

Interview Log

Interview: P.J. Elbourn (JE)

Interviewer and Transcriber: Julie Broadbent (JB)

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Rock Hall,

of Cds: 1

JB: I say let's go.

JE: Okay.

JB: Would you just for the tape recorder tell me your full name and where we are right now.

JE: Parnell J. Elbourn Senior and we are in what we call Puppyville. The gentleman that developed this area was named Frank Puppy and that's where we are, Rock Hall and I'm a past mayor of Rock Hall. I had about 14 years in office and one of things we came up with was Rock Hall is a pearl of the Chesapeake and the garden spot of the world. So that is how we feel about our town.

JB: And you grew up here in Rock Hall?

JE: I was born in this town before hospitals. Really!

JB: Really, were you born in a house then?

JE: Yes, my father's house.

JB: A midwife I'm assuming.

JE: I assume, course I don't remember far back.

JB: Can you give me a rough estimation of when you were born, what year it was?

JE: A long time ago. Almost got to Christmas, I was December the 16, 1931.

JB: Wow.

JE: So this past December I celebrated my 80th birthday. The Lord has blessed and let me still get around, I still drive.

JB: Happy birthday.

JE: Thank you.

JB: Happy belated birthday. So your parents had a t-shirt factory here in town?

JE: No, my father worked on the water with his father as most people do in Rock Hall or did then. And he told his dad that there had to be a better way to make a living. So he stood in the back of a truck from here to Baltimore, a 100 miles, to meet with a fellow that owned a shirt manufactory over there. The older people will remember Marlboro shirts. And he got a contract and he I don't know where I got the sewing machines and so forth to set the plant up but it was set up in Rock Hall at the beginning up town off of Main Street. And he started selling Marlboro shirts, which was men's dress shirts, and it was one of the top three at that time.

JB: Oh wow okay.

JE: In 1925 he built the plant, that's the building is still there off of Downing Avenue. That was Rock Hall Manufacturing Company.

JB: So, your dad started as a waterman?

JE: Yes

JB: Do you know why he wanted to leave the water?

JE: He didn't like it.

JB: That's the perfect reason.

JE: He told his dad because of course you go out there in all types of weather and sometimes your catch is good and sometimes it is not so good. So he told his dad there had to be a better way to make a living than this.

JB: Do you know what his dad thought of that?

JE: He never commented on it. Of course my grandfather died when I was about a year old so I don't remember him but my father had quite a beginning. He was the town cop here for a while and about 7 miles north of here was a place called Tolchester and it was an amusement park. And a ferry boat came over from Baltimore every day and my dad worked up there. He helped, did a lot of the wiring in some of the buildings up there. He helped put the steel tracks down on the old the whirl pool dip. That type of thing.

JB: Wow.

JE: Yeah, so he got around.

JB: When you were growing up here did you in town, did you hang out up in Tolchester?

JE: Well every summer I'd go up there every chance.

JB: Alright, what?

JE: Naw and I don't know it seems like for some reason or another after I got driver's age I didn't hang in Rock Hall very much, Chestertown.

JB: Chestertown, what was in Chestertown that wasn't in Rock Hall?

JE: Well there were places that teenagers hung out and they didn't have one in Rock Hall. You know, we didn't think there was anything to do here so we went into Chestertown. And I don't regret it we have been married 57 years.

JB: Is that where you met your wife in Chestertown?

JE: Yeah.

JB: How did the two of you meet?

JE: At the hang out.

JB: Oh okay.

JE: It was called Gill Brothers down on Cross Street in Chestertown and that was the hangout for high school kids. For some strange reason course the college kids didn't want to hang out with high school kids. So they had their own meeting place in the basement for the Washington College students and they had a dumb waiter to go up and down from the soda fountain. And that is where the college kids hung out downstairs and we hung out upstairs.

JB: That is funny.

JE: It is they had sandwiches and the normal soda fountain things.

JB: Wonderful, so going back to the shirt factory just a little bit...

JE: Yes.

JB: When you were growing up do you remember going to the shirt factory?

JE: Yeah because my dad used to have to take me back to the house.

JB: You used to wander out to the factory?

JE: I would wander out to the shirt factory. I guess I'd get in the way and he was afraid I would get hurt or something, I don't know but anyways I ended up back in the house.

JB: Do you remember how the factory was set up? Like when you walked in the door what did you see?

JE: I can show you.

JB: You can show me? Is the building still around?

JE: Yeah the buildings around but I have some pictures.

JB: Oh wonderful I would love to see the photos.

JE: Well put her on hold.

[pause]

JB: So this is the Elkton Diner?

JE: As it was when I was a youngster. So up in Charlestown around, which is above Elkton, on old route 40 to Baltimore sent me this because I, a little background, I also for the past 21 years, for some stupid reason, I have a radio program at the high school, I volunteer. My program is call Jazz and Other Stuff and that is what I play Dixieland jazz and then old big band stuff from the 30s, 40s, and 50s, a little bit of swing, a little bit of rag time, for example.

JB: Sounds like a good radio station.

JE: Oh we have fun.

JB: Look at all the discs you have.

JE: 45's.

JB: Yeah.

JE: You don't even remember them.

JB: No, they weren't around when I was shopping for music.

JE: It the old tracks.

JB: That's okay.

JE: Anyhow that's what I have been doing 21 years. It is a lot of fun and I have people call me from all around the area and I have some avid listeners from a little town called Charlestown, which is north of here, Aberdeen, Havre de Grace, and right outside of Baltimore. And they call me two or three times a month, just checking in, just wanted to let you know I am listening. And this one fellow sent me that picture of the old Elkton Diner. I was talking about things that I remember from my childhood for example US route 48. Are you familiar with that at all?

JB: A little bit.

JE: It wasn't there when I was a kid.

JB: Really?

JE: It didn't exist.

JB: That's a change.

JE: Neither did 301.

JB: How did you get over to Dover or Delaware in general?

JE: Oh the roads were still there but they're just not the big roads like they are today. When I went to school in Saint Mary's County, almost to Virginia, the Bay Bridge wasn't there. I watched them build it or start to build it when I was going back and forth to school. It was a boarding school and I come home a couple weekends a month I'd be able to come home. Quite a change.

JB: Yeah.

JE: Alright you said something about a picture.

JB: Yes.

JE: Alright. Arial view, my father's house, the shirt factory.

JB: Oh it was right in the backyard.

JE: Yep.

JB: Did he have to get a certain zoning law to change the backyard?

JE: Zoning, what is that? What the hell is that? Zoning? There was no such thing.

JB: Why did he choose to put it in his backyard then?

JE: It was his backyard it's where he wanted it. He walked out the backdoor, walk across the path and he was there.

JB: That is the easiest way to go to work ever.

JE: How about it. How about it.

JB: So who did he hire to work in the factory?

JE: People like that.

JB: Wow, do you know how many people?

JE: We averaged 50 to 55.

JB: A year or a day?

JE: For sixty years.

JB: Oh okay.

JE: The whole time I was there, there was always 50 to 55, 56, 57 you know. I think we did get up to 60 at one time.

JB: Which one is your dad?

JE: Oh okay, he is hiding back here, my dad and my mom.

JB: Okay so almost everyone who worked at the sewing factory was a lady.

JE: Oh yes, well there was only...I can't find the right one, back then, there's my dad, curly head little devil. Back then Rock Hall was quote unquote a fishing village and the boating industry didn't exist like it does today. I mean...We got several large marinas in the area. It didn't exist back then the only thing that was on the water was a place for the watermen to tie up. The water just wasn't as sport then like it is now. Highway or whatever you want to call it.

JB: So most of these women were from Rock Hall then?

JE: Yes, of course in the very beginning all of them were from Rock Hall because transportation just wasn't there and when I was in there I had several come from Chestertown and then the surrounding area but predominately Rock Hall people. And every once in a while I am very gratified to meet someone on the street that I have known all my life or have known me all my life and say 'I don't know what we'd have done without that place because my husband worked on the water and when it would freeze up there was no work, you just didn't have any income and if it wasn't for the shirt factory we would have starved to death.' So it was important industry in town, I think and a lot of other people thought the same thing.

JB: So most of the women that were hired were watermen's wives and sisters?

JE: Predominately, especially in the beginning.

JB: Yeah.

JE: Let's see, that was the inside of the plant.

JB: Oh okay it looks like 10 stations? No more than that you more than that you almost had like 40 stations in here.

1E: 40 or 50 yeah.

JB: Because it looks like you had a couple of people ironing, people bundling.

JE: Yeah.

JB: A couple of cutters.

JE: All the way in the back, that was the back, all the way back here in the back end of the plant that was the shirts were examined with, you know, cut off the loose thread, the hanging threads stuff and inspected and folded in bundles of a dozen and they were load on a truck and at the beginning taken to Baltimore then.

JE's wife: I'm waiting.

JE: For what? The train? Then I think it was around 1974 somewhere in that area we went to work for Rob Roy boy shirts. Marlboro was strictly a men's dress shirt.

JB: Okay.

JE: Then we went with Rob Roy which was a boy's shirt and they, during our tenure with them we worked with them about 21 years, they're in Cambridge. During that time the changeover was made from a cut and sewn, as we called, which was a cotton garment to knit wear. We made thousands of dozens of boys' shirts with the placket in the front, pull over.

JB: Yes.

JE: Short sleeve, long sleeve, before that we made a lot of button up the front cotton shirts and for some reason or another they kind of wound down. They sold the company to executives in the company and it just didn't hang in there very long. That industry is funny anyhow, we were able to, I was able to get some work from a place down in Mineral, Virginia making, actually it was sleepwear but it looked like a big football jersey and it was for girls and it had the numbers on it and everything. We never did any cutting, the people we contracted from, for cut all the garments out and shipped them to Rock Hall in our own truck and sewed them together, send them back. They pressed them and shipped them to the store and then in the last ten- twelve years we had our own pressing department where we pressed them, put the on hangers, shipped them back to the warehouse. That was for another outfit. That was for, after 21 years we went with an outfit called Queens's Casuals out of Philadelphia. It was predominately ladies' blouses and it was a nice outfit to work for, well they all were.

JB: So how did you get involved in the factory?

JE: It was in the backyard. I didn't know anything else and when I went, I'm not going to admit this to you. When I went to private school my father, well I might as well tell you this story 'cause I went to school in Rock Hall for three weeks and I was sent home about 5 times. I was ornery. My father said I found a place for you which was Charlotte. Leave it alone, just leave it alone sit down, hold on [talking to wife].

JE's wife: [Unintelligible].

JE: I don't know what the hell she is talking about. She don't either. My father decided it would be better for me to get out of Rock Hall. So he sent me down to Queen Mary's County, Maryland down near Waldolf to Charlotte Hall Military Academy. My son also went there and the school had, well it started in 1774 and they stopped in 1976. So there were two hundred years and now it is a veteran's home and hospital. So it is still there and I just took up general business courses and come home and just went in. And I drove the truck for most of the time that I was there and then my son took over that part. And it was a good living, a good life. The offshore stuff, you know you can't compete and more than the minimum wage whatever it was. You can't compete with 50- 60 cents an hour when the minimum wage is 6 dollars or more. And that was the demise of the company was the fact you just couldn't charge enough to keep ahead. So I just decided in 1986 it was time to stop or my accountant decided it was time to stop. So I finished out my life in jail, as a corrections office. [Laughter]

JB: You are so tricky, I was like why were you...

JE: Yeah I went to correctional school and I worked in Chestertown for a year or so and then I went to Centreville built a brand new jail and the chief deputy in Chestertown was made warden over there and I went with him and I spent 10 years over there. And then I came back to Chestertown on a part- time basis. It was fun, I enjoyed it, I really did. I was in Queen Anne's county I was lieutenant and I was in charge of the world release program and I enjoyed that very much for two reasons I was helping these kids to know what to do with themselves and also the jobs required that you went out and check them. So I got out of the building two or three times a week I would go out on the road and check them.

JB: That's nice.

JE: I always found them there that helped too?

JB: Definitely. So what was, can you describe to me the person who normally worked in the factory. Maybe not when it first started but maybe closer to the end.

JE: Predominately they were just housewives and they wanted a little money of their own. Course in the beginning they didn't have much choice. It was whether go to work or starve to death it wasn't like that when I was there because there were a lot of things going on. It was predominately housewives or young girls out of school but that haven't gotten that far yet. I think my brother- in- law was there he was kind of the floor manager and then I had a nephew there as a mechanic for the sewing machines and myself that was all the males that were there.

JB: You just had three males.

JE: That was it. And we had stuff that you've heard of, the old Singer sewing machines. That was the real deal. There were two well, there were three or four kinds; one was just they called a plain sewer which

was just a single needle sewing machine, one was a button sewer which sewed buttons on and that was a big. When I first went in there that was before they come up with an automatic feeder and the girl feed the buttons into the machine by hand. She picked it up out of the tray and stick it in, sew it on and put another one in. And then you had an automatic button feeder and that made quite a difference. And then I still remember some of the 7130 was a Singer button sewer, button hole machine. It would sew around the button hole and then a knife would go down and cut the hole out between the stiches, without hitting the stiches.

JB: That is impressive.

JE: Yeah it is, it is really amazing.

JB: Did any women ever, did you mom ever work for the sewing machine.

JE: No.

JB: She didn't.

JE: Not that I know of.

JB: Did you mom have a job?

JE: No.

JB: She was a housewife?

JE: Yeah I had four sisters, one is still living. She must be getting close to 90 now I guess, on the other side of the house, next door.

JB: Oh ok so she is still in Rock Hall that is nice.

JE: Yep, not too much automation in the sewing industry. It is a tremendous amount of hand work. That button feeder was about the most impressive innovation invention that came along.

JE wife: Could you stop please... [unintelligible]

JE: Go ahead and do them I don't care...

[Part 2]

JE: This this was taken at a party down at Fisherman's Wharf which my father owned at the time and this was kind of like our Christmas party celebration. And this was our accountant, Mr. Boyer and my dad and this was Mrs. Hays. Actually she was a relative but her father-in-law ran the place.

JB: Fisherman's wharf?

JE: Yeah.

JB: What year, do you know roughly what year this was? These photos were taken?

JE: No one, course no one had the sense to write on the back when it was.

JB: Do you think the 50s? Do the fashions look like it was in the 50s?

JE: Yes.

JB: So did your dad ever let you play in the factory when you were little before he chased you out?

JE: Not much.

JB: How about your sisters, did your sisters ever play in there?

JE: My sister, Norma worked there as a secretary and when she left my daughter Jenn took over. Now any of these you want to copy I can make you a paper copy.

JB: Oh thank you.

JE: Any of them that you want. This was the front entrance.

JB: The front entrance oh ok. This says 1957 on it.

JE: Oh okay.

JB: So maybe this was around 1957.

JE: McGowan was an amateur photographer and he took most of these pictures.

JB: So what was it like growing up in Rock Hall?

JE: It wasn't bad, wasn't bad at all. I'm disappointed I've got only one good picture of the inside and I don't know where the others got too.

JB: So did you ever go out on the water yourself?

JE: I've lived here 80 years and I think I've been fishing maybe four times.

JB: That's it? Why didn't you...

JE: My waters right out there.

JB: Your pool?

JE: Yep.

JB: Why didn't ever you go fishing?

JE: I don't know I never cared for it. Just didn't turned my crank as they say. I don't know, it just wasn't.

JB: When you went to military school were there many people from watermen's family there?

JE: Not too many no there were a few boys from what they call shoremen from the Eastern Shore but mostly from like Salisbury and the bigger towns. Not too many watermen and there were a few boys from the local area down there. And the rest of them were in-plants, in from all over the place. Matter of fact the boy I roomed with, no he lived next door, the boy I roomed with was from Guatemala, Ecuador and Santiago de Cuba.

JB: Wow.

JE: And one was from, I think he was from Peru and his dad was a delegate to the UN. He went to school in England for a while and then went down there for some reason. So we had a boy in Chestertown, Gillespie, Edward Gillespie and Sons Concrete went to school with him and there is a boy over in Centerville I went to school with and we communicate back and forth on the computer. He was on the boxing squad. Not too many boys from around this area went down there.

JB: Did you play any sports in school?

JE: I played a little J.V. football. I'm not a sportsman. It just didn't turn my crank.

JB: Mmm ok it sounds like you were a great business man though.

JE: I tried. I had trouble getting above the rank lieutenant. I was first lieutenant down there in my senior year and then I was lieutenant over at Queen Anne's County. I never made it to captain.

JB: Is that when you were a correction officer or were you in the military?

JE: Correction officer.

JB: Correction officer.

JE: Yeah I was in the military the 29th division but it was just a National Guard unit then I didn't have any active service.

JE's wife: Don't take my clothes, my house or anything around here that is mine.

JE: She is not going to take anything hon.

JB: I will take nothing but what I brought with me and a recording.

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

JE: Go ahead find something to do hon. [Gibberish] I hope you realize that is not her nature.

JB: No, I know. Where there any, did you have floor manager of the sewers? How did it work? You obviously had a base of workers but then what was the leadership style?

JE: Well when my dad was living, he was the head man in charge and then when he passed away it passed to me.

JB: And you had a secretary, an accountant, you were the president. Did you have like a floor manager or a person to control...That was all you.

JE: My father and then me.

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

JE: Leave it alone, honey it's alright, leave it alone wonderful. Leave it alone it will be okay. Okay. Of course my brother-in-law but he lives up the street here, next door. His main job was to see that work was given out properly and that it progressed along down the floor. If there was a damaged sleeve or collar or whatever, he would take the reminisce that we had and cut a new one so that we didn't have a second it would be the first one, a good shirt. But he didn't have the nature as far as managing people, it just wasn't on his...

JB: It just wasn't something he enjoyed doing?

JE: I don't know whether he enjoyed it or not, I think he enjoyed the, he would have but he would have been vicious, vindictive type of person.

JB: So he wouldn't have been a good manager.

JE: Not at all.

JB: Got it. It happens. What was the best part...

JE: That's what the bumper sticker says.

JB: What bumper sticker?

JE: Stuff happens.

JB: I've seen that bumper sticker, stuff does happen. So what was the best part about the sewing factory for you?

JE: Well it was being at home and I knew everybody. Of course the years that I drove the truck making delivers and picking up new cut work was you know, I get out of the plant...

[Other conversation between JE and wife]

JE: I got a little balance problem sometimes.

JB: I do too.

JE: Yeah but yours is from [drinking].

JB: Only every other night.

JE: Leave it alone please. She can't hear you.

JB: So the best part was the people in the factory.

JE: Oh yeah they were nice, nice people.

JB: What was the worst part?

JE: Not having enough money, you know, when I finally had to make the decision that it was time to leave that was the worst part. Oh God almighty- [other conversation] it's awful when you get to that point that you don't care.

JB: It is very hard to have someone who is sick.

JE: I couldn't make it if it wasn't for my two daughters and my grandson comes down. He'll come down and fixed supper. Shoot. Leave it alone please and then if I talk so she can hear me then she says I am yelling at her. It's alright. So what else?

JB: So when you were driving the truck, how old were you? 16?

JE: 17? Or 18? I guess.

JB: 17 or 18. Did you do it during breaks when you were in high school?

JE: No, no.

JB: You just did it during...

JE: When I was on breaks from school I played. I ran women [laughter].

JB: So how did you find time to drive the trucks back and forth?

JE: Well I was working full-time in there when I got out of school. We weren't there anyhow, it was only once a week and I started off going to Baltimore and I think that place is now is a condo I believe. Then I drove for 20 years from Rock Hall to Cambridge making delivers and pick-ups.

JE's wife: I am going to tear this house up.

JE: No just leave it alone. Please! I drove most of the 12 years that we were with Queen's Casual I drove most of that time up to Philadelphia and back. I was talking about that the other day I think. I had a 30 gallon saddle tank and then the seat tank behind the seat was about 18 or 20 gallons and I'd run out before I got home I run out of it the saddle tank. Can you image filling a 40 gallon a trip?

JB: Yeah that sound expensive, it sounds very expensive.

JE: Now don't open it anymore, leave it alone. Ok? Why don't you sit down and rest a while. Come on you sit down and rest a while. You want to lay back?

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

[Part 3]

JE: What's next, where are you staying down at the motel?

JB: Huh what? Sorry I got distracted. No, it is a beautiful motel.

JE: It is nice. Have you heard about 60 second sex?

JB: No

JE: Have you got a minute?

JB: [Laughter] Oh my God. That's funny.

JE: You didn't know you were going to have a dirty old man was going to hit on you.

JB: No I didn't, little did I know, oh my goodness... so your son did the same thing you did, started driving the trucks. How old was he when he started?

JE: About 17.

JB: Ok same age.

JE: He went to school where I went to school. I went because I had to, he went because he wanted to.

JB: I have just one final question. I mean, I'm sure I'm going to come up with a thousand more but I am going to say that this is my final question.

JE: Okay.

JB: How many pieces did you make per day like what was your...?

JE: I'm not sure with the men' shirts but with the boys' shirts we'd make oh seven-eight hundred dozen a week at least. And I guess we made about five or six hundred dozen of the lady's blouses a week but you just couldn't make enough.

JB: Yeah, did your dad teach you how to kind of run the factory?

JE: Oh yeah.

JB: You just followed him around?

JE: Yeah I hung in there with him from 1950 to 1974 so I learned a little bit. He was from the school that if somebody built it, somebody can fix it. He was an excellent sewing machine mechanic. I was fair but I don't think I ever got to the excellent status with it but I could keep them running. Then I hired a boy, my nephew. He wanted to get out of Baltimore. So he moved over here and he's just naturally born mechanic like my grandson.

JB: It is always nice to have a mechanic in the family. I noticed in the photo that most of the people working in your factory were white. Where there any African American's that worked in the factory?

JE: You mean dark complexion?

JB: Yeah.

JE: During my tenure yes, of course the early years that was a no, no.

JB: Because of?

JE: You don't remember that see...

JB: Because of segregation?

JE: Because they were niggers.

JB: Okay.

JE: Back then. I got fired for saying that word from one of the jails, the last one. I had a situation where I had a deputy sheriff at the back gate pushing the bottom to come in, I had another deputy at the back door to get in, the telephone was going off, the intercom was going off, this is all at the same time and I had a fight in the cellblock and this little dude just caused all kinds of problems and I said under my breath I thought, you know that little nigger is going to get himself hurt. And one of the correctional officers, unfortunately a female, couldn't wait to tell the warden that I said nigger. Oh he said that word. That was the end of it. I think they were a little more behind on it. I think they were looking for an excuse and also he wanted to put a feather in his hat and she wanted to make a point too. And can you believe I was in there two weeks ago and she would not leave me alone. She's just trying to create a conversation. Can you believe that? What the hell I want to talk to you for? That's life.

JB: Yeah. So what did African American women do for work in Rock Hall?

JE: Mostly I would say, well now we had a crab house down here and they would pick crabs. During the season they would shuck oysters and domestic workers.

JB: Okay.

JE: And that was pretty much it but I had a number of black girls work for me. I never had any problems, they fit right in you know.

JB: Were their families also watermen working on the water were their husbands...?

JE: Some of them yeah. Of course some of them farmers worked on the farms but back when I was growing up, of course as I say you wouldn't normally, being 20 years old you wouldn't remember how things were.

JB: Right.

JE: But I can remember my father saying I'm going up to Edesville to get a nigger to come clean up this yard. It was just the way it was.

JB: Did African Americans live in Edesville?

JE: Yeah and they still do, it is predominately black, Edesville is.

JB: They don't live in Rock Hall here?

JE: Oh yeah yeah now, not then.

JB: Okay.

JE: You go up to Rock Hall and you go through Main Street have you been up there at all?

JB: To Edesville?

JE: No, Rock Hall up Main Street.

JB: Mhm.

JE: Did you see the Darting's store?

JB: Yes.

JE: Well when I was a youngster I liked Saturday evenings, the blacks would congregate on the corner across the street. They would select one, he would go down to the liquor store because then it was as state store you had to buy from the state store. He would go down and buy and come back. By dark they were gone. That is the way it was. Right down the street from there which is now a church office, was a movie hall. They couldn't go in there. In Chestertown they had a second balcony that they let blacks go in when I was just a youngster but it's been a lot of change.

JB: Do you remember the change like were there any problems here?

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

JB: I'm sorry?

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

JE: This is home honey.

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

JE: We will go out in a little while just relax and we'll take a little ride. Not really, not really even with the integration of the schools there weren't any real big ruckus about it.

JB: Did the civil rights movement, did any major marches or anything happen up here?

JE: No no

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

JB: So when did African Americans start moving into Rock Hall?

JE: Oh geez I don't know after the movements were all settled and the dust had settled. I have a home right across the street from the shirt factory building and I have an African American girl living there, renting it.

JB: Well thank you so much for your time. I really appreciate it. This was wonderful for you to take so much time.

JE: Did you miss anything?

JB: Do you think we missed anything?

JE: I don't know.

JB: Do you have a stand out memory from the shirt factory?

JE: No, just had 60 years I had what, from 1950 to 1986 there and I'm sorry we had to give it up but it was either that or lose everything. So that was the choice we had to make.

JB: Do you remember any incidences that were funny?

JE: No, it was always kind of dead serious, you know. It was not much of a fun place but it was fun, it was fun, it was nice.

JB: Did you guys ever play music like jazz when they were sewing?

JE: No, no the boss wouldn't put up with that.

JB: You wouldn't put up with any music.

JE: No, my father wouldn't.

JB: Ah. I hear stories that maybe when people were shucking or picking they would sing.

JE: Oh yeah.

JB: Would the ladies sing while sewing? What would they sing?

JE: Oh I don't know I never heard any of them. They were concentrating on what they were doing, they didn't have any time to sing. And I tried my best to get my father to close that place up because at the time I was running the Fisherman's Wharf Marina, had two restaurants and I tried to get him to close that and come down with me but he wouldn't do it. Of course that was before the influx of the yachting trade like it is now. Down here off of 20 where the marina is on the right hand side going down 20.

JB: Yeah.

JE: I lived there, right in the middle there were all that stuff is, I had a home there. That was my first home when we were married. It was my grandmother's. Now it's gone but right there where the marine store is, that is my Uncle Tom's workshop and then next to it the house next door to that and then next door to his house was my grandmother's with all the waterfront. A lot of change. My father had that down there but he wouldn't get off of the shirt factory. He wanted me down here with him, not him with me.

JB: So did you start the Fishermen's Wharf?

JE: No, it was started and my father bought it for a really low price and its been a lot of changes. I don't know how many million that place would be worth today. But I think he sold it from 60-70,000 dollars the whole thing.

JB: What kind of restaurants were they?

JE: Well we had one that was called The Bar and Grill and that's where these pictures are taken. And it was just like a little sandwich shop, you know and then the one on the other side of the creek, was a little more upgrade, the yachting trade. Of course they visited both of them as far as that goes but like for a real nice dinner they would go over to the big restaurant and we'd close the little one. It was more of a breakfast, sandwich thing but we had fun.

JB: Did your sisters help out in the restaurants?

JE: No, my older sister worked in the shirt factory for a little while and let's see who was there, Norma, Edith, she lives in Chestertown. Her husband was a barber. Francis didn't work she lived up here and my youngest sister Ruth was married to a well, he was in Air Force and when he came out, he was in civil service. And they lived out in Wheeling, West Virginia then the mid-west and then they went California. Yep.

JB: Well-

JE: I got around a little bit, I had fun.

JB: Yeah.

JE: Indeed I did.

JB: What did you do for fun?

JE: What does any man do for fun?

JB: Chase girls.

JE: Right, right and it was fun, of course I had to give that up.

JB: You got married.

JE: Yep

JB: You already caught your girl.

JE: Yeah, ironically my father and her father were boyhood friends.

JB: Oh really.

JE: And her father was, he worked at the Chestertown post office and on the side he did plumbing and stuff like for service. God that is awful to watch.

JB: Can I have a couple of copies of those photos?

JE: Some of them anyhow.

JB: Thank you I really appreciate again your time.

JE: Oh I don't mind.

[Part 4]

JE: When the factory first started it was, the machine were run by a line shaft. Which mean there was, the girls sat face to face and underneath of the table was a long shaft with a pulley on the end of it. The belt went down through the floor to a diesel engine that turned that shaft. So all those sewing machines ran off the same shaft and of course the name for it was a line shaft.

JB: Hi how are you? Good.

JE: That's Susie.

JE's wife: [unintelligible]

[Part 5]

JE: Self contain units it would make life easier because with the line shaft machines you had the belt that went down to the pulley was a round leather belt. Matter of fact you called it hair on belt because in fact on top of it was it looked like hair and you had a special pair of pliers that had a cutter and a punch and you cut the belt to the length you want and then you punch a hole in both ends of it and then you had a belt hook, that was just a steel hook you put it through the holes and then you crimped them. And that was, when you got the self-contained unit just had a belt, like a fan belt on a car. You know, you just slipped the belt on them.

JB: Mhm.

JE: It's been a lot of changes. I can still hear the old diesel engine running downstairs. It was single cylinder, it had fly wheels that were about 5 feet tall.

JB: Oh wow, was it loud?

JE: Not really, not really you couldn't hear it upstairs.

JB: Oh wow okay.

JE: But outside the only thing you just heard was this born, born, born, born, born, the single cylinder pump. And in the head of the engine was a steel plug that stuck out and you set...What is it? Pump it up.

JB: Like a tire?

JE: No, it's for fire, I forgot what the hell they call it now but anyhow it was a little thing you put fuel in it and you pump pressure then you pumped fuel into it. And then lit it and then trained the flame on the pin and when the pin got red hot and then you took the flame away and you turned the wheel back so she was off center then you stood on the one spoke of the wheel and forced it back on to the compression and then let go of it and it would spin around she'd start. No self-starting jobs you had to stand on that wheel and get it back off with compression. It was fun.

JB: Did people work 9 to 5?

JE: We worked 7:30 to 4.

JB: Why 7:30 to 4?

JE: I don't know cause that's my father. And we had a half hour lunch break. If you couldn't eat in 30 minutes something is wrong with you.

JB: Did you have a lunch room there?

JE: No, but we did have Uncle Ray Hurst who used to come around in an enclosed truck, like an RV type thing, and he had a cooker, and a burner in there and he cooked hotdogs, had cupcakes and stuff like that. So and he would come around at lunch time.

JB: Did a lot of women bring their lunches?

JE: Yeah and they would get together in a corner somewhere and have lunch. We had a soda machine in there but that was all. Yep

JB: Anything else coming to mind? I'm sure it's a hundred memories.

JE: What people wouldn't realize, you know the average person wouldn't dream that the way the work came into the plant. The shirt was cut into pieces, you know, like you have a bundle of collars, cuffs, sleeves, fronts, backs, you know and they were all separate bundles and all those parts, like bundle one and they would all go together and most of the time from Marlboro and from Rob Roy they were loaded loose and the stuff from Queen Casuals they packed it in a box and closed it up. It was a lot easier to handle. You could load in no time but I didn't mind it. What else what? What have we forgotten?

JB: I don't know I wasn't here I don't know what is forgotten.

JE: Well isn't that something.

JB: Oh my god. Well where there any moments where anything bad happened in the factory? Where there any accidents?

JE: Once in a great while somebody would run a needle through their finger but you just take a pair of pliers and pull it out, put some iodine on it, and a Band-Aid and go back to work. Really!

JB: Sounds painful.

JE: That didn't happen very often though.

JB: The women didn't rebel for higher wages or?

JE: No, they did, well because of Rob Roy was union we were forced and I don't think the girls were really crazy about it because it didn't benefit them that much. Of course there was some, they had to get some raise or otherwise the union wouldn't think they were doing anything but we were a union shop for a number of years and it wasn't too bad.

JB: When did that happen? When did the unionization happen?

JE: 1975, '76 something like that when I was Rob Roy.

JB: So were you in charge then?

JE: I wasn't my dad was. He didn't die until '77- well I want to say the union happened before that because my dad died in '74 and we had been a union shop for a while. But they have a way that they can get you where it hurts. Like I say pull the short hair.

JB: Mhm.

JE: I never had too much trouble with them. Can't stand the button get out of the pan.

JB: What? Isn't it if you can't stand the fire get out of the pan?

JE: Buddy.

JB: Oh Buddy.

JE: Of course now the jail has a different story.

JB: What is the jail one?

JE: Now you are going to have to forgive me for this because it is a little smutty.

JB: Okay.

JE: But if you can't eat it or screw it, piss on it. And that's their theory that's the way they lived to, most of the inmates. And you tell them to do something you don't want to do it, that is when they come up with their real cherry they get all worked up and sweat and they'd say oh not again. That cures it for them. And as far as they are concerned everything is fine. It was quite an experience working at the jail. I got a couple very nice letters that I saved, I don't where they are but I saved them. Mothers had written to me, thanking me for helping their kids, get them jobs, trying and get them on the right track.

JB: How old where these people in jail?

JE: 18, 19, up to 50s and 60s.

JB: Okay, so adults.

JE: Most of them were 20, 30 years old. We only had two or three boys that were only like 18 and they got a DUI or some stupid but they fell in line and got the job done.

JB: What were most people in there for?

JE: I would say DUI or just alcohol in general, a number of assaults and batteries from drinking. That was I guess, well, we had one or two for murder but I don't even remember who they were because it was so few, thank goodness, just the old county jail but it was interesting work.

JB: What did you do on like a daily bases at the jail?

JE: Well course I had my own office and everybody got to build a paper mountain, you know, and so it was always plenty of paper work related to the work release program. And I took care of the commissary also so I had to take care of the ordering and stuff for the commissary.

JB: What exactly is a commissary?

JE: The easy way to explain it would be like, in our case a portable store. You sent out a commissary sheet and they check off what they want. Which is mostly candy, and candy and crackers, potato chips, that type of stuff and then I had a girl that worked with me, Sisco. She pulled the orders and put them in a bag and put them on the cart and taken them around to the pods and give them out and then take the money out of the commissary account because they don't have any money.

JB: Right.

JE: That is Kim, our oldest daughter, she's in Centreville.

JB: OK, I might leave you for dinner. It looks like your dinner has just arrived.

JE: Yeah, a little late but what's you going to do.

[end of interview]