

OH 53 s1

Q: How old were you when you... how old are you now?

ALFRED CHESTER: [00:00:05] Seventy-nine.

Q: Seventy-nine. So you were born in...

AC: [00:00:08] 1909.

Q: 1909.

AC: [00:00:11] Mm-hmm.

Q: Yeah. So you must be the longest... You must be one of the few Black residents, older Black residents born in this town still here.

AC: [00:00:22] Well, there's not too many.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:00:24] Not too many.

Q: Not too many now.

AC: [00:00:25] There might be a few women, working [?] women, not too many.

Q: Not too many men. Yeah. Where were you born? I was interested.

AC: [00:00:32] Right here.

Q: In this house?

AC: [00:00:33] No. Church Neck.

Q: Church Neck.

AC: [00:00:36] Mm-hmm. Now, that's something I'd like to clear up. If I had got into the commission, I would have [unclear]. Railroad Avenue is three different routes.

Q: Yeah, because it never used to be Railroad Avenue at one time.

AC: [00:00:51] There's a Railroad Avenue here. Yeah. But you go down here to the end of these houses, and you in Church Neck. You go across Columbus Street and you in Cherry Street. All on one stretch. That's confusing to a stranger.

Q: When did they change that?

AC: [00:01:09] [unclear] been all my life.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:01:11] Yeah. But my golly, you know, that's confusing, man. You know... Of course, I put up a lot of work. I'm not bragging. But it was hard work, but see... I'll start with the sewer system. They hemming and hawing, hemming and hawing [?] I guess five, six years ago [unclear]. Well, did you know Gene Rivers [?]?

Q: Mm-hmm.

AC: [00:01:36] Yeah. Well, he and I were just like that. My birthday was the 28th, his the 29th of October [?]. We call ourselves nuts. [laughter] So I used to go down [unclear]. We never had a social call [?]. It was always an argument,

so... but about the sewer system. Well, he told me, "Well, some of my big taxpayers are... they don't want the sewer system." I said, "What you mean big taxpayers?" [unclear] I said, "Well, they don't pay for no more than what they got, and that's what I do. I pay for what I got. I pay for what I own. I mean, I don't see no difference there." If you got a thousand dollars property [?] and you paying all that and I have 500, well, I'm still paying my 500 [unclear]. So... Oh, I... Oh, we had it that day. He was... I guess he was around February, first part of February because he was getting ready to go to Florida and, well, jumped around. I jumped around [unclear] jumped around like a little [unclear]. He said, "Well, I'm going to tell you this. I'm going to Florida, and when I come back, I'm going to make a decision." He was chairman [unclear]. I tell you what [unclear]. See, people don't think the average Black man in the country has got some intuitions, and he's got some ideas that haven't been exposed [unclear]. So I said, "Gene." I said, "Your daughter would be proud [unclear] for life that her father was chairman of the commission of St. Michaels when the sewer system went in." I could see him melt. I could see him melt. So cut it off, and he went on to Florida. Came back. Got on it too.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:03:41] Yes, sir. Got right on it.

Q: Yeah. [both speaking-unclear]

AC: [00:03:45] Him and a lot of other men, but it was five years more.

Q: You picked the right angle to get him.

AC: [00:03:49] Mm-hmm. Yeah. But, I mean, I was... I think I was right. What [unclear] with all these people around here, man, [unclear] things underground. Yeah. [unclear] things from pollution of the air and these open toilets. What they call it? [unclear] call it outdoor plumbing.

Q: Outdoor plumbing. Yeah, I've heard of that.

AC: [00:04:16] Outdoor plumbing. So, I mean, this is... I mean, it was starting, so [unclear] from that, I mean. [unclear]

Q: Well, you were... You said you were born out there in Church Neck.

AC: [00:04:30] Mm-hmm.

Q: Did you go to school here at St. Michaels?

AC: [00:04:32] Yeah. Of course, they didn't have a high school class out in Easton. I drove a Model T for three years.

Q: Is that right? To Easton?

AC: [00:04:41] School. Yeah.

Q: What did you do when you left school?

AC: [00:04:45] Well, I tried to go to college? I went to Hampton. That was '28 [unclear] but I did. I had to come home. The only way I had... The only thing I had to depend on was from my family efforts, and most of that was shucking the oysters. And oysters were 20 cents a gallon. They were talking about cutting it to 15.

Q: Mm. Did you work in here in the packing plants here in St. Michael?

AC: [00:05:14] No, no, never did. Uh-uh.

Q: Where did you work when you were shucking oysters, then?

AC: [00:05:18] Me?

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:05:19] No, not me. My people.

Q: Oh, your...

AC: [00:05:21] [both speaking-unclear] Family. No, no.

Q: Your family.

AC: [00:05:23] I never did work in seafood. See, I tell you, I guess I'm kind of old [unclear] But if I can't see sense in the thing I just don't have [unclear]. You just don't tell me, "Sorry, you," you know? Go ahead. Don't tell me sorry for me.

Q: For you.

AC: [00:05:41] I never could see it. See, I couldn't... How much time I got?

Q: I got time. Don't worry.

AC: [00:05:47] See, I couldn't see where you could make a decent living on occupation where in the first place you got to wait for the season. Next thing, you got to wait for a good day. And the next thing, you got to wait on fluctuating prices. I said, "I can't see that."

Q: Sure. You're subject to lot of different things.

AC: [00:06:10] I barbered 31 years.

Q: Did you?

AC: [00:06:12] Yeah. Across the street there and over the hill [?]. This was a barbershop when I first moved here.

Q: Where was the barbershop over there?

AC: [00:06:18] It was on the other side of the hall [?]. It was a one-story building, two rooms on the other side of the hall.

Q: What was this... not to change the subject. But the bar here, before it became a bar, was that a private home?

AC: [00:06:35] No. It's been a hall all my time. It's always been a hall, [unclear] hall.

Q: I mean the bar next to it. Was that...

AC: [00:06:44] The bar. When I first [unclear] it was a double house.

Q: Was it?

AC: [00:06:50] Yeah. It was a double house and [unclear] they called them shoe cobblers. Mend shoes, call them shoe cobblers. Well, he used to do shoe cobbling in one part of it, but that was a double home.

Q: Yeah. I mean, there was another piece on it, added on?

AC: [00:07:09] No, no, no, no, no, no. It was [unclear].

Q: [unclear]

AC: [00:07:16] The whole thing was... like where this entrance is to Sunset Bar. It looked [?] right over the bar straight down. It was a separate building. And this lot was vacant for years over where this is. And... So then they started then to build a garage there, two-car garage. That was owned by Coulbourne [unclear] Jewett [?].

Q: Yeah. I was going to ask you about the [unclear].

AC: [00:07:51] Well, Jewett bought a good big property, and that was some of it, and that's where he kept his car there in that garage. Now [unclear] But, [unclear] lived in there for years. [unclear] house out of it, and he lived there for years, and it's [unclear] family lives in now. They bought it, and they did all this. The house over there didn't belong to it, but they included it [unclear].

Q: I see. Hmm. Is that where... that's the same Webb [?] family? We have the... You know the building that's now

the museum... the white building that's now the museum store, is that the same family?

AC: [00:08:40] Same family. Yeah.

Q: Oh, I didn't know that.

AC: [00:08:42] I bet you a million dollars [unclear] four years ago. I bet [unclear] million dollars [unclear].

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:08:56] [unclear] He was [unclear] stays over here.

Q: Yeah. So I guess it wasn't the same Webb family that owned that house down there by the museum.

AC: [00:09:10] Oh, yeah. See, wasn't nobody who owned the house down there. Not... I mean not Black Webbs.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

AC: [00:09:15] [both speaking-unclear]

Q: Might have been white.

AC: [00:09:16] But I don't know of any place... I... Of course, I don't go down [unclear]. I used to go down there when I was younger. Not much now. But this is [unclear]. They only ever [unclear] one time.

Q: This is a Black family?

AC: [00:09:34] Yeah.

Q: The Black Webbs. Yeah.

AC: [00:09:35] Yeah.

Q: You mentioned about the... Coulbourne, Mr. Coulbourne and Jewett, that company. You obviously knew both of the...

AC: [00:09:46] Yeah.

Q: ...families, because the Jewetts lived down...

AC: [00:09:48] Down here.

Q: ...here, didn't they? Mrs. Jewett died only a couple years ago, I think, didn't she?

AC: [00:09:52] Well, it was more than that. Oh. Well, yeah, one Jewett. That was Elwood's wife.

Q: Elwood's wife. Yeah, yeah.

AC: [00:09:57] Yeah. That was the old Jewett's son, and the son's wife.

Q: Son's wife, yeah.

AC: [00:10:02] Yeah.

Q: Now, the Coulbournes lived...

AC: [00:10:06] In the house. They moved down the museum.

Q: Down the museum, right?

AC: [00:10:09] [unclear] they moved down there.

Q: Yeah. No, they lived there in that house... They didn't live up in this part of town at any time, did they?

AC: [00:10:17] Oh, yes. Not this [unclear] per se. They lived right there where you call Hells Crossing.

Q: They did live in Hells Crossing?

AC: [00:10:24] Yeah, around the corner [unclear].

Q: [unclear]

AC: [00:10:29] [unclear]

Q: No. What about the house [unclear]...

AC: [00:10:31] Diagonal across [both speaking-unclear].

Q: Diagonally across. Okay.

AC: [00:10:34] Yeah, yeah. That was a single resident, but after he got rid of it...

Q: Made it into a...

AC: [00:10:41] ...remodeled it and made it double housing.

Q: I used to live in that little one for a while. Rented it on the left-hand side. Yeah. Yeah. I didn't know that Mr.... the Coulbournes lived there.

AC: [00:10:51] Yeah. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Q: I just brought a picture down of... I know you've seen this picture before, the old picture of Hells Crossing there.

AC: [00:11:03] Oh, yeah. Mr. Ira [?].

Q: See Ira's house there on the corner before they moved it back.

AC: [00:11:07] [unclear]

Q: Who lived next...

AC: [00:11:10] [both speaking-unclear]

Q: George [unclear]. He lived next to Ira.

AC: [00:11:14] Yeah. [unclear]

Q: And then the two houses are joined together now.

AC: [00:11:20] Well... Yeah. Well, see, that's Webb, you know?

Q: Was it?

AC: [00:11:24] It's a young Webb now. He remodeled that place, and oh he's going to [unclear].

Q: Okay. He lives in that place now that they put together. Yeah.

AC: [00:11:30] Yeah. Yeah. Whatever they did... I don't like what all they did do to it, but that's where [unclear] place is. Coulbourne was over in this corner [both speaking-unclear].

Q: Yeah. Because then the Coulbourne Street goes down.

AC: [00:11:43] Yeah. Mm-hmm. That's right.

Q: How about where Ms. Marshall lives now? Who is... You know who's living there before?

AC: [00:11:50] Well, it's always been rented since I've known her. I don't know who owns it. I don't know who owns it now.

Q: I don't know. I've heard the name, but I... doesn't ring any bells.

AC: [00:12:00] I don't know who. But...

Q: Do you remember the house being moved back? I guess you probably do. The...

AC: [00:12:09] That house?

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:12:10] Yeah, it was moved back right out on the corner.

Q: Round the corner.

AC: [00:12:14] Mm-hmm.

Q: I think Ira said he... they moved it back because they had a number of accidents on the corner there.

AC: [00:12:19] I guess so because [unclear].

Q: Yeah, yeah. And they moved the chimney because... The chimney's on the other side of the house, but when they moved it, they must have moved the chimney and put it on the other side, this side.

AC: [00:12:30] I think so. I don't remember about the chimney, but I know they moved the house. Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:12:37] Yeah. Yeah. But you know what's amazing? The equipment they use now to move a house, because back in those days, they moved it with horse and mule.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember seeing them moving that way or...

AC: [00:12:53] Sure. [unclear] Yeah. Pull boats up down at the [unclear] pull them up with a horse.

Q: That's on...

AC: [00:13:04] [unclear]

Q: Old man Colbie's were... Old man Coulbourne.

AC: [00:13:07] Yeah. It was only years ago.

Q: Yeah, yeah.

AC: [00:13:12] Mm-hmm.

Q: Well, speaking of moving houses... I know you've mentioned this when I met you last year. We talked about the houses where the Acme [?] is now.

AC: [00:13:23] Mm-hmm.

Q: And one was moved up...

AC: [00:13:27] Over here.

Q: ...the avenue, right? Yeah.

AC: [00:13:28] Right across there. [unclear] other side the water tank. You can't see from here now. It's on the other side of the water tank.

Q: How'd they move that one?

AC: [00:13:38] Moved it with a horse.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:13:40] Yeah. They had a [unclear] horse walked around, around like that. It'd walk right up.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:13:48] Yeah. That's how you pulled the boats down there.

Q: Yeah. But, see... But that was... Those houses must have been moved, what, in the... That house must have been moved in the '50s...

AC: [00:13:57] This one?

Q: ...when they built the Acme.

AC: [00:13:59] Yeah. They moved [unclear].

Q: But they moved it with a horse, huh?

AC: [00:14:05] Yeah.

Q: I'll be damned.

AC: [00:14:06] Mm-hmm. See, they couldn't get the equipment up there. [unclear] trucks, you know, the [unclear] put them up there. Yeah, they moved with horse.

Q: Huh. There was a group of houses, I know, along where the Acme is, but they... The others were torn down. This was the only one that was moved, do you know?

AC: [00:14:28] Yeah, that's the only one. That's the only one. That was P.W. Harrison [unclear].

Q: That's right. Yeah.

AC: [00:14:36] They used to make the best ice cream on Eastern Shore.

Q: I've heard that from a number of people. Yeah.

AC: [00:14:40] [unclear] But see...

Q: That was his house that they moved to?

AC: [00:14:43] Mm-hmm. [unclear] But, see, I can't understand why it's a good thing doing like that years ago. I mean... Of course, I mean [unclear] but Jim [?] [unclear] down there. He worked for the last, I guess, 20 years, and he didn't know how to make an ice cream cone.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:15:10] Yeah. See? I mean, that don't make sense to me.

Q: Yeah. Should have learned the business while he's there.

AC: [00:15:14] Right. I mean, hazard a guess 50, 60 years older than him, you know? He... The chances are that he's outlive him. But man, that was good ice cream.

Q: Yeah. I've heard that.

AC: [00:15:26] And I don't know. I think that ice cream was held its own now, all down the shore and even further than that now. What did you do? You'd get delivered ice cream Sunday from [unclear].

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:15:46] Put a horse and [unclear] what they call a Jim wagon [?]. It was like a carriage, but it had a body [?] something like a pickup truck. They called it a Jim wagon, and they were...

Q: All over.

AC: [00:15:58] Now... Because [unclear] do now, but this time in the year, January, February... Most times, they'd be cutting ice out of ponds, haul it in there, put the ice... They had ice in [unclear] all of us.

Q: Hmm. Where was the icehouse anyway?

AC: [00:16:18] Right back here with... part of this parking lot [unclear].

Q: Parking lot. Yeah.

AC: [00:16:22] Yeah. See?

Q: Was the other one, though, by Mr. Gillis for a while?

AC: [00:16:26] Not that I... Oh, no. You talking about the icehouse.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:16:30] No, the icehouse was down here.

Q: Down here?

AC: [00:16:32] Yeah, two block... Well, second block down.

Q: Yeah, the big one, I guess, then.

AC: [00:16:36] Yeah.

Q: Yeah. But this one was [unclear]...

AC: [00:16:38] See, that's just a little ice box he had inside the building.

Q: For his ice cream business.

AC: [00:16:46] For his... For the ice cream [unclear].

Q: Oh, okay.

AC: [00:16:49] Yeah.

Q: He used to cut the ice from the pond [both speaking-unclear].

AC: [00:16:51] Go down to the pond this time because, you know, nice and cold. Yeah. But then they go down there. They be down there all day cutting ice, cutting ice. Yeah. Haul it in. Well, see, a lot of the farms had icehouses.

Mm-hmm. I don't know if that one is still... There's two of them. Last two that I know of down Church Neck, but I don't know if they're still there or not. See, everybody moves in, comes in, they got to make changes. Yeah. Everybody...

Q: They're always unsatisfied with something. Yeah.

AC: [00:17:23] Yeah. So I don't know if they still [unclear]. Those days, I could walk on that farm down there and hunt whatever you want, but you better not put your foot down [?]. Yeah.

Q: I remember you said you remember the horse trough in the pub in front of the church.

AC: [00:17:42] Oh, sure. [unclear]

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:17:45] Sure. [unclear] had a big cement trough there and a hitching rack all the way down to where the [unclear].

Q: [unclear] Yeah.

AC: [00:17:55] Yeah. And so many people came here and hitch their horses there, [unclear] place to hitch 'em.

Q: I think a lot of people used to leave them in this... used to be like a stable thing.

AC: [00:18:06] That was here.

Q: Right over here.

AC: [00:18:07] That was Porter's Alley here where they come through in the parking lot now. Yeah. Well, see, there wasn't room enough to pass in that alley. Come in or you go out of it. There wasn't room enough to pass. And that was a livery stable. They had ponies. Bunch of them burned up there. Ponies and horses burned up in the fire. Yeah.

Q: Is that what destroyed the livery stable?

AC: [00:18:37] Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Q: Huh. I didn't know about that. When was that? Must have been a while now.

AC: [00:18:44] Oh, yes. That was around 1914, '15.

Q: Oh, is that right? That long ago. Wow.

AC: [00:18:53] Yeah. [unclear] Yeah. And see... Of course, I was pretty young, but they hauled a good bit of the stuff, the trash down Church Neck off of [unclear] farm in front of those houses [unclear] houses off on this left side. That's where they put the...

Q: Trash.

AC: [00:19:14] ...trash.

Q: You've seen this picture, and I don't know if you know the name. I think this was a man who went around and... at night...

AC: [00:19:25] Oh.

Q: ...with a car.

AC: [00:19:27] I think that's Bob Brown.

Q: Bob Brown?

AC: [00:19:30] Yeah, Robert Brown. See, he was a... He didn't have produce coming in like we do now. Of course, he knew that. Well, he had... He had for most of the produce around this area in season. Yeah. And he wore boots most times, so that's what I... Yeah. I think I was [unclear] boots.

Q: Robert Brown. Yeah.

AC: [00:19:56] Yeah, because he wore boots most of the time.

Q: Yeah. So he'd just go around from house to house selling produce, fresh produce.

AC: [00:20:02] He'd go down that way, and then he'd clean their toilets. Yeah. [unclear]

Q: I put a note on the back because I didn't... we didn't know his name.

AC: [00:20:14] Yeah, Robert Brown.

Q: Robert Brown. Okay. Hmm.

AC: [00:20:23] Well, [unclear] what they call Chester Park?
[unclear]

Q: No.

AC: [00:20:29] Well, it's about... I don't know what it is.
[unclear] now. About 70 acres there. Well, he owned all

that. That's where he kept the produce. [unclear] corn or something like that but all the produce. Chester Park. My uncle bought that. That's where it got its name, Chester Park.

Q: Oh, is that right? Okay. Hmm. [pause] Okay. There's... Let's see. A couple other... These are all quite old pictures. I don't know whether you're going to... This is apparently Fannie Lee [?] on the right. Does that ring any bells with you?

AC: [00:21:22] No.

Q: Fannie Lee.

AC: [00:21:25] Not now. Maybe it did. I don't...

Q: She would have been...

AC: [00:21:31] I can't place it now.

Q: Yeah, that's all right. See what else we got. I thought this fella was perhaps a relation of yours or your wife's. We thought this was Andrew Barnett. [pause]

AC: [00:21:52] [unclear] [pause]

Q: Outside one of the shucking houses down in the Pointe.

AC: [00:22:06] I... [pause] Don't think it's [unclear]. This had to be taken a long time ago.

Q: Oh, yeah, it was.

AC: [00:22:22] He was a pretty young man.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:22:24] Yeah.

Q: Probably was taken around the turn of the century.

AC: [00:22:26] Yeah, long time. I don't know.

Q: Do you remember Andrew Barnett?

AC: [00:22:31] Sure. Certainly. My God. And...

Q: Did he live down near Hells Crossing?

AC: [00:22:40] Yeah. He lived down from Ms. Marshall [unclear]
and down from Ms. Marshall.

Q: One of the two houses that was joined together down there
too.

AC: [00:22:47] I forgot who's bungalow kind of house there.
Yeah. [laughter] Oh, boy.

Q: [pause] I think you've seen this one before. We don't know
who that is or that house even.

AC: [00:23:09] No, but this is when we had church there, wasn't
it?

Q: Yeah, yeah.

AC: [00:23:12] And... See, after you separated these two
buildings, you know, like that, I couldn't... I thought I
recognized the picket fence, but not in this photo.

Q: Yeah. It was near the Methodist church, somewhere near
there within maybe a couple blocks of it.

AC: [00:23:32] I can't put that together.

Q: Cliff Dehope [?] said it might be... have been Sin Berry [?].

AC: [00:23:44] Well, I don't know.

Q: Did you know him?

AC: [00:23:46] No. I've heard the name, but I didn't know him. The name Sin Berry?

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:23:54] [laughs] I've heard of it [unclear]. Yeah. That reached a little too far for me.

Q: Yeah. Going back a little bit too far, I think.

AC: [00:24:02] Yeah.

Q: Yeah. Well, [unclear]. I always take them around just in case somebody recognizes them.

AC: [00:24:09] Well, yes. [unclear]

Q: No, no. So...

AC: [00:24:17] Yeah.

Q: Let's see. I got a couple questions for you.

AC: [00:24:21] What else you got up your sleeve?

Q: Up my sleeve. Coulbourne, Jewett. I have a question for you, Mr. Chester. Do you remember any of the boat builders in town being... any Black boat builders?

AC: [00:24:39] Black boat builders?

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:24:42] No, not per se. No. Now, it was a man who used to build boats, but he was... At that time, he was living in Bellevue, and of course, that's where his home was, but he had lived down here while he built a boat. He'd build you a boat [unclear] whatever you wanted.

Q: What was his name?

AC: [00:25:03] Frank Tilghman[?].

Q: Frank Tilghman.

AC: [00:25:05] Yeah.

Q: He was a Black...

AC: [00:25:06] Mm-hmm. [unclear] build anything. Now, he was a carver [?] [unclear]. Well, he... well, not this [unclear] but before he put the siding on outside, he did most of all this. See, this is the original, this part here. Just like this house over here [both speaking-unclear]. Mm-hmm. This part. After I bought it, I put the other part on, and all the rest of it. And this other man build it, Frank Tilghman.

Q: Frank Tilghman.

AC: [00:25:36] Yeah. He built homes and boats, but he wasn't just, say, in the boat business, you know? No.

Q: He lived down in Bellevue, though.

AC: [00:25:43] Yeah. His home was Bellevue.

Q: Okay.

AC: [00:25:50] Did anybody ever tell you... Now, let me think what was that man's first name. Jones. He was a boat builder.

Q: Yeah. He lived... He had a shop right down.

AC: [00:26:02] Right there on the corner of Mill Street and Talbot Street.

Q: Talbot Street. Yeah. Do you remember his shop?

AC: [00:26:07] Yeah. I can't think of his first name.

Q: Was it Syd Jones?

AC: [00:26:13] No. I can't...

Q: I know. I've got it somewhere.

AC: [00:26:17] I can't think of his first name. I don't know his name.

Q: You ever go into his shop when [both speaking-unclear]?

AC: [00:26:25] Oh, yeah, sure. Yeah. He built some very nice boats. Mm-hmm. That's about all he did in his latter days, he'd work on water. But that's a lot of days he's been on the...

Q: He used to have to put his boats on a cart or something, take them down to the water, didn't he?

AC: [00:26:45] Oh, yeah, sure. [unclear] on a cart chassis. You know? Take the body off, use the whole...

Q: Use the cart chassis.

AC: [00:26:57] Yeah.

Q: But they... How'd they pull them or push them?

AC: [00:27:00] A team of horse.

Q: The horse?

AC: [00:27:01] Yeah. Mm-hmm. [unclear] See, down here at Honeymoon Bridge... When I first [unclear] down there, you could step on a boat from the foot of Cherry Street and go right down to Navy Point and never have to jump.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:27:23] Just walk.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:27:24] Boat to boat.

Q: Solid boats.

AC: [00:27:25] That's right. Mm-hmm. So many boats was down there. Yeah.

Q: You would never... You ever go out in the water yourself or...

AC: [00:27:37] Oh, my Lord, yeah, but I never worked on one. I never worked on one, but I used to go out there. And when I came out of service, that was one of my best times because I was nervous and crazy. I used to go out three or four o'clock in the morning. Had a little skiff with [unclear] I used to catch them all over. We'd catch some fish out there. [unclear] I told everyone [unclear] half past three, four o'clock [unclear]. And I was only in six

to eight foot of water. And I'd cast out there, boom!
See, the hardheads was scarce then. And I said, "The
hardheads got to be [unclear]." And I didn't use it. I
didn't put light on it. See, I learned that years ago. If
you put a light on, gotta keep it on [?]. But if you don't
put it on, you can do pretty good. So I didn't put the
light on. Every time [unclear] just that quick [unclear].
So later on... I guess a little later I found a... It
wasn't a hardhead because I didn't hear him croaking, but
it was a big perch, perch that big. Biggest perch I ever
saw. And... Well, I [unclear] now something else. And if
you throw more than 15 feet off of that particular spot,
you wouldn't get a new one.

Q: I'll be damned [?].

AC: [00:29:13] You wouldn't get a new one. But just the right
bait, throw it in the same spot, [claps].

Q: How many did you come home with?

AC: [00:29:19] Oh, my God. I had more than I could lift.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:29:23] Yeah.

Q: Wow.

AC: [00:29:24] Yeah, more than I could lift. I had to go down
the car and get the basket. I couldn't bring them up
there.

Q: Yeah. Those were the days, huh?

AC: [00:29:34] I used to do that [unclear]. It was a fish. I never did know the real name of it. I don't think that was the name, what they called it, because [unclear]. Called a tint [?].

Q: T-I... T-E-N-T?

AC: [00:29:48] I don't know. I don't know.

Q: Tent?

AC: [00:29:50] I don't remember seeing it. It was [unclear], I think, but that's what they called it. I don't know how they spelled it, but [unclear]. But, boy, he was a nice [unclear] a peach basket full before six o'clock right down by the creek [?], right down there. [unclear]

Q: Yeah. It sounds like it.

AC: [00:30:21] Right out there... You know the little [unclear] off Church Neck Road?

Q: Uh-huh.

AC: [00:30:27] Because he... That was open there through the Broadway [?] down there. If you can go back and picture the automobile, other transportation, then you got boat or horse and buggy. Well, I'll say 45, 50 percent of people from [unclear] used to come over there.

Q: That's how you arrived.

AC: [00:30:56] Saturday afternoon boats, come over there, come in town, [unclear] on his back, and goes back down there.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:31:04] Yes, indeed.

Q: I'll be damned.

AC: [00:31:06] Yeah. Yes, sir. And... See, and they used to bring their crabs over there. Yeah. Crab. And the old man lived out on the river there, those first group of housing [unclear] it was the third house. One, two... No, fourth house. Anyway, he a horse and cart [?] he used to haul the crabs from down there down to Coulbourne and Jewett.

Q: Coulbourne and Jewett. Yeah.

AC: [00:31:33] Mm-hmm.

Q: Mm. They had a pretty big business, didn't they, Coulbourne and Jewett?

AC: [00:31:39] It was largest on the shore.

Q: On the shore. Yeah.

AC: [00:31:41] [unclear] Would kill them [?] when people got to cook it. You know, they [unclear] they sent... I forget how many box cars, marshals [?] to St. Louis. They'd been sitting on that for years. And they got [unclear]. You know, you... I forget [unclear] I remembered [everybody's] box cars [unclear].

Q: There was quite a lot. Did you ever go down to... Well, you must have gone down to Navy Point quite a bit...

AC: [00:32:16] Who?

Q: ...when the seafood companies were still operating down there.

AC: [00:32:18] Oh, yeah. Well, see, you had to... You at work. They had three companies operating down there.

Q: Yeah. Coulbourne and Jewett, St. Michaels Packing Company.

AC: [00:32:30] Mm-hmm.

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AC: [00:00:00] [unclear] and [unclear]...

Q: St. Michaels.

AC: [00:00:07] ...Packing Company [unclear] and grew tomatoes and ketchup. Mm-hmm. And he was the head of [unclear] down there. You've seen it down there? You've seen what I'm talking about? This was end of the last year, I guess. [unclear] do it. The [unclear] would be crowded [unclear] Saturday afternoon [unclear] mushrooms.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:00:41] But, see, but no mushrooms were [unclear].

Q: I know.

AC: [00:00:45] [laughs] And I don't know [unclear].

Q: It's interesting you call them Bohemians. I've heard that term used before. Yeah, yeah.

AC: [00:00:51] That's what they called them. Of course, a lot of people called them bullheads [?]. Mm-hmm.

Q: Well, most of the workers down in the packing, the shucking houses, they were Black, though, for the most part?

AC: [00:01:04] Well, yes. [unclear], and Coulbourne and Jewett yes. But St. Michaels Packing Company, there were a lot of those Bohemians. And they shucked the raw oyster and... Well, they had good amount of Blacks too. They had good amount of Blacks too. And Coulbourne and Jewett wouldn't start shucking until they had a hundred shuckers.

Q: Is that right? They used mostly local people, or did they bring in people from outside?

AC: [00:01:31] Well, they had... Well, I think in early years they used mostly corn [?] people. But, you know, after that dividing up [unclear] livelihoods. Then they started getting people from down... Well, it started from Wicomico County outside of Salisbury down to Tipton [?].

Q: Yeah, that's where they were from.

AC: [00:01:57] Then on down Eastern Shore Virginia.

Q: Yeah. Hmm. Is that because there just wasn't enough people around here to...

AC: [00:02:04] Wasn't enough to do it. No. And [unclear]. See, tomatoes is something you got to have at the right time, and these people around here... If you don't [unclear] ball game or something going on Saturday, they [unclear] so then they started getting people [unclear] you know, other people. And they started then from... people from further down south. Because they would work, but St. Michaels [unclear] at work.

Q: Ask you a question. Another photograph here of Mill Street.

AC: [00:03:04] Mm-hmm. [both speaking-unclear]

Q: I think you've seen that one too looking up Mill Street towards Talbot Street. A number of those houses are no longer there.

AC: [00:03:17] Oh, most all these are gone. About all of them gone in that block.

Q: Who lived in the... You must have known some of those people lived down that way.

AC: [00:03:25] Oh, see, this house here on the corner, that's where Jones lived. Remember the boat builder?

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:03:31] That was his home.

Q: Which house was that?

AC: [00:03:33] [unclear]

Q: Oh, that's where he lived

AC: [00:03:36] Mm-hmm. Yeah. [unclear] And going back this way. See?

Q: This is the house they moved to St. Mary's Square.

AC: [00:03:45] Yeah.

Q: That was there.

AC: [00:03:45] That's it. Mm-hmm. That's it. Yeah.

Q: Oh, okay. I didn't know where Jones had lived.

AC: [00:03:51] Yeah. [unclear] first name. Virgil [?] was his name. Virgil [unclear].

Q: Yeah. Hmm.

AC: [00:04:04] [unclear] it's so much change. You know, you take... Seventy-nine years old [unclear] you forget your own name [laughs] if you're not careful.

Q: I hope certainly not.

AC: [00:04:22] [unclear]

Q: [laughs] You're pretty good for seventy-nine.

AC: [00:04:25] [unclear]

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:04:29] [unclear] I don't think it was him, though. He had on the wrong cap. He's seventy-nine. No, that ain't him. But there's another fella [unclear].

Q: Well, when you first had started growing up in this area were there many Blacks living in St. Michaels at the time?

AC: [00:04:47] More than there is now.

Q: More than there is now.

AC: [00:04:49] Yeah. Mm-hmm. Well, see, I tell you, most all the places I've worked... As you can see, most any family had five or six children, seven children, nine [unclear] now.

Q: Yeah, yeah. That's true.

AC: [00:05:04] [unclear]

Q: Were most of them... Back then, were most of them concentrated in this area of St. Michael's, or were they spread out in different areas?

AC: [00:05:14] Well, they... Now, see, you take down the roadway [?]. Every house down there was full, and all but the first house on the right, George Brooks' place, had children. George Brooks had two nieces. [unclear] the mother died with the flu, and George Brooks and his wife took those two girls. It was more [unclear] two boys. They took the two girls. But most every house down there... But now [unclear]. Same thing Church Neck. [pause] The first house, first house there [unclear] second house, and the third house, well, there was five [unclear] children. Most of them were... Most of them... All of them

were older than me, a little older than me. But they had the children. The population was here. I mean, I hope you follow me, where I'm coming from.

Q: Yeah, yeah, larger families.

AC: [00:06:28] Yeah. Yeah. [unclear] See, you only get [unclear] takes time to work on it. If I knew what... I don't even want to talk about it [unclear]. See, you catching me on [unclear].

Q: Yeah. I know. I apologize. I...

AC: [00:06:50] [unclear] It's all you going to get. It's all you going to get. [laughter]

Q: I wasn't sure. I didn't know much about your background, so I wasn't sure what exactly to talk about. We're interested in the buildings, but we're also interested in the people too.

AC: [00:07:04] Yeah. Well, see... Yeah. It was... [unclear] There was three, five, six. Six. There was six grandchildren of my grandparents, two girls and four boys. Well, out of that six, there's only three of us living, the two girls and myself. I'm the oldest of the grandchildren, and I'm home, still hanging around here. Did you know [unclear]?

Q: Who?

AC: [00:07:50] [unclear] Chester?

Q: No, I didn't.

AC: [00:07:53] Well, he died last February. He was [unclear].
This is Barnett [?]. That was his stepson too. He
[unclear].

Q: I see.

AC: [00:08:05] Mm-hmm. See, that was all in my family, three
boys and [unclear] there was four boys and two girls.

Q: Yeah. How about one... Maybe a couple more questions.

AC: [00:08:20] Help yourself. Shoot.

Q: [laughs] I'm sure you're familiar with the churches in
town, the Black churches. And I'm not that familiar with
it. I know the Methodist church down... the Union
Methodist church here. There was a church just a block
down further that's now, unfortunately, just... They've
torn it down.

AC: [00:08:40] It fell down.

Q: It fell down?

AC: [00:08:42] They tried to move it, and it [laughs] fell
apart.

Q: Fell apart on them.

AC: [00:08:44] Yeah.

Q: What was the background of that church? Do you know
anything about?

AC: [00:08:47] That was the African Methodist.

Q: African Methodist Church.

AC: [00:08:50] African.

Q: Yeah. But when I first came here, that building was empty, and it had been...

AC: [00:08:57] Oh, yeah, it had been empty for many years.

Q: [00:08:59] [unclear] Why was that? It just didn't... not enough people or...

AC: [00:09:03] Well, I'll tell you, there was all churches here. There was Catholic [unclear] like a tidal wave, you know? And, I mean, you [unclear] didn't have to. Now, so many people had these things in their own local [unclear]. You know what I mean? They wouldn't publicize because [unclear], but they had those things going on.

Q: Going on.

AC: [00:09:35] [unclear] dropped out. Now, see, I was over there sixty years.

Q: The African Methodist Church?

AC: [00:09:44] No.

Q: The Union?

AC: [00:09:46] Methodist, Union Methodist.

Q: Union. Yeah.

AC: [00:09:48] I had to pull up [?] but I [unclear] Jehovah's Witness. I learned more in two years with the Jehovah's Witness than I learned in fifty-eight years...

Q: Union Methodist.

AC: [00:10:02] ...with the church. Now, [unclear] well, he would read [unclear]. He pulled out [unclear] Seventh Day Adventist.

Q: So the Black community really couldn't afford... I mean couldn't support two churches [unclear].

AC: [00:10:27] Yes. You had enough [unclear] support two church.

Q: Was there any more? Was there... The Black community, was that...

AC: [00:10:32] [unclear] got two more churches now. Yeah. Got two more churches right there.

Q: Right there. But these were the older ones, the...

AC: [00:10:39] Yeah, these were the old originals [?].

Q: Two Methodist ones. Yeah.

AC: [00:10:42] Yeah. African Methodist and Methodist.

Q: Huh.

AC: [00:10:51] Yeah. That water tank [unclear].

Q: Yeah. [unclear]

AC: [00:11:05] I don't know. I thought of somebody some time ago [?]. Yeah. [unclear] was a wooden tank.

Q: It originally was wooden.

AC: [00:11:14] Oh, sure. Boy, that thing would spring a leak more than [unclear].

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:11:20] You had to go around [unclear] be soaking wet.
See?

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:11:26] And then they put that steel one up there.

Q: Steel one up there.

AC: [00:11:29] Yeah. [unclear] all over on the church and
everything [unclear]. [laughs] Yes, sir. But I like the
ramps on stuff [?]. You know, it helps me too.

Q: Yeah. [both speaking-unclear]

AC: [00:11:47] [unclear] Actually, you can go ahead in front of
me [?]. Yeah. So I don't mind. I appreciate it.

Q: I know they're going to... they're trying to raise money to
fix up the lodge.

AC: [00:12:01] Yeah. Well, that's the oldest Black [unclear]
lodge in the state of Maryland.

Q: Yeah, it's a very important building.

AC: [00:12:07] So they'd like to hold onto it.

Q: I imagine it's been very important to the community here
over the years, so...

AC: [00:12:12] Well, it did years ago. But, see, automobile
changed history. And used be [unclear] people get from
Bozman. You know, it was, oh, in my time anywhere from 75
to 80, maybe 100 Black people in Bozman. But they came

here in town. Most of them, people come in town there.

But when you had those people, they would come in here for different reasons, you know? And... But now there ain't nothing for people [unclear].

Q: And the harbor down there?

AC: [00:13:01] No, not... Well, the harbor too, but oh, Christmas [unclear].

Q: Colosseum or stadium.

AC: [00:13:07] Yeah, something like that. [unclear] do that, but you couldn't do that back in them days. You had to use [unclear] so it makes a difference. Now, you got to compete with them, or else close doors.

Q: So the lodge isn't used as much as it once... as it used to be, then?

AC: [00:13:22] Oh, no. No, indeed. No. But what we try to think about now, and in some place that you can have some [unclear]. That's the main thing. You see, Black people in particular... I don't. You can have most everything at church. I don't care what it is. In church. I don't believe that. That's a sacred place. It should be kept that way, so I mean, you need another place to have those things.

Q: Have meetings and so on. Yeah.

AC: [00:13:56] Yeah. See, politics. Politics never belong in the church if you believe the Bible, say you're Christ-like. What politics is Christ-like? You Republican or Democrat? [laughter]

Q: Independent [unclear].

AC: [00:14:15] There you go. There you go. Well, independent is not a politician at all. No. I wish it was. Yeah.

Q: It's a nice building, that lodge building. I think it'll be very nice...

AC: [00:14:26] Oh, it was nice.

Q: ...when it's fixed up. Yeah.

AC: [00:14:27] Yeah, it was nice. [unclear] See, [unclear] member now.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:14:33] Sure. See... Now, I'm a member. I've been a member 50 years. I was taught by my ancestors [unclear] my grandfather. He was a nice fellow. And I had known my uncles [unclear] but you got these people now don't know nothing.

Q: Don't know anything. Yeah.

AC: [00:14:58] [unclear] I mean, how am I going to tell you as my job [?] what's this, what's that if I'm not a part of it? I can assume [?] what I can see, you know, from thinking, what I think. So this is where we are.

Q: It's the same all over, unfortunately, too.

AC: [00:15:14] Oh, yeah. Everything [unclear]. See, actually, now you can't tell them nothing. Can't [unclear]. I got a grandson [unclear] I told him [unclear]. No, couldn't tell him nothing.

Q: Couldn't tell him.

AC: [00:15:43] Now he's just all despondent [unclear] with a 15-year-old son.

Q: Oh, geez.

AC: [00:15:49] You know? [unclear] like this. Now, I don't know how true it is, and he's a big liar. His sister told her sister, "No, [unclear]." "How you doing?" "All right." Said, "Do you have a couple dollars?" She said, "Why? Don't you got a couple dollars?" Said, "I ain't got but two dollars. I'm hungry. Can I get something to eat?" I don't know if that's so or not. I don't know if that's so. But we gave that boy everything. We raised him from seven years old till he got married, and he had everything most any poor child would have. Even send him to a commune in Mexico. Scouts. [unclear]. I mean, [unclear] experience those kind of things and [unclear].

Q: You... I know that... I agree with you on this. Young people today, they go out. They don't want to be concerned with community, but... Of course back when you were growing

up, everything centered on the community, I think. I'm very curious. What did the Black community do for recreation here?

AC: [00:17:12] Well...

Q: [00:17:12] I know there was a movie theater in town, but...

AC: [00:17:15] Yes, there was.

Q: ...did... Were Blacks welcomed at the theater? Did they go, or did they?

AC: [00:17:20] Yes, they go in the back way.

Q: The back way.

AC: [00:17:22] Yeah. Where the antique place, next to the [unclear] that place. You go in the back way [unclear]. You go in this [unclear]. See, they were more interested in projects, community, whatever you did. Now, they used to have a [unclear] Fourth of July. There was a little horse cart [?] [unclear].

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:17:56] [unclear] Yeah. We had a band that was second to none. They wanted any number of [?].

Q: Was that the Silver Cornet Band I heard about? Was that...

AC: [00:18:07] No.

Q: ...earlier band? Do you remember the name of it?

AC: [00:18:11] Oh my soul, now I can't think of that, see.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:18:15] [both speaking-unclear]

Q: That's all right.

AC: [00:18:16] [unclear] band. I can't think of...

Q: That's all right. Sorry I'm going to [?] interrupt you.

AC: [00:18:21] See... And Cambridge had one. And most every time they compete in a contest, St. Michaels...

Q: St. Michaels won.

AC: [00:18:27] ...would win over them. But they could play some music. Yes, sir. [laughs] That's what my uncle told me because I didn't see it. [unclear] great, big fellow used to beat the bass drum. [unclear] took a drum and bust it [both speaking-unclear].

Q: And bust it open.

AC: [00:18:52] They told me [unclear] that story. They had [unclear] decorate all these carts, buggies, carriages, and things. [unclear] where the library is, house was there. The house burned down. They had a goat, and then they had this goat all trimmed up, paper and stuff on it. Crepe paper. Man, they went to get him for the parade, and he done eat up everything [?]. [laughter]

Q: Ate a wall of decorations.

AC: [00:19:32] He ate up everything [unclear]. [laughs]

Q: That's funny.

AC: [00:19:39] [unclear] that's how I feel about Marshall's Express [unclear] when people lived there, when it was all resident.

Q: Before it became Marshall's Express.

AC: [00:19:48] Sure, sure. [unclear] Marshall's Express till after the place burned down and [unclear] Marshall bought it for his warehouse.

Q: I guess you remember the hotel here too on Talbot Street.

AC: [00:20:00] Oh, certainly. Certainly. Yes, indeed. Yeah. Yes, sir. Hotel, blacksmith shop. The blacksmith right there on Talbot Street.

Q: Was that... There was one down by the other church, wasn't there, run by a...

AC: [00:20:18] Down by the parish hall.

Q: By the parish hall.

AC: [00:20:20] Yeah. That was Hunt [?].

Q: Yeah, Mr. Hunt.

AC: [00:20:23] Yeah.

Q: There was another one too where...

AC: [00:20:25] There's another one out here. What was that man's name? [pause] He's owned the house down there where Jewett is now.

Q: [both speaking-unclear]

AC: [00:20:39] Next to [unclear].

Q: Yeah. Was it Hamilton?

AC: [00:20:45] That's it.

Q: Hamilton.

AC: [00:20:46] Mm-hmm.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:20:47] But he had a little pump. A little hill goes up there, if you notice. It's not a big one, but [unclear]. People go down there and get water. The coldest water in August will be 100 degrees.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:21:02] Give a couple of strokes [?] on that pump, and that water will be just as cold as ice.

Q: Where was it? Was it in front of the house? [unclear]

AC: [00:21:07] Off to the side, not right in front. It was off to the side like...

Q: Where Mr. Jewett and them lives now.

AC: [00:21:12] Yeah, where he lives. Yeah. And [unclear] down where Margaret Wells [?] lived, up on that little hill is one.

Q: Another pump in there.

AC: [00:21:21] A wooden pump. Yeah.

Q: And anybody can come and fill up?

AC: [00:21:23] Yeah. Everybody go there. Sometimes they have [unclear]. Yeah. That's right off of Honeymoon Bridge down there. Yeah.

Q: It's where they made the film down there. Were you around when they made that film in town in 1928?

AC: [00:21:42] If I was born 1909, I must have been around somewhere.

Q: Yeah. Do you remember anything about the film?

AC: [00:21:46] Yes, indeed.

Q: Do you?

AC: [00:21:48] Certainly. About the dumbest thing [?] they did. Yeah. I was in school then, but they filmed between Easton and here. [unclear] and see, when they made... they started the picture, it was supposed to be *First Kiss*. Then...

Q: The name. Yeah.

AC: [00:22:14] Then it was a name [unclear] *First Kiss*, and they changed the name to *The Four Talbot Brothers*.

Q: Mm-hmm. *Four Brothers*.

AC: [00:22:21] Mm-hmm. *Four Talbot Brothers*. So the four Talbot brothers in a fight up in the cemetery.

Q: In the cemetery. Mm-hmm.

AC: [00:22:33] Mm-hmm.

Q: They used a fake gravestone or something, didn't they?

AC: [00:22:36] Oh, yeah, sure.

Q: [laughs] Yeah.

AC: [00:22:39] They did. Well, my grandfather was in there.

Q: Was he?

AC: [00:22:42] He drove [unclear] you go round and round to pull the boat up. Well, he had his horse and him pull that boat up. Yes, indeed. Mm-hmm. [laughs]

Q: Your grandfather worked at the shipyard?

AC: [00:22:55] No.

Q: Or just...

AC: [00:22:56] No, he was a farmer [unclear]. Yeah.

Q: How'd he get involved, though in that?

AC: [00:23:03] Well, somebody wanted a horse to use.

Q: To use. Yeah.

AC: [00:23:07] Yeah. Well, somebody wanted a horse to use. So see... Oh, of course, can't tell you now, but [unclear].

Q: Yeah, I've seen pictures of it.

AC: [00:23:18] Well...

Q: Double porch.

AC: [00:23:21] Mm-hmm. On this end, near the bridge was... I think, if I remember correctly, it was a one-story [unclear] and they built onto that for the picture.

Q: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I heard that.

AC: [00:23:36] One of them artificial things. I called it artificial. And that's where they had part of the picture. Looked like it was just as old as the other part [unclear] but I hauled the stuff away [unclear].

Q: Oh, you did?

AC: [00:23:51] [unclear] the chimney, the lumber, and stuff. I hauled it away [both speaking-unclear] crashed my cart.

Q: Hauled it away.

AC: [00:23:54] I don't know what happened. [unclear] I don't know what happened. [unclear] cart about two thirds loaded, and that horse fell down. I don't know what happened. [unclear] backing up or what, he got hung up and down he went. I had to take a [unclear] for him to get up. [unclear] Yes, sir.

Q: That house stayed empty for a while, didn't it?

AC: [00:24:26] Oh yeah.

Q: Later.

AC: [00:24:26] It stayed empty for a good while.

Q: Yeah, yeah. It just fell down one...

AC: [00:24:31] Well, I think [unclear] I think it was in pretty good shape. I think it was. I mean, I wasn't in there or nothing, but I think it was in pretty good shape.

Q: Nice-looking house.

AC: [00:24:41] Yeah, but it was a nice-looking house. But, of course, just like everything else, when old folks die, young folks don't [unclear].

Q: Sure.

AC: [00:24:52] [unclear]

[recording paused]

AC: [00:24:56] [unclear] modern time. Now, you take any of this down. I'm talking about Black. You can find a man that [unclear] anything you want. Brickwork, plaster. You can find [both speaking-unclear]. You didn't know [unclear]?

Q: No.

AC: [00:25:19] [unclear] Most talented man who's ever [unclear].

Q: Huh. What was his full name? Do you remember?

AC: [00:25:28] Milton Dennis [?].

Q: Milton Dennis. Yeah.

AC: [00:25:31] Mm-hmm. You did that [?]. Mm-hmm. You may not do it as good, but you do enough where you get by. [unclear] I offered to get him a corresponding course [?] one day.

Q: One day.

AC: [00:25:46] Mm-hmm. You can do anything you want, you know?
He been dead about three, four years now. A couple or so
years before he died, [unclear] making canes.

Q: Is that right?

AC: [00:26:03] Some canes [unclear] street. Mm-hmm. Yeah.
Made some nice canes. Cut the heads into them. Make a dog
head or a horse head.

Q: Uh-huh.

AC: [00:26:12] Yeah, he could do it. [unclear] [laughs]

Q: No, I think you're right, though. People back then were...
They relied on themselves. They did a lot more things.

AC: [00:26:31] Mm-hmm. Yeah, that's right.

Q: It's happened all over, unfortunately.

AC: [00:26:39] [unclear] white and Black [unclear] going to see
a hard time, unless you're prepared to meet present days.
Understand?

Q: Mm-hmm.

AC: [00:26:57] You see, in my early days, [unclear]. What can
you do? Most anything. [unclear] you going to hurt
somebody's head [?] doing the same thing. What you going
to do? My golly. See, when I started electricity,
[unclear] about 50 years. Well, when I started, you could
get somebody to help you, you know, and they tried to
learn. But now my last day [unclear] didn't know nothing

about it. Now you havne't got a single Black man in St. Michaels put a bulb and in and know what it do. You know, that's a disgrace.

Q: It is.

AC: [00:27:50] That's a disgrace. Yes, sir. I [unclear] 50 years. After I came back from Hampton doing the business I told you about... I want to Hampton to take auto mechanics. That's why I went there. After I came back home, you know, I don't know what happened, but they just [unclear] parts of it [unclear]. I was looking at a magazine one day, and I saw this correspondence course [unclear] school in Chicago. [unclear] You know, I have more credentials than the white man [unclear]. Yes, sir.

Q: Do you work for your own self, or do you work for somebody [?]?

AC: [00:28:36] Yes. [unclear] Well, Kirby [?], I work with him. Albert Kirby. And he... See, he had worked in... He's much older than me. You know Helen Plumber [?]?

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:28:54] Her brother. Well, he was much older, and he worked in Washington [?]. You see?

Q: Mm-hmm.

AC: [00:29:06] He used to work... See, he learned a lot, but I'd never had been exposed. Now, corresponding is fine. I

was a help to him, and he was a help to me because he was a help to me on the job. I was a help to him on the code because he didn't know the code, and we put it together. So that's how we got along. [laughs]

Q: Hmm. Hmm.

AC: [00:29:31] Now, I don't know if he thought I was working for him, but I wasn't. We was working for each other.

Q: Working for each other.

AC: [00:29:36] Yeah.

Q: Sounds like good arrangement.

AC: [00:29:38] See... You know, corresponding is fine. I mean, it open your eyes. Ain't no question about it. Oh, yeah. But with [unclear] installation don't figure on reading that book and going over a house like this and do it. You better have somebody come and direct. You know, I'll say this too. I'm doing all the talking.

Q: That's all right.

AC: [00:30:06] I'll say this. You know, I talk about an ignorant person. What is an ignorant person? [pause]

Q: I don't know. Somebody doesn't know what they're talking about.

AC: [00:30:26] Well, talk is cheap. Don't have to worry about talking. Talking [unclear]. [pause] Waiting for an answer.

Q: I don't know.

AC: [00:30:39] Well, I broke it down this way in my [unclear] way. You see, you take a student at Columbia University in New York, and he takes this course in exploring. If he went to Africa, before he steps foot in the jungle, he gets one of those ignorant men he calls to go in there with him. Now, you mean to tell me you're going to put your life in an ignorant man's hands? Hmm. All right, now. Let's wake up. Where are we? Where are we?

Q: I think you're right.

AC: [00:31:19] Yeah.

Q: We tend to put too much value on learning from books and not enough on experience.

AC: [00:31:24] That's right. That's right. That's right. [unclear] you be eat up the next 15 minutes. [laughter] Yes, sir. But, I mean, that's some of the ology [?] I got from barbering. That was an education.

Q: Mm-hmm. Sure. You don't need books to get an education.

AC: [00:31:57] Well, see, my wife taught 44 years. And we got in a big argument one time [unclear]. I said, "Only people who need to go to college is dumb people." [laughs] I said, "People's that got it start with it. They got a gift of it, you know? And ain't nobody can go to school and compete with that person who's got a gift with [unclear]."

Q: If they use it.

AC: [00:32:19] Yeah.

Q: Yeah.

AC: [00:32:20] Mm-hmm. [unclear]

END OF AUDIO FILE