

Interview Log

Interviewee: Edna Marie Hubbard Sutton

Interviewer and Transcriber: Julie Broadbent

Date: 8/6/2011

Location: Rock Hall, Maryland

Topic: Waterman's Restaurant, seafood wholesaling, seafood industry, working as a female, growing up in Rock Hall,

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JB: Ok so what year did you go and buy it?

EM: In 1952, Hubbard's purchased what was then a long pier. Miss Rita Joiner, she was a Joiner and she had married but it was an old ice plant there and by old and I mean old. We bought that and it was a little place on the end that Bud Edwards at that time ran he would sell fishing tvkle and a cup of coffee in the morning to the men who were taking out even back then taking out fishing parties and of course the watermen. You had a lot of the watermen then set pound nets and that was the summer time and during the fall and winter they left here and went drift netting and when we bought it wasn't ... I mean they sold gasoline and after Hubbard's bought it we had the small place that was there moved. Popeye got that I think and it was moved to Edsville. And we tore down the old ice plant it was really extinct by that time because Spoons had put up a modern ice plant. At our end Hubbard's had rented from the owners of the property, took the north area part of it and we had a small fish house where our men could come in, unload, box up their fish, and there was a truck at that time called White Six Crest that went from here to Baltimore every day they had a franchise. Well after we tore down the building that was there. That winter Coke and his father were to be the ones on the boat with the nets and bringing in that income and Wilks stayed ashore to run Hubbard's seafood business. While he was there that winter because there wasn't fish coming in he was starting to build the restaurant.

RM: Wilks, is Miss Edna's husband.

JB: Oh okay.

RM: Yes.

EM: And the men, we were to buy the fish from, most of the fishermen at that time and they would come in. At that time there wasn't any limit like there is now catching rock. During the winter there would be large catches of rock fish. In the spring and after 1948, that our men had started going back up to Betterton to drift for the shad in the spring. That is they would go to Betterton but most of the down they would go

home at night and that meant they could put their nets out and the nets would drift down, called a drift net and they had their markers on them. They would drift down so far and then the tide changes they would drift back up and the fishermen would have to be there in time. Maybe they'd have to leave Rock Hall at 3-3:30 in the morning to get up there and pull those nets in on shore, take the fish out of that and we had a truck there to get the fish and bring them back. We had by the spring, May of 1953 we opened the restaurant Wilks built onto the fish house and at that time would we get ice for fish from the Screams Ice Company.

RM: That is right where we parked when we ate at Watermen's. That is where the icehouse used to be.

JB: Oh okay.

EM: And the ice would come in three-hundred pounds cakes. It would be chopped into maybe fifty pounds cakes put in an ice grinder. Grind the ice up and have a bin there for it to be caught in and somebody that was strong and able there too. As they to bring the fish in, the fish would go in the scale and check they weight, write it down, and then a layer of fish, a layer of ice, a layer of fish, a layer of ice till that 100 pounds boxes were filled and then they were put in a cooler. We would buy from maybe eight to ten people. Most all the watermen sold to Hubbard's at that time. The Crouch's did ship their own most of the time. It wasn't long after we were there, we got the franchise for hauling instead licenses went to Hogan's and after Hogan's we took over with that. Then we hauled to Baltimore then we hauled got runs to New York and to Philadelphia. In the spring when we had the large catches of perch sometimes it was, not for long, it was yellow perch. We got them up to Canada. We have gone south Virginia, North Carolina and then after the fish season or what we consider the fish season over, we'd start with crabs. We'd buy a lot of crabs. Wilks had a big steamer put on the outside of our building so we could steam maybe fifteen-twenty bushel at a time. That was later removed after we sold it but crabs you could buy three dollars a bushel and now I pay a hundred-sixty-five for a bushel of steamed crabs and it really is silver in your teeth.

RM: That's for sure.

EM: But we sold many and we had a lot of dealers come and pick up the crabs. We would ship the crabs to Philly, New York, and Baltimore and gradually the laws changed. Restaurant got busy and you have about twenty-eight fishing party boats that would be running out to the harbor there and you just worked. I always kept all the books and if they were busy down in the fish room with the fish coming in, a couple of captains at the same time and they needed it I would come down and catch the weight and write it down. And we paid our men when they unload, they were paid unless they wanted to wait until the end of the week. Take the money, we always gave them a ticket and we always kept the record of all of it and you had to send records in to the state. We sold a lot of gasoline to the fishing parties but we opened our restaurant at four o'clock in the morning and closed at whatever time was convenient. Over

the summer to seven o'clock during the winter maybe eight but we catered to the watermen. We sold them coffee, their breakfast. If they wanted a packed lunch they got a packed lunch and if they wanted something when they came in we were there to take care of them. Wilks Hubbard was taken waterman and loved being a watermen. No one could have been considered better than he was too, his faith for watermen. Our fish house burned in 1956 and instead of letting his crabbers and those coming in wonder what to do that day, he back the truck up and took their product just the same. Then we rebuilt it and rebuilt larger. Then we got an ice machine that would make the ice and that slowed down haying to handle the big chunks of ice. In the crabbing season we went from I'll say it didn't start much until May and the big hits of crabs didn't come on until the middle of July and after crabbing season came oyster season. We had to buyboat or we'd hire someone with a buyboat and at that time oysters were pretty plentiful here. We had folks come from down to Tilghman's, down to Smith Island would come and what do you call them bugeyes? RM: Yea the skipjacks and bugeyes.

EM: The skipjacks, yeah. I have seen as many as five or six tied at the rest over the weekend were here and watermen back in those days a lot of them lived on board the boats. When our men left here in the fall to all go to Solomon's because of the ice and the fish, they lived on the boat. They slept on it, they cooked on it and they lived on it and you never heard them complain. They were happy it was part of their life and they were happy.

RM: What a nice life it used to be.

EM: I told Wilksen, my son, that when your father would get up three thirty- four o'clock in the morning go work all day and I never once in my life heard him say I wish I didn't have to do this and really, my first husband died when he was 48. He'd been in the business then 1952 he died in '62. He ran the business and got it started good, twelve years, and the oystermen come in 1962. We purchased the adjoining properties which that time were Albert H. Briden's which was the shucking of oysters and clams. Clamming had started, I think did clamming start 1959?

RM: It was in the late 50s.

EM: In 1959 I think soft shell clamming started and that involved I think about sixteen to eighteen of our the watermen started because it was good right then and we had to have truck to go to Massachusetts and to Maine.

RM: That is where all the market for the clams where.

JB: Sure, yeah.

EM: Not to many people around here particularly like the soft shell clams but up there they were a bit more popular. In fact, we had one driver that Massachusetts was his run. We had another driver that

New York was his run and he went maybe four or five times a week and another driver went to Baltimore every night to get to the fish markets there.

JB: Did you coordinate that? Did you coordinate when the drivers ran contact the buyers and stuff like that?

EM: Oh yes, yes Wilks when he lived did it and after Wilks died I had a fourteen year old son, I had already lost my daughter and it wasn't a job for a woman by herself. So I sold the business and stayed on as an accountant and I continued to work in the restaurant. I did most of the cooking for a long while. I continued to do all the books and we were having to count like to insure that everything was doing what, he is in Annapolis, maybe once a month I would contact him. But yep.

JB: So what did he do with him in Annapolis? Did he...

EM: Oh I took papers over.

RM: Like an accountant.

JB: Got it, got yea ok.

EM: And sometimes, it wasn't that often, but in order to keep things, the state even then we had a lot of reporting to do. We had reports called Service on Account on the truck run. We had to report all the fish, the weights of all the fish that were caught, the crabs, the oysters the same way and we had a record of who we bought from and who we sold to and we kept that in case they wanted to check it, it was there for them to check. The restaurant help would come in three o'clock in the morning usually by three-fifteen to be ready by four o'clock and I would get up and look out the window here. We had a sign on the top that said Hubbard's Pier and when it was turned on I knew the help was there and we had a colored man, God bless George Washington, who would pick up the help and who would take them home. He would wait on the gasoline and we sold a lot of gasoline. Pumps out to the waterfront for the boats and we had pumps on the land side for the trucks to be filled.

RM: Let me interrupt you for a minute. Where the casement is on side of watermen's that was all land and that's where Hubbard's was. I never told her where Hubbard's was.

EM: Let me show you a picture

JB: Ok great

RM: I didn't mean to interrupt.

EM: I'm glad you did.

RM: But that whole stretch of land from the Rock Hall railway over to Watermen's was basically Hubbard's. There the restaurant, the shucking house, the fish house. Did you guys own Jenny's?

EM: Yea

RM: Did you? You rented it.

EM: In 1962 when we bought from Albert Ivan's oyster shucking house and they had rooms over top of it.

RM: Yea

EM: Where Mr. Ivan's lived and they did rent some room. Al and his family stayed there for a while after he came. I still worked 24/7.

RM: Now Alan Woodfield which was her partner, was from the Western Shore. They were big seafood buyers on the lower Western Shore weren't they?

EM: Yea they are from Palesfield.

RM: Palesfield yea.

EM: We had worked together. I mean they needed fish and we had them, would sell to them. The same we would sell to anybody else. When the watermen would go to Solomon's, even before we started our business going there, the Woodfield truck would go down and pick up the fish from Solomon's. The watermen were more or less followed let's say up and down the Bay wherever they were. They didn't have to worry about loading the fish in a pickup or something and bringing them to Rock Hall or Tilghman's Island or where. If it was your town's people either your town or you knew that someone was going be there to take care of them when they came in. If they just have to unload and weight up and be paid.

JB: Whose idea was it to expand the business into gasoline and shucking instead of doing the processing?

EM: Oh well, when we bought there had been a tank there but in order to take care of the watermen if they had their boats we gave them free dockage to tie up at our dock and fill up with gasoline in the morning and go out catch the fish bring them in and we would buy them. It was very kind, generous I mean no one I don't think as the others you wanted to take advantage of anybody. You tried to see that the men were taken care of. What they needed we tried to see that they had and didn't see if you could buy it real cheap and sell it high. Nu-huh it wasn't a game. We were partners almost.

RM: Hubbard's kept a supply of net they kept a supply of all the kinds of equipment to help keep the watermen working. Which is profit for everyone.

EM: That's right

RM: If the watermen were producing you guys were making money.

EM: Like rope, if they wanted rope we could get it for them. We didn't stock the rope because there was a hardware store up town that stocked the rope and we didn't want to be in competition. They need their living to. I can always feel like what Hubbard's did was to benefit not only Hubbard's but to benefit the community and the watermen in particular.

JB: Who did you have shucking in the shucking house? Did you employ like women in the area or blacks?

EM: Yes, lots of the colored folks would shuck the oysters and after the...

JB: Men and women?

EM: What?

JB: Men and women?

EM: Oh yes and sing as they worked. They were happy.

RM: They were drinking gin.

EM: And then the government said you had to have a time card. They had to be paid so much an hour. They were paid by what they produced. Now when they came in and got the time card and got the time machine that you pushed the card in and the inspector would come around. You couldn't regulate what people did all the time but when the inspector came one time one of them came in and hollered to another, "push my card through." That's how that went. I know when I was keeping the books I would have to have three different color of ink. I would have one for the hours, one for the clams, one for the oysters, then how much they made and they would have to have enough of the oyster shucking money and the clam shucking money to at least equal what the wage had to be per hour. So I had to have three or four different color inks in order to be able separate it and if one of those shuckers thought you'd made a mistake. Not only one would come but three or four and they'd all think there was a mistake. Thank God there wasn't. I did pretty good keep it straight.

JB: Did you go to school to learn how to keep the books or did you?

EM: I was a registered nurse.

JB: Oh ok.

EM: I like book work and I had taken a commercial course in high school. Anybody can multiple two by two it was on back of a notebook. You didn't have to learn to do anything. Right now people depend on those adding machine. Of course I had an adding machine then but I'm glad when we went to school that we had to learn how to do things.

JB: What book is that?

EM: I'll tell you in a minute. Now where did I put that? This shows you how old I am when I went to school.

JB: Oh wow [laughter].

EM: That was our school bus.

RM: Pretty good.

EM: We lived on Bay Shore road.

JB: That truck was your school bus?

EM: That was our bus that was first class.

RM: Yea

JB: There were just benches in the back that lined the outside.

EM: The benches up each side of the bus and the curtains dropped down.

RM: You were up town.

EM: If it was too muddy cause the roads were dirt if it was too muddy to get this bus through then he'd come with horse and wagon that was seven grades. You were asking this was a book that my second husband did. It is Kent country from 1900- 1980.

JB: What is it called again?

EM: Beyond the Roadgate.

JB: Oh okay.

RM: That's Eastern Neck, let's see. [pages turning] I have a picture here of the pier that's why I am looking for it. Let's see.

RM: You wouldn't believe the amount of seafood that passed through Rock Hall would they?

EM: Oh what Rodney said at one of the meetings we had, you did not go from here to Chestertown that you didn't meet a Hubbard's seafood truck either coming or going.

RM: Yea day and night, I mean.

EM: Yes

RM: It was around the clock.

EM: That's right. Now let's see.

JB: When you were in restaurant did you only cook local seafood or did you import any seafood?

EM: Oh you had to get some things from outside. Most of it was local but some of it you had to have some. [page turning] That's the Rock Hall harbor. This was our restaurant and one of the stores.

JB: Oh yea

EM: This is working in the fish house. This is a colored man taking in the fish and emptying it in the scales to weigh them up. The truck, Booty backed in to unload it.

JB: And this is in your place?

EM: Yea, no. That is Orville Ashley there. He was a waterman.

RM: Oh is Orville in that picture?

JB: Right in the doorway.

RM: He's young there isn't he?

EM: That is Lonnie Davis.

RM: Oh yea that's Lonnie.

EM: Lonnie's was going down the road one time I had brought Wilkens was here and he was trying to dig something. Lonnie said "What are you doing?" Wilks always said, "Well she got me out here. I gotta do this thing." "If I was you, I would hide that shovel and not know where I hid it." [Laughter]

RM: Right, right.

EM: Poor Lonnie.

RM: Is Wilks in that picture?

EM: No.

RM: No.

EM: Yes he is. There he is.

RM: In the back.

EM: That's George Keller Harrison from Tilghman's.

JB: In the white shirt.

EM: There was an article.

RM: And you say it is Orville in the hat?

EM: I don't know, do you?

RM: Yea, that Harrison from down Tilghman's, that's Wilks, Lonnie.

JB: Just for the record this is on page 235.

RM: This was Cokes' boat. Jeri Mac was Coke's boat wasn't it? I think that was one of Coke's boats.

JB: This is Lonnie?

RM: That's Lonnie.

JB: That's Lonnie the African American man shoveling.

RM: Lonnie worked for Wayne in later years when Wayne had his place. Well one Friday Wayne paid Lonnie off with 50s and 100s and he looked at the pile, that's a clam boat, he looked at the handful of 50s and 100s and said "Oh my God, I work harder than this this week." He gave the money back to Wayne. Wayne paid him off in 20s and 10s which was a much thicker pile of money and then he was satisfied.

JB: The same amount?

RM: Probably less [laughter]

JB: There's a picture of that right there, Hubbard's seafood.

RM: That's part of it then there was more over here.

JB: Oh yea look at that, and that's your husband?

EM: Yea that was my husband, he never lived to see it.

JB: This is in Fishing Gazette October, 1963. I'll see I can find this. It looks great. It is page 42 and 43 talks about Hubbard's.

EM: And this was a really little restaurant was put in the end where Watermen's is.

RM: There was another small restaurant called the Chesapeake I guess that is that right there.

EM: We bought that in 1962.

RM: I think they had some wonderful food didn't that?

EM: And that's Jenny's.

RM: Yea, Miss Jenny.

EM: The only thing I did with that place was changed the register box, count the money, and pay the help because they sold beer and I didn't. I was strict. Hubbard's restaurant as long as it had the name on the top was never to serve alcohol. Not in my world and when I sold the business I sold it with that thought. And one time Alex said to me, "What do you

think would it be alright to get a license to sell beer?" And I said, "There was never alcohol sold in this place" and he said "Ok."

RM: And there never was.

EM: And there never was. They could sell it to go, you go out of the fish house. This is there were freezers over here. There was the clam house. This was the end of our place. This was a retail store and in here was where they iced them up and had a cold room with a freezer in it and over here we had more freezers.

JB: Did you ever go out on the water when your husband was still out there?

EM: Very little, I went a couple of times to watch him fish pound nets. I would rather be in here warm than I would be from out there in and my son, thank God, never got into seeing the money that could be made on the water. My son is thoracic surgeon in Virginia. I think it you can say it was honesty in caring for business in this over here would have been slough boxes. Where in the spring when the crabs were shedding, Wilks set up a system that would pump fresh water into the slough boxes and would slough for the soft crabs. Now that's something you had to watch very carefully. You couldn't let them go twelve hours. You had to be there to get the soft crabs out as need. Also in the spring we would buy snapping turtles. We'd have to go down right to the way sometimes to pick up the snapping turtles to go and catch them and we built pen in the fish house and that would be filled up with snapping turtles. And we would either, if we didn't sell them all we would clean and freezes them and then sell them off in the winter. There is a truck man from Philadelphia Calabama seafood who used to come and buy a lot of the turtles and then sometimes you would get a lot diamond terrapin. I don't think you aren't allowed to have any more.

RM: Not any more.

EM: They are a protected species but crabs, the oysters, all of that.

RM: How many fish would pass through that place in a day when things were really rolling?

[phone rings]

EM: I don't have answer because sometimes a boat would come in with three tons and another boat come in with a couple of ton.

RM: Yea and you had twenty-five boats.

EM: Yea

JB: That's a lot.

RM: And that was daily.

JB: Yea and they went all around the United States all the way to California.

EM: No, we didn't go to California.

RM: That came later.

JB: Oh ok.

EM: No, no we did after Al come in the 80s I would ship crabs sometime by air to maybe Arkansas or somewhere but no as long as I was in the business we didn't go to anything to California you do now. California is not one of my favorite places but there are too many rich people along by the president's faces.

RM: You got that right.

EM: We don't need any. Now have you any question or have I talked too much?

JB: No, I actually have a question about your employees. I am focusing on women, I am wondering what did you have women do in the restaurant or shucking house?

EM: Oh well. During the summer I expect we had started thirty women in different shifts at the restaurant. We always any time of the year we had at least, I would say, eight in the restaurant and in the shucking house we had fifty two shuckers on the list and predominately women at that time. Now we as Hubbard's never picked crabs. We didn't have a crab picking business. In our retail room it varied but we always had had men that worked there to clean the terrapin and so forth and usually they were black men who loved us and we loved him. I can't say that there is discrimination between the whites and the blacks at that time.

RM: Years ago there really wasn't.

EM: No, not around here.

RM: Everyone was poor and everyone was working just to survive.

EM: That's right. They weren't bad. I know that they respected because we when Linda died one of them came to the door and said, "Can we all come up to the house?" At that time we displayed bodes in the houses and I said of course and the same way when Wilks died. Was it alright to come up? But of course.

JB: Linda your daughter?

EM: Yes, yes and work has been good for me. I have done some good work in my life. I was so happy I was able to work. I hoped I helped others. I know that others help me through the heartbreaks. We got to keep busy doing something with friends around you and the blacks and the whites were and still are friends.

JB: Mhm.

EM: Alan was here Thursday. You ask me what else?

JB: Do you remember any women going out on the water and selling to you?

EM: Yes, Yes, Higgs.

RM: Patsy.

EM: And she wrote a book.

RM: Yea I told her about that.

EM: Yes, Patsy Higgs.

RM: Hazel Downing.

EM Hazel Downing, Uncle Newt's wife. She was a regular partner with Uncle Newt.

RM: Yep, she worked like a man.

EM: Yea she did and she was ambition and a good Adventist not on Saturday did she work. Well, her nephew comes to see me to a church program every Thursday.

JB: Do you remember anyone ever saying like oh that's weird that the women were going out working on the water or was it just a way of life?

EM: That's a way of life if you wanted to work on the water, go.

RM: In those days it was survival.

EM: Right we had a sewing factory right here in the town where a good many of the women and the wives of watermen worked and that was a wonderful thing but that has been extinct now for a number of years.

RM: We had a cannery.

EM: Oh yes we did.

JB: I heard about that.

EM: The shuckers, I am going to say worked, was predominately women.

JB: Black women right?

EM: Yes, yes I don't know of any white women that were shuckers. Now the white women, at home we picked the crabs and still do which is I think allowed. I hope it is. Anyways they still do it at home and they could pick. Like they did, they can. That has been an income for local women. I expect there's half a dozen around here that picked crabs.

RM: They could make good money at it.

EM: Yes, yes and they can sell it.

JB: Were like women groups to be a part of or like associations whatever you have?

EM: We used to have, wait a minute now. There was the order of the association I guess it was off shore. Our watermen still have a Maryland's Watermen's Association and we no longer have a women part of it but for a number of years there we did because Mrs. Florence Downing, Alice Crouch, Mr. Hilton's wife, and myself were officers. I don't know how much good we ever did. I remember one time we had our picture taken. And we used to have, now the women now, we've got out fire company where our women work. Work I mean they worked, volunteer, they are up there getting ready for something and Miss Shirley is a bookkeeper up there. Our town I know a lot of time it is more work finding something to do. You need to find a volunteer or paid job there are volunteers are always open.

RM: There is plenty of that.

JB: What did the auxiliary group either the watermen or the firemen? What do they do?

EM: Well the fire company they put on dinners, they have breakfasts. I guess feeding people I guess is the biggest thing.

RM: Fundraising.

JB: Fundraising.

RM: They do a lot of cooking.

EM: Yes they do. The day before getting ready and the day of the affair. Did you notice the big fire hall that we have as you come in town? That has to be paid for. The mortgage payments and they got a lot of good volunteers.

JB: Is that the same thing the women's watermen axillary did? Did they raise money?

EM: No, no I can't recall a whole lot that we did do with the watermen.

RM: Probably organized the dinner dances.

EM: Yea things like that.

RM: All the social events that the watermen's association would hold.

EM: And of course report to the local papers and things.

JB: What was a dinner dance like?

EM: Just what it says; a dinner and a dance.

JB: Just for fun?

EE: Oh yes to raise money.

JB: And you would bring a band down?

EM: Either that or have a local band.

RM: They were fun times.

JB: Do you still have them today?

RM: Not as much.

EM: Well tonight at 7 o'clock there is a free concert in Oyster Park being put on by Thomas Q and a partner of his and I think that would be well worth, free, that'd be well worth going to. I doubt if I can get there but take an interest and help the children. They are doing some work now with the children and the oysters aren't they?

RM: Yea they have little projects that they do. I don't know, it's nice.

EM: When we were in business we would have times when a class from the school would be brought and you saw the picture with Wilks holding a fish, I expect, trying to explain to the children about the different species and fish. It was part of an educational program during the year too, to show them how to open the oyster and different things and how the crab would slough. So there was some education to it.

JB: Did you bring your son to work with you when he was younger before he came to school?

EM: I have two kids. Linda, she did die when she was thirteen. Yes, children worked with me. And if they were around the water they had life perseveres on them for safety and a lot of times they would sit on the dock and fish. Linda had her brother trained to he put the bait on the hook and take the fish off it. She was two years older and she had him well trained. [Laughter]After losing his father I often think that God that had a plan for something else for Wilkens because he has been able to help a lot of people through his work. So I hope that we helped others. I hope what I say today hasn't been boring and that I hope I helped you a little with your thesis. Now ask anything you want and I will answer it if I want to.

JB: That sounds good. I actually had one more question because I think childcare is really interesting just as my own personal idea. When they were with you work did you at... now a days they would have a play pen in your office or have a special room that the kids would go to that is kind of like a safe place for them. Did you have the same thing? Did other women bring their children?

EM: No, no, no I didn't have time for anyone else's kids. [Laughs] All the help that I had know that the children were to be looked at.

JB: Ok.

EM: And Wilkens has slept, had many a nap on like a boat mattress or a bag of potatoes in the storage room.

RM: Right, right.

EM: And the children we sold beside the restaurant; fishing tackle, cigarettes, candy, I mean you name it and we had a lot of it. And when Linda came from school sometimes and then she'd would walk I would see her out by the canal in Chestertown and they in their old age they would learn without it. Sometimes they needed help and as far as vacations went, people didn't worry too much about vacation. We were happy as long as you were healthy, had plenty to eat and a car to go in. We would take trips once a year when the children were off of school. We would go like three or four days and we would go to Florida. The children were there and spend some time. I don't know. I think that people have to grow up learning to do a lot of things to enjoy them. If you learned to work and enjoy that, you are happy and content. Go to church on Sunday, you're happy.

JB: What church do you go to?

EM: Methodist, the one that is on the hill as you come in. Where the cemetery is, beautiful cemetery, and we get most of them in the end. [Laughter] I invite people to come to church, if someone new moves around here I'll try to stop by their house and tell them where the churches are: Catholic Church, the Baptist church, the Adventist church, three Methodist churches, Church of God. I love churches. We need them [Laughter]. There's room for a lot more.

JB: I have actually I read a history written in the 70s about that church.

EM: Wesley.

JB: That is a book that was written. That is an active place in the community wasn't it? The author mentioned a lot of Sunday schools and choirs.

EM: Oh we have one of, in this day of age there are not to many people learning to play the piano and the organ. We have a professional organist and choir director who is a Christian lady and it's her husband who comes to see me once a week and we talked today a bit, good Christian people. I don't know what your faith is but the neighbors out here are Catholic and I couldn't have any better neighbors when they're here. They are from New Jersey but here all the time. Speaking about the area, you wanted to know about women though. I was going to say prior to 1962 where you see all those boats at the Sailing Emporium that was a marsh where the men spread their nets. Where these condos are behind me, during the 60s, that was all marsh. The Crouch's owned part of it and we owned part of it and this creek behind us was a creek. It was very shallow and we had, you aren't tapping this.

JB: Ok, it's okay.

EM: We had some land here, the Crouch's had some land here but you couldn't get a boat out there if the tide was low and we tip together and raised enough money to pay Mr. Tom Elldren to dig a narrow channel up but Mr. Tom died before he got it done but he had a son that he worked with him and he said, "Well I'll stand behind Daddy's contract." So he dug it in and later I almost expected him, in the 70's 80's, when the creek was dug out and they filled in enough that over here the condos were built. There are built on marsh land and it had changed a lot with the Sailing Emporium. Then came the business after 1962. [Unintelligible]

JB: Did the church have a women's group as well that did a lot of things?

EM: Oh yes oh yes there used to be but used to died. We had Ladies' Aid and the Young Women's Association but those things have changed.

JB: What changed them?

EM: Time, you know they call it progress but I wonder if it is, so many things have changed.

RM: Yea, quickly. Rock Hall, I guess when the rock fish ban came on is when the waterfront all changed.

EM: Yes it did. When pushed Hubbard's down they pushed the heart out of Rock Hall down.

RM: Yea, that is exactly right. Rock Hall revolved around right there and the waterfront.

EM: It was started, it was great, it either started or ended at Hubbard's.

RM: Yea

EM: But now we have on the Fourth of July, we have fireworks, beautiful, you don't have much better in Baltimore and this field next door here will be covered with cars. It takes, the fireworks get over by ten o'clock and by eleven o'clock the folks who had come here to watch maybe by eleven- fifteen they can leave. So we still attract a lot of people to our town. Now I guess the stores I suppose are where most of the women work and they support their husbands on their boats and they go out hook and lining. Some of them do go out hook and lining. I got a friend who goes with her husband, Adele. They go out in a small boat and catch fish hook and lining and if they catch enough for they can sell them. Every fish has to be tagged I think.

RM: Yea

EM: Now Donna I know helps Charles with his book work.

RM: Yea

EM: With his fish coming in.

EM: Donna and Charles are Charlie's grandparents.

JB: Oh okay.

EM: Women support like I mean I did, you know, gonna ship it out to make sure the tickets gets out to the driver to take it if Wilks wasn't there and after Al came Buck Steams wouldn't let a truck be loaded unless I was there and watched them load it. And I wouldn't let Buck Steams take that truck so I did it.

JB: They knew who was boss.

EM: Well I don't, he was a faithful driver most of our help was faithful. Anyone who would come down to a restaurant at 3:30 in the morning, seven days a week they are faithful.

RM: How long was Francis there, Francis Henson?

EM: Oh my, we started twenty-two, twenty three years. We started a pension plan for our people. We had health insurance for our scheduled help it wasn't required but we did it. [Phone rings] Excuse me.

[Part 2]

EM: Of course being a church member and all I think working through the church has meant an awful lot because of the companionship and whether it was Catholic, or Methodist, or Adventist or what. The women I think are the backbone many times of the organization and our town. We had two secretaries in our town we have a town manager who is a man but the interest that the women take on the Board of Appeals there are one or two women I was on it about fifteen years. The zoning board there's a couple women on that and the women show a lot of interest in what's going on. The museum that we had in the town were women and when we had the last fundraiser, the women who were on the board made most of the food that was sold, that was served. Women get a lot of good ideas if you could just get the men to listen to us [laughter]. It's a hard job sometimes.

JB: Can't you bribe them with some with the food that you made like you want?

EM: That's a good idea [laughter]. That's an idea. You are not married yet.

JB: No

EM: That will change [laughter]. I have been very blessed.

JB: We were talking about over lunch how watermen in the community kind of used to be like the kings of the area.

RM: Yea

JB: Like they were what you wanted to be. Is that what you felt growing up when you were working with them? That the watermen were the most important people in town?

EM: Well, we were a seafood town.

JB: Right.

EM: Seafood was what our town lived on and thrived on but as the Bay has become best productive because it has been abused. Then the watermen had to, they have found jobs elsewhere many of them and we don't have the number or the devoted watermen that we used to have and our watermen many of them have had to go, they maybe from Rock Hall, but they have had to go to other ports anytime during the year now. Back in the 40s, 50s, 60s, we expected them in the fall to go to Annapolis and on to Solomon's more or less to follow the fish. In the spring to go to Betterton and up the Bay to follow the fish but things have changed so much. Now they have closed the shad fishing. I don't know what year they closed that. So that eliminates a certain number of persons who could make a living at it. So they look for something else some of our watermen work in Aberdeen. Am I not right?

RM: Yea that is correct.

EM: They work at Aberdeen and have for a number of years. So that became very influential. We did have a lady here who was having a little insurance company but she is retired. Like the drug store where they have ice cream that hires some and Walgreens hire some. We used to have a lot of people that sold them ice cream cones for 5 cents but things changed. People say why have things changed so much? I said, well people got cars and learned there were places like Dover and there was a Wal-Mart and now it is Middletown where there is a big Wal-Mart and things and women I would think are really the ones who do the budgeting for the household and most of the shopping. Teachers, our teachers...

JB: Did you do all the budging and shopping for your family?

EM: Pretty well. Here and for the business to I did all the ordering for the restaurant.

JB: You were busy over there over there at the restaurant, being the cook and the bookkeeper.

EM: I did some in between other things and after 1967 I had a sick spell I didn't do any more cooking just

arranged the help and like that. As soon as they were there and take everything I was done. I have just been blessed that I was able to do. That I just didn't know any different, just do. When I was nursing it was just do.

JB: Were you nursing before you were married? Did you give it up to before married?

EM: I was an instructor at the Nurses association in Baltimore and then I moved to Rock Hall. I had been brought up in Kent County and I moved to Rock Hall. I more or less said, I had been nursing for a side up in and they called and said that they needed help for a year or so. Never was a steady employee but I was employed steadily over time.[Laughter] I just feel like I have been so blessed with a wonderful life and the opportunities that I've had and if I tell the good Lord if I wine please forgive me we because I have no right to do so. I have just been so blessed.

JB: How did you meet your husband? Were you his nurse?

EM: No, no he was my sweetheart before I went to be a nurse. He was from Rock Hall, I went to Chestertown High School. Saturday nights in Rock Hall used to be a gathering town and we met here in the town. He was sixteen and I decided I had wanted to go to Baltimore to go to business school but in order to do business school then, my folks weren't wealthy and I would have to live with a family in Baltimore and been a babysitter or a maid and that would have been all right except I didn't have any extra encouragement for that. So then I said I am going to be a nurse and I was accepted and that was three years. Wilks and I corresponded and we saw each other different times and I was fortunate because when I graduated nursing there wasn't too much demand. I was fortunate, I got a job where I had the weekends off and I could ride the street cars that were in Baltimore and it was good and then when the... I promised to work two years when I took the job and before those two years were up the hospital I graduated from called me and they had offed me the opportunity to go to Columbia University were they would take care of my expenses and I would come back and start social work at the hospital. But I was very young so I said I am going to be married and that wouldn't be fair. So the superintendent said well if I needed a job let him know. And so I got married and came home and been happy that I was here ever since and then the war started. We had only been married a year when the war started and that wasn't good. Of course when you produce food you are put in 3A. They reached the outer limit the fine print they would take most anything. He had to go be examined, he was called to go.

RM: Food produces were the last ones called for the draft.

JB: Okay.

RM: Yeah, that is what she meant by 3A.

JB: 3A, I've heard of that before.

EM: Wilks had a hernia so the day he was to be inducted they sent him home thank God. He came home. We just everybody helped each other. We wished that our babies freeze up. We had an ice breaker coming and we haven't had to have that in ten years.

RM: We have had some mild winters here recently.

JB: Well you were saying the other day that didn't you go up there and try and break ice.

RM: I was telling her. Carl Stanger and lit took us five hours to get from like Hubbard's to the mouth of the jetties one day.

EM: Sure.

RM: Trying to break out of here.

EM: I know when we were first married, we lived in, where Rose Beckman lives, that was our first home and it wasn't anything to stop me from seeing out in the Bay from the attic window and I know I stood up there saw our men on the sides of the boat with tongs breaking the ice so they could get to it and that's why they would go to first Annapolis and then as it got worse to Solomon's where it didn't get that bad and the fish were there too. I've been to Calvert County museum it has been a number of years. I would like to see Solomon's again.

JB: Speaking of the museum. Who started the museums here in town?

EM: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, He was school teacher, she was a school teacher and their daughter she is a couple years older than Wilkens. She was a doctor and worked in research I think but died in the past two years I think and the Johnson's also died. Did you get to go to the museum?

JB: I am actually going tomorrow.

EM: Well it is well worth your time. You'll see a picture of Wilks there on the wall, that doesn't make it worth your time any more than the other things and Coke Hubbard made a miniature pound net.

RM: She has seen that.

JB: Yea

EM: They borrowed it down in St. Michaels there for a while. We have a good museum I do not act as a docent because you never know when you are this old what to do or not do but I'm on the board and we have our meeting Thursday. We have our meeting once a month. We have a lot to be proud in our museum which is at the municipal building. Tolchester Revisited is also considered one of our museums and that was Tolchester was an amusement park.

JB: Sure

EM: And then there's another watermen's museum that's connected to the Haven Harbor and you get the key from Haven Harbor you get to go in but they don't have docents to take care so there is there are no docents down there. Just take the key in and take the key back.

JB: Mhm

EM: But we have a lot to be thankful for here in Rock Hall. People care about our town.

JB: What was it like here in town during World War II when 'cause the gentlemen were still here? Was there any back lash from other communities?

EM: Well we had a minute men association. I know Wilks bought a 30-30 rifle. Many people had them just in case you might need it. And they would have gatherings it's hard to see our boys have to go and I am sure you don't remember but I think often about the Ekeroad boy he lived across from Hubbard's sort of at an angle and he had to go. He was killed. And we, the Ashley boy was killed. We lost some people in that from the Chestertown high school. I lost classmates. Today I was looking at the class picture of one of the boys Robert Hooks and he was married to the Elizan girl. I look at that picture today I tried to pick out just one of them that was killed. The last time I saw him I was taking a course at John Hopkins University at night and he was taking the same course and that's the last time I saw him. We went to high school and elementary school together but we had a lot of classmates in that war that we lost [unintelligible]. One time we had a plaque in our church of those that had served. I don't know where it is now around the church but it was rough, yea.

JB: Mhm. Was there a big celebration when they all came home at the end?

EM: I can't say there was when it was over. It was over in August of '45 wasn't it?

JB: That would make sense.

EM: Linda Hubbard had died. She died on the 5th of July. It was a bad year so we were not too much for joining the celebration. We are just blessed. Like my brother says we have drugs, yes. We have alcoholics, yes. We have problems, yes. People don't get along sometimes yes but you know that somebody will help. Right now we have a big problem darn Mr. Witman doesn't want to say the Lord's Prayer at the town meetings.

RM: He has been stirring up some stuff hasn't he?

EM: That man needs to go back to where he came from with a one way ticket and he's from Boston.

RM: He is not going to quit and he's a one man band. He is just determined to inflict his way on everyone. I think he is going to give Bush Gregs a heart attack.

EM: Well me too. His was running council to put signs in the field and I came down the road and I saw the sign. They had that number on there and I promptly called that number kindly remove those signs before sundown. I thought it was public property. I said it is not public property and I do not agree. So remove the signs. Which he did but he is not part of us. He doesn't belong here. I am going to say we're a faith based community. We might not all go to church and shout hallelujahs but the watermen have got to be faith based or they couldn't be watermen. They got to feel like God is going to take care of them and go out there and protect them from the storms and help them make a living. If they didn't feel that way they better find something else to do. So I feel very much that we are a faith based community. A community that will stick together as much as they can. We got some people that moved in that don't belong but most of the people that I have any dealings with I am glad to call my friends and neighbors and the man who lived behind me yesterday I looked out he was spraying the driveway for me again with Round-up. The day before he came over because I didn't have my identification out on my gatepost. Three times and three times and then tore off kids or vandals or something. I had one posted on the house but there was a false alarm for the ambulance to come here end of June. Thank God it was a false alarm and its ambulance saw it and was backing up trying to see where this number was and I said that's not fair to the ambulance people. So Brian Jones ordered me it, aint so pretty but anyways it got my number on it. Brian came over on a four by four and planted that for me. So Wilkson said people ask him, where is your mother? She lives in Rock Hall. "Is she in assisted living?" He said "Well I would say so." He says, "She lives by herself and a different one assists her with whatever she needs. Well I guess she has assisted living. She has great neighbors." Ann Lee Thomas would jump through a hoop to help me if she could. Donna is very faithful. So I am very blessed. We have a good bank.

One time I was on the way home from Ocean City and my sister was a nursing home for therapy at that time down outside of Salisbury. And Wilkens had driven her almost to that place and I had taken the car and gone in there with her. Before I got to that nursing home I was sick. I mean I upchucked I was so sick. I ran there and laid down on the couch for a while. I was sick I laid down in the room. I was so sick I knew I couldn't drive. I didn't know what to do. There was no phone booth. There was no phone booth. I had never had a phone and I called people back and they accepted them. At that time I talked to Donna. Somebody to get down here, somebody to take me home and somebody to drive my car and it wasn't two hours and they were there and that's the kind of place people we are. We all want to help each other. Now these folks over here, the Bowdon's, where Hubbard's was, they're nice people.

RM: Are they?

EM: Yes. I'll be honest with you I'm not a pisser I don't run in and out of people's house. People have enough to take pissers but she'll call me sometimes see if I need a ride to go to town meetings. Donna's been taking me the last two or three meetings we've had because we are interested in keeping this prayer in town meetings. Our town starts and ends in a prayer and Pledge of Alliance and this man we are speaking

about don't want us to do that anymore. He never comes to the meetings so I don't know what difference it'll make to him.

RM: He is making a stink about it.

EM: He is someone I think from down on the water.

RM: Oh is it?

EM: And they don't come to the meetings except to cause trouble. They ought to stay home. And I can tell him too.

JB: Good, good. Well thank you so much.

EM: Well I hope I had said anything that's help to you I am glad to do it because when you help people help them understand that by helping others you have helped ourselves and maybe help make the world a little better place for others. That's what I think we are put here for and I hope the Lord lets me stay ill can keep my mind and my health. I don't mind staying around.

JB: You are in a great area here. Rock Hall is one in a million.

EM: I love it, I love it I wouldn't want to be other places now. Wilkson's wife's family after they moved to New York and then they moved to Virginia Beach. Her family moved from Upton down there but I think I belong here.