

INTERVIEW LOG

Oral History #55

Interviewees: Vernon Whitely, John Wright
and daughter of Mr. Whitely

Interviewer: Richard Dodds & Joe Liener

Date: March 14, 1989

Location: Mr. Whiteley's residence, 221 Wye Avenue, Easton, MD

Topic: Methods of fishing on the Choptank River
Description of the boats used
The old Dover Bridge

Comments:

BEGIN SIDE A

Vernon Whitely: ...because my father didn't build there.

John Wright: Well, most of the fishermen around there would either build their own or rent them where I'm at around Dover Bridge. Either the Engel boys would build it or we'd build them. My father and my older brother would build one and the Worm brothers at a place they called Hull Creek. They used to build boats. They built all types of boats. You know either the stern fishers or the side net type or you know those old sharp ended ones. But, they used to call those a barge, too. I guess they got the name from the fact that it was sharp on both ends where a barge you know is the same on both ends and can be pushed either way.

VW: Yeah, in proportions to the length and...

Ms. Whitely: This one tapers off more like that...

VW: It would be just a little bit narrower in the stern, too.

Joe Liener: Did you fish your net the same way the Sharptown fellows fished theirs.

VW: On the side, back out the tilt (ph) side.

JL: So that more or less determined the length of your boat as to the depth of the net.

JW: The ones that we had, the net was longer than the boat. You always that, what do you call it...the bunt (ph) or something with the cork (ph) net in the middle.

VW: It seems to me that we used to run the cork line (ph) in the bow and ring line in the stern and then there was a plank laid between the two seats. There's two seats in it front and back other than the one in the bow and one right in the stern of the seat. But there's two other places, yeah, and then there's a wide plank laid in there for what they call the cog (ph) in the net. Weaving in the net was made in that. We used to come ashore with the little Detroit two cycle engine--you just kill it with the throttle switch and switch over to the timer and soon as it come up under pressure, you give that looser (ph) and start to run backwards, always add a little more fuel to kind of, you know, run a rich mixture in it and it would just barely run. Actually, what you were doing was backing away from the shoreline and you're just flipping that over as you backed out.

JL: Did you always have an inboard engine in yours?

VW: Yes, my father (ph) bought that engine new. As a matter of fact that engine is somewhere in St. Michaels. Somebody...a collector in St. Michaels has it. I don't know where, but it's been sold years and years ago...I guess 30 years ago that engine was.

JL: Have you looked at the collection that they have down at the Museum.

VW: No, I haven't been down there...it has been a long time. The year after they got it started was the first time I was down there and I haven't been down there since.

JW: It may be it a good idea for you to go down and look at that Sharptown Boat. I looked at it the other day down there and ours was nowhere near like that. It's a whole lot bigger boat. It's longer and wider and everything else.

JL: You knew John Goslee didn't you?

JW: Who?

JL: John Goslee up at Sharptown.

JW: I didn't know anybody at Sharptown.

RD: He's built several hundred of those Sharptown shad boats.

VW: Well there was an article in the paper a few years back about that boat there and they said that that was the only boat that was built for that use. They forgotten it or didn't know about the one's in the Choptank apparently because they weren't mentioned.

JW: The reason they use these type of boats--a lot of the reason is a shad boat--because I don't know if you guys ever fished a shad seine off of them, but that damn thing would catch a cold. I mean it was so fine, the linen thread was so fine that it would catch anything, any little stick or anything. They were

the biggest pain in the neck to fish, but it would catch shad.

JL: What about herring? Did you fish for herring.

VW: Well they'd catch herring too, but the thing of it was, what they call the marsh or the stretch width of the square was just a little bit big for herring.

JW: You'd need about three inches for herring.

VW: Well 3 ¼ was what we used to fish for that--around 3 ¼ and 3 ½ and then for shad seining I think it was 4 or 4 ½ and of course shad are considerably bigger. They look like a herring. Anybody else wouldn't know the difference. They would swear that's what they were. But they were considerably bigger.

RD: Where did you fish exactly at?

VW: In the late 40s, say '48, '47, '46?.

RD: Whereabouts on the river?.

VW: Just below Dover Bridge.

RD: Okay.

VW: My mother still lives on the farm there. It's a big white house that sits out a farm on the Caroline side.

Ms. Whitely: (unintelligible).

JW: I fished back in the twenties.

RD: Same area?

JW: I didn't fish as far up the river, maybe Parker's Landing on the Talbot side.

VW: Parker's is right across from the Hog Island Point.

JL: And you had what two drifts (ph) between there and the Dover Bridge.

VW: No, just one wretch (ph), well two wretches - what I would call wretches between there and Dover Bridge - up at the sharp turn at the Hog Island Lane and then from there on up it was fairly straight on there under bridge.

JL: You just drifted that one stretch?

VW: That's the only one that I fished in my time. I've been up above the bridge and fished up there a couple times or a few times with my brother and we fished what they call Rumbly (ph) which was just around Hog Island. There's a big buoy there now.

JW: There was the Hog Island drift and the Rumbly drift (ph)...Parker's Landing and Lowe's (ph) Landing.

VW: Parker's Landing was a pretty short one. At Parker's landing by the time you get the net out, it's darn near time to bring it back up again, you know.

JW: That was the narrowest part of the river there.

VW: There was a very short section in there you could fish.

JW: That's a deep hole right there at Hog Island, too.

VW: Yeah, and there's one above the bridge that we used to fish, too. There's a real deep spot there. It was a real short drift there, too. I really couldn't tell you where the area would be now.

JW: It's there at Parker's Landing. Apparently, that was at the bottom of the river at one time. There's a bank about three or four feet high of solid clam shells and my older brother, who later lived in Baltimore...he moved to Baltimore...he has one or two shark's teeth that he dug out of that bank.

VW: Well that bank started at about that high and it went to about 40 feet.

JW: On the bank itself.

VW: It's way up there in one spot.

JW: And apparently, they must have been awful old because you couldn't get a shell out in one piece.

VW: Pretty hard, yeah. You know big fan shells like its advertised - Shell Oil Company - they're all embedded in that soft (ph) shell up there. I call it a red clay. It's real tough. You could see the shell sticking out of the bank, you know. The best ones are the ones that are farther down that the river had washed out and some of them that are mostly brown and gray, but every once in a while, you'd find

some that are almost the color of that paper there...kinda almost white.

RD: Were these skiffs common, I mean this is pretty much all you saw fishing was this type of fishing boat.

VW: This is what we actually...people up the river around where I come from faced for years until some smarty got an idea to put an automobile engine in a boat which I think that was my brother. He started that foolishness and from then on...because he could beat everybody else in second layouts. Everybody was fishing in the river...you lay out in flood tide and then the time you got laid out there'd be somebody else right behind you, maybe 100 yards behind you, and then you had to come all the way back to lay out a second seine or it would be somebody else, but if you had enough power, you could just buzz right on around them and (unintelligible) behind them you had a little bit of advantage so everybody got what they put out.

RD: So before they put the engine inside, they were using outboards?

VW: Some of them used outboards and some of the earlier models used the same inboard engine that we used to use...a little old two cycle (unintelligible). Some of them used Briggs and Strattons, some of them used...even the earlier ones used the one they called the fisherman engine...you know, the Universal Fisherman engine. I had one of those last year and I should have kept it.

RD: Were there any men still using the paddle and the oar at that time?

VW: Yeah, there were some people using oars.

RD: Yeah, even with the engine, you still needed the paddle.

VW: Well, a lot of those with the engine didn't have any rudder on them. You started with a paddle.

RD: Okay.

JW: That would have been in the way fishing your nets (ph).

JL: Didn't you have that much rocker in the bottom?

VW: Yeah. The reason of the rocker like I was talking about this a while ago...is the sides of the boat were made out of one plank. You can't bend a plank that wide two ways. It will not work and they put a little bit of a drop in the bow or back cut in the bow in order to get a little bit of flare. If you'd have put it straight up to the bow stem straight up and down, you couldn't get any flare. You could bend it to the side, but you couldn't get any of the tilt. So in the process, it back cut the bow stem to get the tilt for the sides but in the process of getting the tilt and the bend too, you ended up with a rocker-shaped boat.

JW: I had (ph) taken that out once

VW: Well, you could have. That could have been, but it was more of an advantage to leave it like that. It rode better and it would have been absolutely fine.

JW: You could turn it around better.

VW: Mm hmm. You see a flat bottom boat is a pain in the neck, it would beat you to death and with that much rocker in it...

JW: These are a farmer's (ph) bottom.

VW: Yeah, plus they usually run about a 2 x 10 or 2 x 12 right down the center for a brace on the bottom. You know, 'cause planking that wide say 5 feet or 4 ½ feet wide, it'll flex enough that you never could keep the (unintelligible) from leaking so they added what they call a skeg or that's what a lot of people call it now...that's not really the correct name because the kick skeg is on the outside of the boat, not on the inside and that's what they put on them on the inside.

RD: What was the typical dimensions on one of these.

VW: They'd run right close to 20 feet most of the time for the length.

RD: And the beam would be what?

VW: At the top of the beam, maybe 4 ½ feet, 5 feet.

JW: You didn't have much trouble getting a 20 foot board for the (unintelligible).

VW: No, not in those days you didn't.

JW You know lumber was plentiful then...width and length.

VW: Most of it was what they call Eastern Shore mahogany...pine (laughter). You couldn't find a short needle pine very often. That's what the guys really look for with what they call a spruce pine. It's a short needle pine, but that was a close grain and it was much better wood and a stronger wood and it wasn't as subject to rot as bad as bull pine. Of course, bull wasn't too bad.

JW: They used a lot of novel things years ago. There's two that I remember. One was for buoys and I remember a board (ph) that they built...about that big square. Of course the shads knew a board at (ph) nighttime. You'd do a lot of nighttime fishing and to be able to find the buoys, of course you didn't have flashlights then, and they built these boards and set a lantern in the middle of the board with a couple of notches with wooden buttons that you could turn and lock them all in.

JL: We have one down at the Museum.

VW: How about a buoy marker made out of boards. Do you have one in there?

RD: What?

VW: The net marker--both ends of the net buoy--you used to make them out of these big old boards—painted board--(unintelligible) and you'd put a steel ring on the bottom for ballast.

(All voices at once). I used to have one of them damn things, I don't know whatever happened to it. I haven't had it for years.

JW: And then another thing they used...I got some boards that I used part of last year and run some long boards. I think these people were from Windyhill. They came out with real long boards for buoys and they urged (ph) a net around and tied them on and I remember those things...

VW: It had the ring--a steel ring on the bottom of it.

JW: Yeah, I guess that was it, yeah..

VW: I had one of them around Humberg (ph) (unintelligible). I used a short neck ones and the long neck ones too.

JL: Did you have on your cork lines...did you have the corks right up to the top of the water...that is the top of the net up to the top of the water? You didn't have a liner hung over anything did you?

JW: No.

VW: Shad seines we fished the corks floated. But the regular nets...we want that as bald (ph) net. Shad seine was a bald net.

JW: We used to have about a four foot liner so that the net hung down and any driftwood on the water went right on over it. It didn't catch in the net.

JL: A lot of tricks you used in those days...

VW: The corks on the shad seine were the oval wooden ones, about that big around the center and tapered down like that on both ends.

JW: Some of them...most of them would be square. The same as on a sturgeon net.

JL: As long it had no sharp corners...to get hung up in the net.

VW: I still got some of them I believe...the flukes (ph) for a shad seine...I got some of those.

JL: You never run across any sturgeon up here did you?

VW: Yes, once in a great while I've heard of them, but I've never seen one.

JW: I knew of one that was caught in the Choptank weighed 160 something pounds. He caught him in a pound net.

VW: They caught 'em up this far as Dover Bridge. They have been caught up there.

JW: Yeah, it was five foot long.

VW: They caught shark up above Dover Bridge one time, too..

JL: What kind were they?

VW: I don't remember what kind it was. It was about 8 or 9 feet long.

JW: I swam within a few feet of them in the Choptank and we were just boys swimming off in the wharf there and my buddy came up the ladder in a rush one day and we could see him out on the outer part of the wharf and we swam on the inside and the older people said they were harmless, they were dog sharks and we didn't have to worry about it, so we kept on swimming. My buddy come up that

ladder the fastest I ever saw him move (laughter). He said the shark went right by him. But a real dry year when the water is real salty, a shark could come up there and porpoise, too.

VW: Yeah, my father used to say porpoises used to run with us with the steam boats.

JL: What was the average length of your drift net?

VW: It was 130 yards I think is what it was because the river I think is 370 yards wide there in front of the house and there's better than half of it is not shoal necessarily, but it's a tapered off mud bank...

JW:...That slackened up enough so that it...

VW: Yeah, it would go through, yeah.. But off of the Talbot side off of the marsh side which is on the Talbot side, it drops off very quickly. You could have six feet from the edge of the tide line and you're in water if you don't want to be in. Right there at the turn at the old wharf, it's better than 60 feet of water right off the fender (ph) piling, so out in the center of the river I don't know how deep it is there. Just like under the Dover Bridge, there's 65 – 70 feet of water under the bridge. Of course, that's an awful narrow spot too.

JW: The rock will, in the wintertime, would stay in those holes.

JL: Yeah, would drop right down in the hole.

JW: The water is warm.

RD: Were there any men who specialized in building these boats?

VW: I'd say most of them were built by the people that done the fishing, the Worm Brothers, or the Worm boys or the Engle, Wilbur (ph)...

JW: I don't think you had over 15 people.

RD: Oh, is that right?

JW: So whoever built them, they built them to suit themselves.

VW: Wilbur Engle you could also get a hold of. Now, he's been around a long time and he would know more about this than I do, because as a matter of fact he helped build some of these boats.

JL: He's still around?

VW: Oh yes, he's the first lane on the right after you get over the bridge on the Caroline side.

RD: What's his first name?

VW: Wilbur Engle-- E N G L E. When you turn into his driveway, you go across a little bit of a marsh and then there's another house on the right and he's all the way down on the end. He's on a farm down there. He raises chickens and just doing whatever.

JL: He'd be willing to talk about it.

VW: Oh yeah, he'll talk to you. He's a very nice person. And practically all of those brothers...those Engle brothers, there's Wilbur and Howard...you know, if you guys have been on the Preston Road and may even been by Howard Engle's place, that place just past Tanyard, has got...

JW: ...the blacksmith shop...

VW: Yeah, a perpetual junk yard...that's Howard Engle and then the next one down on the same side is Gus and then there's Lee and Wilbur.

JW: We've been down there to that new house that's down the river on the east side of the river. That fellow built a new house way back at the end of that lane.

RD: It looks like a lighthouse from a distance.

VW: Oh, you're talking about down on the other end down...on down Tanyard Road all the way out.

RD: Yeah.

VW: Okay, well Dot Trappmill (ph) owns that farm on the right down there and Tucker Langford owns the one right straight. When you run out of county road and into a private lane, Tucker Langford owns that and the Langford family has owned that for I guess 90 years.

JL: When was it he moved back there, what two years ago?

JW: He used to pull a haul seine in Skeleton (ph) Creek.

VW: I haven't been down there so long...

JW: The place down there, they live in a trailer down there now.

VW: That house that was there on the Langford Farm was...

JW: That was a beautiful home at one time.

VW: Yeah, it was. The bricks came from England and it had stone lintels up above the windows..

JW: It's a shame (unintelligible).

VW: They say it had a beautiful staircase in it, too. They never took care of it and it just fell apart right when they were living in it.

JL: Well, that's a shame.

JW: I think it's just the opposite of what the Engle's were. The Engle's were very industrious. These boys' parents ran old steam rigs, old Kaiser (ph) rigs.

VW: Running a saw mill and (unintelligible).

JL: Do they still use a haul seine up there?

VW: I don't think so. I don't think they use a haul seine anymore. I think it's not that profitable.

JW: (unintelligible) up there is think. That's what I did.

VW: The state of Maryland (many voices at once) (laughter). It's hard work a haul seine is.

JW: My brother-in-law and I built this boat along about 1950 and the stern from that came from the Engle that you're talking about. He took the stern out from somebody and made a loft there somewhere. He said he wouldn't make them anymore, but I went looking for one.

VW: He's still got planking down there--Wilbur does. But anytime when his father run the sawmill they had a sizable pine log down there especially if it was (unintelligible) pine...you know old lob lolly pine...they used to take at least a couple of planks right out of the center of it and lay them off for sides for what they call boat sides and the wash boards too. He used to cut them for wash boards and boat sides.

JW: Well, they could probably give us some information on this too.

RD: Are there any skiffs still around, you know?.

VW: None that I know of. Like I say, your best bet is talking to Wilbur because you know, he lived right there in that vicinity all of his life and I've been gone from there since the early fifties-- in '51 matter of fact--'52. I mean I still own the property down there and I'm still back and forth down at the farm, but as far as being associated with a lot of this...

JL: Do you have any idea when you finally stopped using drift nets?

VW: Well, it was in the fifties. My brother still...Jim...do you remember where the Wilbert brothers that run the service station...you remember Tiff Wilbert that had run that...well, my brother owns...well, he don't now, he's dead, but his wife still lives in that brick house right across from there. Well, he's fished the river for years after dad quit fooling with it, you know, but they fished off the stern...you know, just run the net off of the stern.

JL: They bolted the net right on the stern.

VW: You take the ring line and cork line both, but this was a bottom fishing net. If you took both lines at the same time and then the center of that you'd just drug in over the stern of the boat.

JW: I used to haul more rock than more shad then, too.

VW: Hmm, hmm. You didn't fish a shad seine like that because you'd have it in such a damn tangle that you'd back (unintelligible) overboard.

JL: Were you bothered with green tails up there? You know what I mean don't you? Marshmuckers (ph)?

VW: Yeah, yeah.

JL: They'd swim with their mouth open and twist the leads all up in a knot, then you'd spend about a half a day picking the net out.

VW: I don't know how in the hell they ever managed to get them to end up with a piece about that long ...the net that would be tied within itself. I don't think you could live long enough to tie a knot like those dudes would.

JW: The fish could some twisting.

VW: A hard crab is worse. Fishing in the late spring and you'd get a big hard crab on the bottom of the net and man, a big one's a pain.

JL: But, you always called these a shad skiff.

VW: Well, yes and no. They called them a barge. I never really heard them called a shad skiff as much as I did a barge or just a river barge or fishing barge, you know. That's what they were referred to. Of course, you know, a lot of watermen would hang their own terminology dependent on the area.

JL: Yeah, your nomenclature changes...

JW: You couldn't use it much further down the river because it was a lot rougher down there and they were so loaded with water.

JL: Did you always just row one pair of oars.

JW: One oar, just one 10 foot oar.

JL: Another fellow steered it.

JW: Yeah. I don't believe they had but one oarlock block. I'm not sure the side where you tied the net on, I don't think you had a block on it at all.

RD: Well, the catch is in the way.

JW: Well, you probably wouldn't want anything to hang up on it.

JW: You had to keep that clear. That's why I worried about the one that you got from down in Nanticoke. It's got a washboard (ph) there and how they kept the net clear over it I don't know.

JL: Well, they had everything pretty smooth.

VW: Yeah, all of that was sanded down. All the nicks and the rough little snags that's on the wood...all that was nice and clean, yeah. You had to be or you'd be picking (ph) the net off if all the time.

JW: You always had two men in a boat.

JW: Oh yeah, had to have two.

VW: Had to, because you had to. I'd say between these two seats would be a long plank here that part of the net would lay and then the ring line would then be down at the bottom of the boat and the cork line up front in the bottom of the boat and you'd pick the net up by the line, you know, ahead of the cork and just pitch it and the ring would follow and they were placed out about every six feet. I think every six feet for the ring line. Now shad seine was geared different. I had more corks than I did rings.

JW: Yeah, it was a heavier net.

VW: Yeah, well, it was a deeper net and it was a floating net where we faced (ph) it was they floated. You could see the corks on top of the water. 'Cause we used to go out and pluck (ph) the facing, you know, you'd see the cork bouncing...

JW: You had to gear it with more slack in it.

VW: Oh, yeah. But, it was then again, a deeper net, too. The collar of the net was (unintelligible).

JL: Did you ever call that plank that you laid on there a gang board (ph) did you?

VW: Come to think of it, I think you got the name board, yeah. I've got a big beat (laughter).

JW: I saw a fish the other day that I've seen with my older brothers when they were fishing these, the hole that these fish made in those nets and I had a show down in Salisbury a week ago Saturday. They had a 92 pound rock and that's the kind that tore the nets up.

VW: There have been some awful ones up that river, I know that.

RD: I came across this article when I was digging around yesterday...about Charlie Hopkins, the net maker..

VW: Lives right down there by Hog Creek. I went to school with his son, Calvin.

JW: They were the last ones to gear gill nets for other people. It hasn't been too many years ago when they were still doing it.

RD: Is anybody still making nets locally? I guess, not anymore.

VW: Not that I know. I don't even know whether you can still get the netting anymore or not. You know, there used to be an outfit in Baltimore where you bought the netting and you bought it by the

pound.

JW: I think it's Ray's (ph) company and one other I think that used to do it.

VW: You know, I forgot to bring that. I'll go bring one of those gearing needles that had the name of the company right on it..

JW: (Unintelligible) is one who used to sell nets in Baltimore.

RD: Here looks to be one of these skiffs that we were talking about in there with an outboard on it.

VW: You see, these are later models with the short seats. Yeah, you'd run an outboard motor on it, too.

JW: Yeah that's a short one.

VW: Yeah, that's not much better than a rowboat there.

JL: They're fishing over the side.

VW: Yeah, they're fishing off the side.

JL: I don't see how they kept clear of that propeller.

VW: See, these blooming things like he's talking about in rough water...when you're taking the net in, you're taking the net in sideways, you know, a man on the cork line and one on the ring line. You're taking the net in sideways and you're pulling the boat sideways and if you run into any kind of sea, you got a mess of water on you, I'll tell you that. If you had a good baler there, if you take on a real good good bit of water taking that net in. Or even the net itself would take on a very good bit of water bringing it in, 'cause as it comes in, it's going to drain, you know. I've faced that right in front of the house. I wouldn't do it now, I'll tell you that now.

RD: Got more sense now.

VW: Yeah, I'm a little wiser (laughter). Me and my brother had.

JW: Like me fishing through the ice.

JL: But, you didn't have any washboards on your boat.

VW: No, just an extra, maybe a 2 ½ inch plank added to the top of the...

JW: Reinforcement

VW: Just like this, see, added to the top of the boat. In fact the ones that we had didn't even have ribs in them. The boat didn't even have ribs in it. These show here...the later ones had that...but that's not a one plank bottom either or a one plank side either.

JW: That one my father built himself (ph).

RD: But in the early boats anyway, there were no frames...old dog clipper (ph).

VW: Calvin...I went to school with him. He used to gear nets, too.

JL: What would be your catch for about one night's work? Any idea?

JW: Well, it depends on how the fish are running. The shad in particular, just like herring and yellow perch and white perch and (unintelligible), a good example of that was the yellow perch. My father used to fish white necks a lot up the creeks and for two or three days straight we'd fish with nets and they'd be solid full of yellow perch (unintelligible). In between, you'd catch a (unintelligible) and they kept building up and all at once the big rush came and I expect the shad were pretty much the same way, weren't they?. In the amount of maybe a week, you caught most of the shad.

VW: It was a short time, a very short time.

JL: Your shad season wasn't too long, either.

JW: No indeed.

VW: Calvin, I don't know whether he still does it not, but if there is any net gearing done around there, I'm sure that he'd be the one to do it because you know it's kind of a long start (ph).

JL: Did you ever fish with cast (ph) nets up here.

VW: Not that I know of...I never did.

JW: I never did cast nets here.

RD: What's cast nets?

JW: Well, it's a big round net and it's hung right in the center and the line from the center has a little

button on it or something and you held that in your teeth and you swung the other one around and you let it loose and if you could handle it right, that would spread out just like a big umbrella and then you had one line that you pulled in to pull it together.

VW: Like a purse seine.

JW: Yeah, like a miniature purse seine.

JL: This looks like it might be a shad net. See the size of it.

VW: See, they used to...the later part of the season you used to fish with what they called a 7 ½. That was 7 ½ on the marshes. The marshes on the net,,,you'd pull the corners of it all the way out and measure the length between that and they went by so many of these deep for 60 or 50 marshes (ph) deep you know for the depth of the net. That one there, from the looks of it, Calvin got a hold of that, so that's about a 4 ¼ or better. That one...the old man got a hold of that...it looked a lot like a 7 ½ by the size of it. That's an awful big marshes (ph) on there.

JL: That's strictly for big rock isn't it?

All voices at once.

RD: This is all synthetic (unintelligible)?.

VW: Well, that come later. Nylon come later. We used to use rayon.

JW: Started out with cotton.

VW: Linen, yeah, cotton and linen.

JW: When they had cotton, if you didn't hang that cotton up everyday...

VW: Yeah, cotton you had to hang up everyday. We had two great big posts on the shore right down by the house, by the tenant house.

JW: Sort of a roller.

VW: Well, one of them had a roller on it and the other had two big pegs. You just hang the net on it...steel pegs.

JW: Then linen came along. It came from Ireland--Irish linen--and it was a whole lot more expensive, of course.

VW: It didn't hang around very long linen net didn't. It didn't hang around very long. If you took care of it it would. It would last two years, I guess.

RD: Were they treated at all.

VW: No. A treated net stiffened. Haul seines I used to treat, but they used to tar 'em, dip 'em tar. But the drift net had to be very pliable.

JW: Bought it by the pound. They came out of Baltimore usually.

JL: How deep do you think the river boats were?

VW: Oh, let's see.

JL: Not much over 18 inches were they?

VW: About 18 inches really.

JL: Must have been that much for a big log.

VW: About 18 inches I'd say...18 to 20 inches, somewhere along there.

JL: And they had sawed about an inch thick or an inch and a quarter.

VW: Well, you could saw that a little bit better than an inch and by the time they run it through the planer, it would end up anywhere between ¾ and 7/8. Because, the thicker it goes, the harder it is to bend. We used to throw it overboard you know and sink it with some damn cement blocks for about a month before you'd ever try to bend it because it just wouldn't bend, you know. (Laughter).

JW: My brother-in-law and I had the experience with that bending when we built this boat. We built that here in the garage or in the yard and we got marine plywood and we got my friends to bring her around, you know. We wanted to give it a little flare to it, too. So, one of the other of us had read somewhere that you could loosen the glue in plywood with hot water. So, we got it as close together as we could and tied it and then got hot water...several buckets of hot water...and put it all over it and just left her overnight and the next morning took the rope off...she just moved the least little bit...and we

(unintelligible) to loosen it up.

VW: You did the about the same thing as steaming wood. You could bend wood if you steam it.

JW: Same principal. Damping it relieved the tension on one side and the compression on the other. This is probably the first plywood boat that was built around here. I never heard of one. Adkins Lumber Company had to order the plywood because they didn't stock them in. Plywood was new then.

JL: When they planked the bottom of these, what kind of a seam did they use in there?

VW: Just a flat seam. You could put just a little bit of taper on it. Tight side to the inside so that the plank would always seem to swell more on the outside than it would on the inside so the planks were put together with just a slight taper on the edges of the plank so the tight side was on the inside and if you had problems with it leaking, you could always caulk it from the outside.

JL: Did they use cypress for bottom?

VW: You used to use pine. You used to do a better grade like I said before. The spruce or the short needle pine that's what you used to use for the bottom because that would hang in there about as long as anything would.

JW: I think my father used cypress, I don't know why.

JL: That was bald cypress, wasn't it?

JW: Probably, yeah.

JL: Do you know where he got the lumber from?

JW: No.

JL: Over in Delaware maybe?

VW: Most of the cypress they use on boats comes from southern cypress.

JL: That's that Tidewater cypress.

RD: Do you keep these barges in the water all year round normally. Do you keep them in the water all year round?

VW: No, no. Well, yes and no, it depends on how much maintenance you had on it. If you had problems with the boat, you'd just pull it up. The only problem with pulling one up is the fact they'd dried out and then everything opened up and then it seemed like you never could get it back to where it belonged after that. It would swell again like it was originally...

JW: It would take them a long time to dry out.

VW: Sometimes you had to to make repairs because you could lose like the sides if it was what they call bald pine. Because it was the oddest wood around water, especially fresh water. Salt water is okay, but around fresh water, it would rot in spots. It seemed like it would go through a heave or something in a particular spot, say the size of your hand. It would just go to hell and the rest of it would be solid all year round. You know, you'd have to cut it out and reinstall new wood and put a patch plank behind and beef it up. My father used to use what he called Easton tar. I don't know whether any of you guys remember Easton Utilities used to burn coal for the gas. Well, it produced a black sticky coal tar.

JW: We used that on haul seines.

VW: Yeah, and we used to use it on the boat, too. Used to use it on that. It was good. It would dry just like paint.

JW: Got it at the Gas Works.

VW: Yeah.

RD: Speaking of paint, how were these normally painted and all? What was the color...just white?

VW: White more than normal. You used old house paint, some chalking house paint.

JL: Whatever you had went on.

JW: That's right.

VW: I heard a lot of watermen say they ain't a point in putting expensive paint on the boat because you had to paint the damn thing every year anyhow, so you'd rather put chalking paint on there and by the time you had to paint it again, you ain't got all that paint to scrape off now. It was a chalking paint, you

know, using turpentine and linseed oil, you know, the alkaline bases in the thinners, it was a preservative, too--a wood preservative.

JL: Did you have a chine around either side.

VW: On the bottom about 3 ½ or 4 inch strip around the bottom.

JL: Beveled out.

VW: Yeah, beveled out. The ribs that we usually had in the boat at all was right where the seats went across.

RD: Mr. Wright, when you were down in the Museum, I thought that you had said that you were hoping that maybe the Museum might build one. Was that your intention or idea?

JW: Yeah, I wasn't going to build it, but I was going to try to put something together with somebody down there who might be interested in building one and putting it on display.

RD: I would like to be able to see if there is an old one still around first.

JW: Well, anyway, see Engle.

RD: I'll give him a call and we'll go over and see him, too.

VW: Wilbur Engle would be the one to see because he's been around. He knows all those people.

Well, he knows me well and I know him well, too, because he's been around long enough and he's done enough of that work that he could tell you size by measurements and the whole blasted thing, you know, and practically anything you want to know about those boats. I'm sure he could give you a good rundown on it. Better than I can. I can only go by the one that we used and the few that I had a chance to be around when I was there because they were on the way out. You see, that type of fishing was on the way out when I was old enough to really go on the river and fish. That boat my father had originally with that little 2 cycle Detroit engine in it...and he sold it to Tiff Wilby (ph). Now, this was back before I was born. And then the boat hung around that long that he bought the boat back for me and my brother. Now my younger and I used to play around on the river with it and we'd actually got it in good shape and actually fished it for three or four years on the river and we had a heck of a good time with it. We used to run up and down the river with that old thing and we'd be popping along and probably run about...that engine probably turned about 7, 800, 900 RPM tops...a little 2 cycle water cooled. Now, I wish I had held onto that thing. Of course, I wish could have held onto a lot of things

RD: What happened to the boat then?

VW: The boat eventually went to pieces. It just rotted right out from under everybody.

JW: There was a difference in power. When I got ready to put a motor on this boat, the biggest outboard I could find was 5 horsepower. They didn't make them any bigger. I put a 5 horse Johnson on it.

VW: Except for the army.

JW: That's right. The army had a (unintelligible) weighed a ton. I figured I didn't need one of them. But I got rid of the boat after (unintelligible) Creek and I went fishing in the Wye (ph), so the fellow I was working for at the time, he and I took off one morning about 7 o'clock, and it took us all day to go around Tilghman's Island and we made a couple of stops on the way up to the Wye. We got around at 4 o'clock. You could leave there now and go an hour and a half and you could be in the Wye River.

JL: You probably made about 4 ½ miles an hour.

JW: That's about it. Outboards have come a long way since then.

VW: Really these shad boats on the Choptank River and the Nanticoke River was about the only two rivers you could really do any amount of fishing in because of you know with the migration...

END OF SIDE ONE

JL: I got to tell you a tale about up the Bay. This last Waterfowl Festival, they had an exhibit in St. Mark's Church and I went out there and they had some live animals, birds and things like that. Just as I went in the door on the right, they had a man there carving decoys. His name was Mitchell...he's from up the Bay, a very noted carver and I just sort of glanced at him as I went by and stopped at the next exhibit and I thought well, I got a question for that fellow. So, I decided to ask him if the celery (ph) that he used to grow there on the flats and showed their signs coming back here. So I went back in and asked him. He didn't answer me. So I looked a little closer and I finally decided that there was a figure. I looked at the people behind me and they were laughing, but they were laughing, too, simply because they were fooled also and there was an article in the paper the next day, the local paper here about it, that it was so natural he was there with...the only thing that I noticed different (with a silver knife (ph) in his hand, he had a block of wood and I thought well, they use all kinds of instruments now for carving, so maybe he had a blade on the bottom of that so I went on you know, and I was sure he was Mr. Mitchell. He's still living, but that wasn't him.

JW: Well you got any other questions about fishing that we can answer and maybe Mr. Engle can answer.

RD: What I think we'll do is go speak with him. I'll give him a call and John and I will go over and talk to him. Maybe I can ask Joe to do a lines drawing based on the information. He's done it before and Joe's had drafting ability and I have to impose on him and his talents.

VW: That's a definite plus.

RD: But you did this with a shad...the Nanticoke skiff just on talking to and the information he gave me and a week later Joe came and he had a complete drawing of the boat...wall dimensions on the plan, and maybe I can ask Joe to do something in this case.

JW: If you got time today, why don't you go on down to the Museum and take a look at that Nanticoke boat.

VW: I've been thinking about that.

RD: What size is she – the Nanticoke boat.

JW: Eighteen, 23 foot. They built them according to the depths of their net. That's so the dob line man could stand in the bow and the lead line fellow in the stern and take it right in over the side. No trouble at all.

RD: The one we have was never actually used. Did you get some of the history when you were down there on that boat? She was never used.

JL: It never had a coat of paint on it until after the Museum got it.

RD: She was bought by a state senator.

JW: It was built to be used there you mean?

RD: Well, it was built by a builder all these boats, but this boat itself was never used. It was built by a wealthy...well he died about four years ago...he was a state senator I believe. He grew up in Caroline County and they had a big auction of his. He was a collector of engines, particularly antique engines.

JL: He had a whole lot of farm machinery and stuff.

RD: Had a big estate auction.

VW: Senator Dean?

RD: I think it was senator Dean. But when he died, a lot of his estate was auctioned off and he had like two football fields of machinery.

JL: Queen Anne's County.

RD: Queen Anne's County, that's right. But he had one boat there and this was the boat that he had. Never been in the water. He bought it and put it in the barn and never even used it.

JW: I should have looked at it (unintelligible, many voices at once) It's been up there about 30 years. Well, if John takes a look at this boat, he can tell you the difference between that boat and the ones that we use.

VW: They got a steam engine over at the Tuckahoe Steam Show that's named after Senator Dean and

that's where it come from.

RD: That's right, they did get one, yeah.

VW: They bought that.

JW: More or less this one is the same type keel.

VW: The only thing is the ones that I saw just like the pictures that are in here, you didn't see any.

Now these had a real narrow top turn board that could be classified as washboard, but really a washboard in a cinch (ph) was put there to work on. I mean most of the time they were wide enough--8 to 10 inches wide-- so that if you bring the net over you could fish in that or take fish out of the net right there and the ones that I've been used to being around, these older ones didn't have any washboard on it, they just had a stiffener on the top.

JL: When you brought your net in and piled it up on that gang board down the middle, then you took the fish out later on.

VW: Well, most of the time we took the fish out as we brought the net in, especially a shad seine. If you'd have left the fish in that damn thing and it laid on that gang board, you'd have fish out of the whole net because any time they flopped around and carried on, it made a real mess. Shad seine was a real pain.

JL: Did you have a couple of kid (ph) boards as we called them. It went across the boat that you could have one group for the buck shad and the other one for the roe shad.

VW: I don't recall that. We just used to toss them in the bottom of the boat and you'd stumble over them. Either that or we had a basket. We used a regular 5/8 tomato basket. We used to put them in a regular basket. Easier to handle that way, you know. I'll never forget that one trip me and my brother made. We used to fish ebb tide for herring. You know herring you see them all over the place. And we caught one trip through there at ebb tide. It was 3 1/4 and we were almost at Barker's Landing before we got the fish picked out. We had 14 baskets of herring on that one trip with one net.

JL: Did you strip the roe out of them.

VW: No, no. We threw a lot of them back overboard if they were very much alive. A lot of times they get drove in the nets so tight they would close their gills, when I say drowned.

JL: Yeah, drowned them.

VW:.. What they call drowned..suffocated really.

JW: But they used to sell them by the thousands to the farmers and the farmer people would salt them.

JL: Drop a couple in the corn hill (ph).

JW: Oh, yeah. We used corn or bean hills (unintelligible) in the gardens and I remember one story that they told about a fellow. In fact I knew the man who lived in Poplar Neck near the Choptank and he was awful tight, so when he came down with one of these one horse carts to get some fish to salt away, he wanted a cart load, so these watermen they loaded him up—they figured he had loads. “No indeed, throw some more on the seine.” They kept on throwing them on until the cart broke down right there – broke the cart. (Laughter). Overloaded her. He wanted to get his moneys worth.

VW: They used to can that down at Tilghman's Island – herring roe.

JW: Harrison caught them down there.

VW: The Faulkner brothers used to run a cannery down there.

JW: Their father (ph) does too.

VW: I knew one of those

JW: Where are you from?

JL: Down at Pot Pie (ph).

JW: You may have known my brother when he lived Sherwood--Sonny Whiteley and he worked on the water. Been there for a while.

JL: The name is familiar.

JW: It's a good many years ago too. (Laughter).

RD: Gets past you after a while doesn't it. (Laughter).

JW: Yeah, you're talking about those Tilghman Island herring. I think I got one of the last cases that they put up down at Tilghman and I brought some of the cans up there and they're up there in the lighthouse with a label on it.

VW: Well, they used to can the roe. Well, herring roe was good.

JW: They gutted them and cut the heads off and scraped the scales and they put each one in a little part of a piece of parchment paper and stuck them in the cans.

JL: I suspect the women did that and they probably handled them (ph) about as fast as they could pick a crab,

JW: I think the money was in the canning. The cans were about like that, so high, and half were pickled-like.

RD: What did you do with the fish after they landed (ph).

VW: Well, we used to sell to the dealer. He used to come to Dover Bridge and we used to sell that at Dover Bridge right there at the Old Bridge Landing. You know, there's an old abutment there from the original bridge that was there and a dealer used to come down and buy it down there. But, most of the fishing that I did was for rock and we didn't bother much with shad, but shad was getting to the point that it was hardly worth the trouble, you know, because we couldn't catch that many of them. You had the rock and 5 cents a pound we sold them for.

RD: Is that right? (laughter).

JW: There was a fellow from Philadelphia who come down there and bought fish by the name of Gelfont (ph).

VW: We had a better business with little illegals than we did with (unintelligible) fish. (Laughter). We could sell the little illegal ones for \$2 a piece, you know.

JL: Did you catch any carp up there, too?

VW: Oh, yeah, that something...big old yellow carp, called them suckers, yeah.

JW: My father used to put a rope through the gills and tie them out to a stake and some colored person came along, and he (unintelligible) great big carp (laughter).

VW: We used to tie a buoy on them.

JW: That Gelfont (ph) fellow had a big tank on one of his trucks.

VW: That was for carp for the Jewish people.

JW: Yeah, could be kosher.

VW: Carp is a real late springtime fish. You don't see them. They plied the flats (ph). You know you could hear them at night. My bedroom was upstairs and you could almost spit in the river, and you know, the windows up at nights you could hear them out there – splash, splash, splash all over the place. That carp was mad – he'd roll in the water and throw that tail, you know, and the water would fly over them. They used to ply at the bottom, you know. They were bottom fish. They'd mess around and dug holes in the (unintelligible) foraging for roots, grasses and stuff. They'd leave a hole like a sunfish. Carp used to do the same thing.

JW: My brothers used to fish up at Williston (ph) too – they had a drift up there..

VW: I never got that far up the river. That was Ganey's (ph) wharf. I used to fish that one quite a bit. All the boys from Hog Creek used to fish out mostly at Ganey's (ph) and narrow down just above Dover Bridge and they even used to go to Williston (ph), too, for that matter.

JL: How about the fellows over out of Secretary and in there? Did they use a seine.

JW: They never seemed to come up the river them.

VW: They didn't come up the river. They stayed pretty well within their limits there because of the fact that the boats were not that mobile. You know, you didn't have that much range.

JW: They didn't do any type of fishing.

VW: Plus the fact that fish were plentiful enough that you didn't have to go anywhere else That was it. You could fish the area that you were in (many voices at once).

JW: They fished pound nets and things like that in there.

VW: They fished more pound nets and fykes (ph) and stuff like that down the river. Very few pound nets or fykes (ph) or any of that type of fishing above the Dover Bridge.

JL: All your fykes (ph), did you have wings out.

VW: Two wings went out on it.

JW: Had a leader and then wings on the side.

VW: Oh, they were a pain in the neck too. I'll tell you one thing, in the spring of the year, that was good. If you had set up right in the right place, that was a good money maker – a pound net, or fyking (ph).

JW: They fished while you were falling asleep. (Laughter). The gill nets didn't

JL: Well, you had to tend to them.

JW: That's like crab pots...two types of crab pots. The big square ones, they fish while you were sleeping 24 hours a day. They'd catch them too.

VW: I'd seen in the paper – in the Star Democrat the other day – this (unintelligible) in Oxford or St. Michaels or somewhere that makes those blasted things.

JL: Tilghman's Island, yeah.

RD: So, nobody's drift net fishing anymore on the Choptank?

VW: Well, I don't think so because you know, Maryland put the stoppage on rock fish and that just about killed it because now if you were going to fish now it would be for white perch and you'd fish with say a 3 ¼ net for white perch.

JW: For yellow perch, too.

VW: Yeah, the stopped yellow perch too, but mostly white perch come up the river now as far as game fish – not game fish – but a commercial fish. In fact now, there's so many small rock, the guys spend so damn much time picking a rock out and throwing him overboard just to catch him again later on, you know. They quit fooling with it.

JL: Did anybody much further up the river bother with catfish.

VW: I never much messed with catfish.

JW: Not much money in it.

VW: Once in a while you'd catch a little blue bottom catch...

JW: There's much up there at the mouth of the Sassafras River. They'd go in there at Turner's Creek...that seems to be their headquarters and they would catch quite a lot of catfish.

JW: Well, they haven't been catching them in the Choptank and I was fishing down almost to Cambridge Bridge a couple of years ago with my nephew and there were great big catfish down there. They used to catch them down there years ago.

VW: Yeah, it's really odd the way because catfish are pretty good eating, really.

JW: White perch... (unintelligible).

VW: (Unintelligible) or either one, you know...yellow ones and the white belly and the dark blue and almost black on top, well about the color of your sweater on top and a white belly underneath and they were big, got a real good size. I used to him the the channel cat. They were in deeper water. Some of them had a real big head on them. You know the mouth looked like a shark or worse. But they were given their size they were good eating especially when they set that barb (ph) up on top. They had a way of locking it...

JW: Boy, that gets infected, right

VW: It seems like it does most anytime, but I've always managed to get it anytime was between the fingers and the back of the hand. I never had to get one in the palm of my hand. But they had that fin – that back fin – they could lock that blasted thing up and you couldn't get it down and the side fins are the same way. They could lock them out and you couldn't pull them in. And the lead in side (ph) of the fin was sharp just like an icepick. If you could get a hold of that dude, he'd sure put the hurtings on you (laughter).

JL: All peculiar things come out of the water for sure. I'll tell you a porpoise story. My niece who still

lives on the Choptank with her husband who fished all his life just about. He was a Price. You may have known Graham Price – and he told me this story. Of course he was noted for stressing (ph) things a little bit, but I except it anyway. Anyway, he was crabbing with trot lines and he was down the river around Drum Point I guess it was and one day this porpoise showed up and he followed him back and forth all day long and he did that for several days. So one day he said he was crabbing on the Talbot shore and he wasn't doing much so he took his line up and moved over on the Chester River and the porpoise followed him over there and he made a couple of trips over his line and he heard a lot of splashing and looked over and the porpoise was laying belly up, so he went over his line and went over to him and he was dead so he was curious as to what happened, so he met with (unintelligible) and he was going to get him in the boat if he could, so he finally rolled him in the boat and took him to a fellow down in Cambridge that he knew and he looked him over and the blow hole on the top of him was plugged up with mud and there was a dead eel around his gills, rotten, and the only thing they could figure was that that porpoise was in pain of some sort or discomfort of some sort and he followed him back and forth trying to get some help. Cause the porpoises are noted to be very intelligent and after so long a time he figured that he couldn't get any help and the only reason that a porpoise would get mud in that hole there would be deliberately and they figured that that porpoise committed suicide. It is possible I guess with an animal like that they're that intelligent and he went down to the bottom there – in the muddy bottom – and plugged that hole up and died.

JL: Did he say how big that porpoise was?

JW: No, I don't remember that he did...it was just an average size. You thinking about age maybe? Old age?

JL: Yeah, I was wondering about the age of him, see.

JW: He was able to get him in the boat by himself so he couldn't have been too big, I guess.

VW: Well, you could get a pretty good size fish in a low tide boat. Once you start in the bend really, you could just start them over the side and just roll them right in.

JW: But, those porpoises are noted for...

VW: I've seen rock I couldn't pull out of the water. That was a big damn fish, I'll tell you that. You could stick a dinner plate right in their mouth. You couldn't clear water, couldn't clear water.

JL: Do you have any idea of the biggest one that your family ever caught.

VW: Well, the biggest one I've ever seen around there weighed about 65 pounds that we brought ashore, but those real ones, like I say I've had a hold of them that I couldn't get them out of the water – that big – and it looked like you stick a dinner plate right in their mouth. You know of course when you bring them up, their mouth comes open automatically.

JL: Were they female?

VW: Yeah they were loaded. You know their bellies were blown up.

JW: We used to get around the haul seine and of course the limit was 15 pounds and my father, of course, he could judge that right away just about. I always have to push the cork line down and (unintelligible) and roll them back out.

VW: I've caught them in a yield net where you know the hinge on a rock's mouth has got that double end on the side of their mouths – they call them a one strand on that. It's a lazy, you know in cold water and they're so loaded with roe eggs and ready to spawn and they're lazy and I brought them up. You just reach down right in the water, hook them, smack them on the back and put them on the boat for business.

JW: That's when you were lucky.

VW: If you got a hold of a male, a melt (ph), man, you could roll up about 10 corks a net and (unintelligible) you'd be. You get done picking all that mess off, you'd find him after a while. He'd be in there somewhere. The later your spring was, the worse it got you know as far as them getting lively.

JW: I see you got 10 foot oars you used in your boat there.

VW: The only oar we used was for steerage and you know to try to maneuver the boat around we used

also stern for steering, but it was either a 6 or a 10 oar.

JW: He (ph) came along when the motor came along.

VW: Now the Cole (ph) boys, they used to skull one. Old man Dave Cole (ph), used to skull a boat down the river. I used to see him do that, you know, one boat, one oar off the stern in the notch.

JW: They ought to look up the history of that family.

JL: Was that skull and oar straight that he used.

VW: Yeah, straight, just like a regular rowing oar, but it was a long one.

JW: It doesn't have a crook in it.

VW: Uh, uh. It didn't have that down drop in it.

JL: On your oars here up near the hand grip, did they leave that square so it was heavier to balance.

VW: Uh, uh. All of them that I've ever seen was round all the way up.

JL: How about the wood that they used for that.

VW: I believe it was spruce, Northern spruce I believe. It was real close grained wood. It wasn't redwood or anything like that. I believe it was spruce – something like Sitka spruce. You know, Sitka spruce is light wood and it's strong and it's a real close grained, but it was a pine of some description, but it was either white pine or spruce, but it was very stable because you never had any problem with warping or splitting and all that foolishness. The stuff stayed nice and straight. You know, any time it would be warped was if there was any weight placed on it when it was wet or something like that.

JW: It had to be the right kind of wood because you're out in all kinds of weather and the sun shines on them.

VW: Oh yeah. You just haul them in the boat and left them right in there. A lot of fishing boats had not the open locks, they had the circle locks right on the boat, right on the oar on there and they had a rubber (ph) wrap and then a ring put on them to keep the oarlocks from sliding off and you'd just flip them right down in the boat. You even had a little short chain on them run through the receptacle and lock on the ends and they could only go so far. You wouldn't lose that oar. It wasn't going anywhere.

JW: My father played good Samaritan one time at Hunting (ph) Creek that divides Caroline from Dorchester.

JL: Yeah, it runs up to the back of Preston.

JW: Anyway, we fish white necks (ph) up there a lot and we came out of there one day. This boat had come out of there. A farmer by the name of (unintelligible) had grown a big crop of watermelons and they were still using sailboats for transporting things to Baltimore – produce – so my father and I were in this haul seine boat and we had two sets of oars in that one and anyway, this sailboat came out. It was a push boat and in the process, of changing over and getting that push boat adjusted while he got his sails up and then sailed and the push boat broke loose and that thing was still running – running around in circles right there in the river and they were helpless. They had no other boat. So I guess we got help to get the people out a little bit.

VW: that's how they used to do that -- use a push boat. Of course, you couldn't sail down that creek. You couldn't hardly sail that blasted thing.

JW: Anyway, on the Choptank River I had a similar engine with a spark plug just around the top (ph), so my father said we're going to approach the boat and try to get close enough and he said you maneuver me over there and I'll see if I can knock the oar off the boat. Well, the first time around we missed it. We come around the second time, we knocked it off and we took the boat along to him and at first he wanted to pay my father for it and he wouldn't take anything. Well, how about a watermelon. He had the biggest watermelons I ever saw. That captain really appreciated that (laughter). He was helpless out there.

JL: That wasn't a bugeye, was it?

JW: I never learned the difference between the sailboats, but it was just a single mast.

VW: More than likely what it was.

JL: We have a bugeye there at the museum, but the fellow who owned it was going from St. Michaels

around to Oxford and the same thing happened with him. He was all alone on this bugeye and a yawl boat chafed her lines through and took off by herself and he was stuck. Somebody ran it down out there in the Bay and brought her back to him.

JW: Those things could happen I guess.

JL: I don't know whether you ever run across that or not yet.

VW: That's an odd way to push a sailboat and have two lines on the rudder for a push boat and two pulleys and then two lines up and you control the push boat.

JL: This fellow was all alone and he didn't have anybody with him when he left St. Michaels going around to Oxford out there and the yawl boat come loose on him.

VW: How about these fisherman any oystermen. You'd be surprised how many of them damn people can't swim. (Laughter). You know it never occurred to me – of course I've been able to swim ever since I was a kid – but it never occurred to me that somebody who worked on the water and staying within a foot of it you know and pulled oyster tongs all day long and can't swim. If he fell overboard he'd have been in a bad way unless he could get to the boat quick enough.

JW: A lot of times they'd get ice on their washboard (ph). (Laughter).

JL: Well, I think we will have to trace that guy down over there.

RD: That's what we'll do.

JL: Were you bothered much by driftwood in the river?

VW: If you had a bad rain or a hard rain or something like that, you'd pick up sticks and stuff like that, small stuff, but not heavy driftwood. If you had a real bad rain, real hard...

JW: Or bad wind...(unintelligible) some stuff on the bottom you get hung up on.

VW: Oh yeah, and we used to catch a place out there we used to call a peach orchard right out in front of the house. I don't know where they got that. That bank washed away several years ago and evidently there was a peach orchard on that farm at one time and some of those trees...

JW: At Lloyds Landing, Miles Creek comes out beyond the bend just a little ways and that water there whirls a lot that they call it curlicue. My brother and I were fishing two nets there at one time and one of them disappeared. The buoys went under and we thought we lost it completely and about a week later we had (unintelligible), Dave Cheezum (ph), do you remember when he lived on the Caroline shore, the next bend down from Lloyd's Landing – and we were fishing down there and we caught this netting here and it had four or five rock in it when it was new (ph) of course, but we got the net back anyway.

VW: All balled up and tied up in a ball.

JW: And there was a hang (ph) there. Somebody said there was a sailboat anchor down there that we got hung up. We were able to break loose from it anyway.

VW: As a matter of fact I had a sword come out of the river in front of the house that was caught in a drift net. About that long – its what I can best find on the history of that was it's like an infantry man or something like that sword. It's real wide and just a sharpened back about that long on the back. It's steel with brass handle.

JW: Up at Dover Bridge that Dover came from a town that was there before Easton.

JL: That's south of the bridge.

JW: And they said that boats used to come up – sailboats of course – because that's all they had then – and the ones that been out on the ocean would come up there and hang around a week or so to kill the worms. The fresh water would kill the worms.

VW: Where the Dover Bridge is and the old abutment where the old Dover Bridge is, originally was a landing because it was a high bank and they run a wharf right off of that. It was right there on both sides of course where the bridge is built and the old bridge was built – a lot of that was hauled in there, but that was high ground and that was a landing at one time before they put that bridge in there. But, Wilbur Engle can tell you they delivered a steam engine from Easton across the old Dover Bridge and they got halfway across the bridge and the bridge collapsed and the damn steam engine went right

down in the river. Now, he's got pictures of it when they dug it out with a cable. They hired a diver. It was a brand new steam engine. They hired a diver and went down and hooked onto it with a cable and they drug it out on the Caroline side and washed it off and washed everything out and they fired that damn thing up and delivered it (laughter).

JL: You're talking about a tractor steam engine.

VW: Tractor engine. Yeah. He's got pictures of it.

JL: I wonder if some of that stone work there of the old first bridge abutment was part of the landing. You don't know, do you?

VW: I think the abutment that's on the Talbot side is all concrete. I'm not certain, but I think it's all concrete. The other side, they used the same causeway and everything for the other side. The first bridge when it crossed the river was on a bit of an angle and then the second bridge, the new bridge, they switched the Talbot side around a little bit and it's more straight across the river. That was a wooden bridge that first one.

JW: And years back we got ready to come from Caroline and come over to Easton, we had to go according to the tide. If there was going to be an extra high tide, we stayed home because that road was covered with water.

JL: Couldn't get across that bar (ph).

VW: I've seen that several times – water being across that causeway.

JW: They finally built it up where they...

VW: There used to be a railroad bridge just below Dover Bridge, too, right behind Wilbur Engle. As a matter of fact the railroad bed is still back there. I seen in the paper the other day a guy by the name of Rodney King that used to deal in DuPont explosives. In fact we used to buy dynamite off of him for ditching and he was the one that blasted that bridge. I can remember that I was about 6 or 7 years old. They blasted that bridge and took that whole bridge out. Of course, it took all the steel work of it and all of that, but it was a wooden bridge all the way across the river – a drawbridge – and they dropped charges on all the pilings and cut the pilings off and blew the whole bridge – blew it all at one time. Talk about a spectacle (laughter) and it was up and down the river for a long time the pilings and the little creek that makes up just before when you go across it down the Tanyard Road, make a kind of a turn down. The cannery sitting there used to be Jack LeGage's (ph) cannery and on the mouth of that creek there's still the original pilings laying in the mud that was from that bridge. That's where they were stored right in the mouth of that creek when they were building that bridge and they're still laying there. They're petrified almost in the mud. You can see the round section of them. You know now this has been quite a few years ago and they might not be now.

JW: They're preserved in that mud.

VW: Those pilings every once in a while the ice will pull one down the wharf there at Hog Island Wharf. You get a low tide and you get a hard freeze and then the ice will get a hold of that piling and up to the point to lift it up.

JL: There's still some piling there?

VW: Yeah, there's still piling there and from the mud line down, it's the same as it was when it was put in there. Wood just as white and pretty like it was it driven in there yesterday.

JW: Yeah, especially if they used sweet gum for a piling. That will stay.

VW: Well, white oak will too.

JW: Not as well as sweet gum will as long as that's down in the mud.

VW: Oh yeah.

JW: Whenever using those wharfs, I remember the first ride I had on the steamboat, my older sister took me to Baltimore and back and my fare was 50 cents. I do remember the fare for kids – 50 cents round trip. (Laughter).

VW: My father got his arm broke on that wharf trying to deflect a boat that was coming in on the wrong angle...his left arm. Broke his wrist. Old doc from Preston (ph) near the Choptank who used to

live there set it. He come back a week later to check it and it started to grow crooked. Said it was no problem they took his arm and wham! Right on the table and broke it again you know, and reset it. Of course, you know, it's a wonder pop didn't take him to task over that. The old man was a very good size man. He's about my height and weighed about 235 – 240, and you know, if it had been me, I expect I would have broke the other hand on him. He said, “Boy, that smarted.” I guess it did. It was just starting to knit, you know, but it wasn't that much trouble to break it again, but it was still crooked. It stuck way out. He never could get the arm straight. It was still awful crooked.

JL: I just picked up an old copy of *Mutiny on the Bounty* I'm reading again and talked about the doctor that had...

END OF SIDE B