

INTERVIEW LOG

Interviewee: John W. Collins

Oral History # 80

Interviewer: Richard Dodds
Joe Liener

Date: November 7, 1990

Location: RFD #1
Princess Anne, MD
301-651-1037

Topic: Mr. Collins owns a 5 log power canoe, originally built in 1933 in Mt. Vernon. She was one of three canoes all built at the same time by Tommy Shores. This boat was used by Mr. Collins for oystering in winter and taking fishing parties in summer. He took the canoe out of the water in the summer of 1990, therefore, possibly making her the last log canoe to work on the Chesapeake. Subjects discussed included the background of the canoe and Mr. Collins' career as a waterman.

Comments: Very difficult to understand Mr. Collins.

Documentation:

Transcribed by:

Marge Berman
29709 Lyons Drive
Easton, MD 21601
410-770-4814

BEGIN SIDE A

Richard Dodds: ...And she's 37 feet, that's correct too.

John Collins: Unintelligible.

Joe Liener: Got the builder's name and all there.

RD: Is this the same boat?

JC: Yeah.

RD: Okay. She's called the *Sea Queen*, I see.

JC: Yeah.

RD: Was that the name you gave her?

JC: No, somebody give it to her.

JL: He didn't change it; bad luck

JC: I don't put no name on her.

JL: Bad luck to change the name.

JC: That's what it was – the *Sea Queen*.

RD: And the builder's name what I heard was Mr. Shores.

JC: Yeah, I couldn't think of his name...yeah, a little man.

JL: How's that spelled?

RD: S-h-o-r-e-s, Shores. Let me see what his first name is. Tommy Shores, is that right?

JC: Yeah.

JL: And she was built right here.

RD: She was built right down here, wasn't she?

JC: Down there at Oriole in that woods down there where they made the chunks and bolted them together and after they done all that, they filled her full of pine tar and after that stayed in there a while, they pulled her out of Monie up a creek there and brought her up here right across that (unintelligible) down there. That's where they built her.

RD: Okay, so they brought the logs up to here then built her.

JC: And that old man...I remember I was a little boy...them people over there in that old white house there, and he slept out on the porch. A little peanut (ph) man.

RD: I called Mr. Hopkins Fisher (ph) who owns the place down here and he gave me some information. He said he remembers that there were three canoes built and she was one of them.

JC: Yeah. She was the biggest one.

RD: She was the biggest one?

JC: Yeah.

RD: One of the canoes was name the *George W. Simpkins*.

JC: It belonged to that man over there. He had two of 'em.

RD: Yeah. And the other one was named *Mary A. Simpkins*. That was what he said the other one was and then he said that he thought this one was originally called the *Mary A. Murray*.

JC: That's right. That's the one.

RD: That's the same one? Okay.

JC: That man who got that store up there had her.

RD: That's the one we just passed when we came into town here, yeah.

JC: That yellow store right up here. And the boy had to pay for that boat. How much it cost to build her (unintelligible) overtime.

RD: Is that right?

JC: He died and I didn't get to get it (ph).

RD: That's too bad.

JL: That's too bad. Yeah.

RD: So those are the three canoes that were built at the same time. I guess they're all built for power, too, by that time, yeah.

JC: Yeah, they all had power then. But, the one I had before had a place in there where a mast stood up.

RD: How big was the one you had before?

JC: She was a little bit bigger than this one. She was wider.

RD: Now, this is a five log by chunk.

JC: I believe it is, yeah.

RD: We should find out, yeah. What was the name of the early one you had, did she have a name?

JC: She never had no name. One man around here had one...she was sold and he didn't know how old she was. His dad traded her for a drudge boat over across the Bay and brought her over here and they never did know how old she was and he was old himself and his daddy didn't know how old she was. And the man from Norfolk come down here and bought her; bought her and took her down there and put sails on her and stuff. That's the last I ever heard of her.

RD: You know your old canoe—where was she built, do you know; do you remember when she was built?

JC: No, I don't.

RD: But, she was a sailing canoe to start with.

JC: Yeah. Man she was rotten when I bought her and I kept her for years and years.

RD: Is that right?

JC: She had so many patches and you know (unintelligible) hole come in or something was rotten. Them kind of boats you cut it out and put a piece right in it and keep right on going. Nailed it into her. Ain't like a plank bottom boat.

JL: No, no.

RD: When did you buy this canoe?

JC: It's on there; I don't know just when one it was. I think I've had her about 20 something years.

RD: You got a date here 1959, Norfolk, Virginia, Raymond Conns (ph) and William Mitchell.

JC: Yeah, that's who I got her from.

RD: Oh that's who you got her from. It looks like you purchased it in '59, no '61. Bill of sale – '61. You've had her for quite a few years, haven't you then.

JC: Yeah. I was working down the shore one day crabbing and I seen this boat on the shore—this log boat—and I looked at her and I said, "Man, I'd like to have her, boy that's a nice boat you got, she got a good bottom and everything—I mean it seems new." So about a year after that, this boy got her and he had her in the harbor and she had a big motor on her and had (unintelligible) over the side of her and I guess it got rained in and stuff and they took the motor out and left her right there and a big rain come and she sunk

and she stayed on the bottom in the harbor here for a year and I went there and bought her from him. I got a man to pull her up and that's how come I got her. Yeah, the sails (unintelligible).

RD: Has she been a good boat to you?

JC: Yeah, but this boat here weren't nothing rotten about her, but the boat I had before when I bought her she was rotten. I could tell that up on the shore. I was using it for oystering.

JL: Were those logs cut right close here for the three that were built down there?

JC: I don't even know. That was way before my day and I'm 70 something.

RD: No, talking about the one you have now, you said they were cut near Oriole.

JL: Oh, down here, yeah... I remember that because when I was a boy I used to go down there with a man in a Model T truck and go across there in Monie. There was a drawbridge there. You turn right down there by the fire hall. There used to be a drawbridge and probably still there. I used to go there with that man.

RD: Down there in Oriole. That's where the logs came from. They hauled them around to the...

JC: And they towed them around there in a boat. They built the sides up and built her right on up. Fine looking things laying in the woods all bolted together (laughter). Man that pine wood looked like sticks of candy, it was so pretty, you know.

RD: Is that right?

JL: Twisted.

JC: Yeah. They put tar in there I guess to keep from rotting.

JL: They worked them out mostly in the woods where they cut them down.

JC: And when they towed them out here and all they done was put the top and sides and on them. They were all bolted together and everything.

RD: The little cutty was added later I guess, wasn't it? Did you put the cabin on her or was that on there when you got her?

JC: She had a pretty cabin on her. I put that on her.

RD: You put that on her, yeah.

JC: Just something to get underneath when it rained. She had a pretty cabin on her whoever had her. (Unintelligible) used to own her over there in Nanticoke. Yeah, she pretty cabin on her. We oystered in her. Had a stove in there and everything.

RD: Is that right? What did you use her mainly for, for oystering?

JC: Oystering.

RD: Did you do any crabbing in her, too?

JC: No, I never did crabbing.

RD: Just oystering. When did you start oystering? You start when you were quite early?

JC: Yeah. I guess I was about 20; I was a bit younger than that and go with somebody.

RD: You were born and raised here?

JC: Right here right across the road here. The house burnt down.

RD: Is that right? I guess you've seen all kinds of changes out on the water around here.

JC: At one time, that's all there was down here, them kind of boats.

RD: There must have been quite a few canoes around here.

JC: Man, there was a bunch of them. And then in the wintertime, there was (unintelligible) oystering would get the Smith Islanders to come up here in the wintertime and tong oyster and everyone of them had coasting canoes. They were the prettiest things

I've ever seen. They called them coasting canoes from Smith Island, from Tangier Island. That's where they come from. All sizes. They come up here and stayed all the winter, slept right on board 'em.

RD: They called them coasting canoes?

JC: Yeah, that's what they call them.

RD: They were bigger canoes?

JC: No, some of them were smaller. Boy, they were pretty. Man, this fisherman down there used to tell me, "He said, boy they're the prettiest canoes he ever seen, log boats. They were from Smith Island and Tangiers.

RD: Coasting canoes—that's interesting.

JC: That's what they used to call them. I don't know what they meant by that, but that's what they called them.

RD: Pretty boats.

JL: They never called them kunnners, did they?

JC: Yes, they called them all kinds of names (laughter). I've had people ask me which was the front of that boat. Yeah, I've had people ask me in the harbor coming down here looking at her.

RD: You have a picture of you working in the boat? Anybody give you any pictures of you working?

JC: Yeah, a man come down here—I can't find that nowhere in the newspaper. He took a picture there and it was in the paper of me working. He took a lot of pictures of me working down there.

RD: Is that right?

JC: Yeah.

RD: Do you remember who he was?

JC: No. The Tidewater police? No, I don't know who it was. The man on the police boat told me they were putting them in the papers and stuff, all them old boats. They come around maybe four or five times making circles taking pictures.

JL: Different angles.

JC: Yeah. I got an old book here of all kinds of boats that comes from up that away. They gave it to me for a Christmas present (sounds like walking up stairs).

RD: Oh, probably a Burgess or something.

JC: There ain't no log boats in there.

JL: Oh yeah.

JC: Did you ever see one of them books?

RD: Yeah—*Old Chesapeake Bay*. Yeah I think I've seen that, yeah. It's a nice book.

JC: You remember them old boats. I think there's one or two in there these, I call them dove tails when the stern comes down like this. What are the right names for them?

JL: Hooper Islanders.

JC: Yeah, but they call them dove tails.

RD: Dove tails or drake tails.

JC: You don't see no more of them.

RD: Not many.

JL: Not many, we have a few.

JC: Is that right?

RD: We saw one working the Choptank when we crossed the bridge.

JL: One fellow out there off of Cambridge was tonging out of one. Pretty good size one.

RD: You're right; there aren't many left there.

JC: Man, I didn't know there was none of them left. The last one I seen was down here in the harbor and that's been a right good while back. A man from Crisfield had her.

RD: Well, your boat must be the last canoe.

JC: Oh yeah, that's the last log that was ever made around anywhere.

RD: Yeah.

JC: She's the last one.

JL: I saw one lying down Federal Waterview (ph), right out there on the point quite a number of years ago at the end of the road that was hauled up. Have you ever been over in there, Waterview?

JC: No I ain't been over there for a good while.

JL: This was right on down below Jim Summers (ph) house.

JC: Yes, if you're going over there by the Nanticoke over there. The last time I was over there, they had one in the shed over there.

JL: Oh yeah. That's the...

JC: Is that still there?

JL: Yep. Next to the firehouse.

JC: Yeah and they said a car come along and somebody run into it.

JL: That's right.

JC: ...some drunk and they rebuilt it again. And they still (unintelligible).

JL: Yeah, that's a McKinley.

JC: Yeah, now boy that's old.

JL: Named after the president.

RD: Well, I think your canoe may be the last canoe to work on the Bay.

JC: Yeah, 'cause the reason why I say that when they see me out there oystering, they come up there and look. They say, "My god, I ain't never seen a boat – what kind of boat is that?" (Laughter).

JL: That's a good boat.

JC: I've had people go down the river and come by me and turn around in these fast boats and come back and look at her again.

RD: Is that right?

JC: They say, "Damn, boy that thing's old. (Laughter) Where did that come from?"

RD: You just hauled her out this summer, didn't you?

JC: Yeah. Man, I used to take people fishing in the summertime in it.

RD: Is that right?

JC: Yeah.

RD: Where did you usually go oystering around here?

JC: Down here at the great shoal and down here in Tangier Sound.

RD: Tangier Sound, yeah.

JC: Sometimes over in Nanticoke.

RD: Did you use her for oystering last winter?

JC: No. I ain't been oystering I guess about two or three (ph) years on account of that disease that's killed them. There ain't nothing around here to catch.

RD: Oh, is that right? There's nothing, yeah.

JC: Now, I've been out a lot, fishing and stuff taking people fishing. The last time I worked, I was working on people's plants (ph).

JL: Catching plant spats.

JC: Yeah, it must have been about three years ago, I guess. 'Cause they died too. They ain't no more boats working around here oystering no more.

RD: Around here, no.

JC: They all (unintelligible) all the oystering.

RD: I guess the plant down here gets all the oysters. Do they truck them in, or something?

JC: Yeah, they get them on trucks. Did you ever see the drudge boat down there?

RD: Yeah, the last time she was here, the city of Crisfield...

JC: They got one in there (unintelligible) right there at Harbor when you come in there. He just went up the Bay last week and tied up there.

RD: There was maybe about a dozen working in the Choptank when we came across today.

JL: I counted seven, wasn't it? Seven skipjacks out there.

JC: There's not many of them left, is there?

JL: About 23 or 24, I think it is.

JC: No, them people used to come down here when I was working taking pictures and the guy on the police boat said they put them in them books, but I ain't never seen them with them boats in there.

RD: Yeah.

JC: But that's what they got them for.

JL: I think all the bugeyes are gone and no more dredging with the bugeyes.

JC: I'll tell you something else around here when I was a little boy...these little crabbing skiffs...

JL: Oh yeah.

JC: They ain't never had no motors or nothing and if the wind died down, they put an oar in there and skulled down the water.

JL: Either that or poled them.

JC: Man, I bet you...boy there was a mess of them around here.

RD: Were they double ended skiffs?

JL: No, both double enders and a stern on them.

JC: Yeah, a stern on them.

JL: A lot of them come from Winona.

JC: And the bottom was built the long ways. They didn't have it across.

RD: Oh, it was fore and aft planking, huh?

JL: Yes, same with a Nancy (ph) boat.

RD: Yeah.

JL: You know what a Nancy (ph) boat is.

JC: Man, them people, they tell me, I don't remember that you used to go clean across sailing her in them little boats and if the wind died down, they had to stall down the line (ph). Man, I've seen them old people take the risk and do something like that just like our outboard motors. (Laughter). I never could do that. I tried. I get the oars off.

JL: You couldn't get...

JC: No, them old people watching them go across in the harbor there just like a little outboard motor on the back of 'em.

RD: Pretty.

JC: Yeah, they could do that.

RD: Are there any of those skiffs still around?

JC: No.

RD: They're all gone.

JC: There's one back there in a ditch that's rotten now.

RD: Oh, there is?

JC: Yeah, a man put her out there. There's two or three log boats in that ditch down there at Johnson's Creek.

RD: Is there anything left of them?

JC: I don't know. I ain't been back there for years. That man who owns that oyster (unintelligible) down there has got one down there.

RD: Oh, does he?

JC: Yeah. Fisher who owns the (unintelligible). His father had that rebuilt; didn't have her rebuilt; had a lot of work done. He had a railway down there then. And after he got her fixed, he put her up there in the creek, and never had used her anymore.

JL: I'll be darned. Got her all tinkered up and then layed her up.

JC: Brought her up there and I bought this boat and I needed a wheel, and (unintelligible), he'd go down there and get that wheel and you could have it and I took some boards down there and layed on that mud (ph) and took a hack saw and sawed the wheel off.

JL: Shaft off.

JC: Yeah, the shaft off and then I brought it up (laughter).

JL: Was that a wheelless wheel?

JC: I don't even remember now.

JL: You know whether the blade hooks away around.

JC: Well, I'll tell you what he done to her down there at the railway; right down in the middle of her he put a board in there about that wide. I guess the ice had cracked her.

JL: Opened her up.

JC: Yep and dug down in her about that deep and set a piece in her and painted her all up and took her up there in the creek and he never did use her. Had a motor for her and everything. Just bought a (unintelligible) engine and I bet they're still there. There are four in that creek.

RD: Well, maybe we'll go there. Is it easy to find once we leave here go up and have a look at her.

JC: No, you've got to get there in a boat. Yeah, you can't walk there.

RD: So much for that idea (laughter).

JC: It used to be you could, but it's grown up.

RD: Is it?

JL: Do you remember John Branford (ph)?

JC: I hear tell of him.

JL: Over on Fishing Island.

JC: I hear tell of him, yeah.

JL: He was quite a canoe builder and a bug-eye builder and a skipjack builder right out there on the marsh. How about Mr. Jim Summers (ph) over in Waterview. Do you remember him?

JC: Over there?

JL: Yeah, over in Waterview. He was a log canoe builder.

JC: Yeah, man, I knew him.

JL: Did you?

JC: Yeah.

JL: Did you know his boy?

JC: Didn't he have a daughter?

JL: No.

JC: That's not the Summers (ph) then.

JL: Yes, he had a daughter.

JC: She cut hair; she's a barber.

JL: I don't know about that, but he had a son James Arthur who was a boat builder and he lived right there in Waterview.

JC: Well, I knew a man over there named Summers (ph) and he built boats. I don't know if it's him or not and his daughter married a man over here and she is a barber right across that field there. She cut hair, now, I don't know if it's the same one or not. He was tall and he was hard of hearing.

JL: Well, the old man, Jim Summers (ph), the one I'm talking about died before I got down here and his son worked for me one time – James Arthur. Because I came down to hunt with him (ph) and they lived right there in Waterview. You know, that's right across the river here and James Arthur married a woman from White Haven who had a farm up there and I don't know what her name was, but when Richard told me about coming down here, I

thought I'm going to ask him about whether he knew those people.

JC: No, the Summers (ph) that I know I remember now – he's from Nanticoke. His name is Summers (ph) and he worked on boats. Man, he was a nice man that man, real old. He used to come over here and see his daughter and he stayed here one summer and he's always to the store (ph) at nights and his daughter said, "Boy, that's something. I don't know what's going on over there to the store (ph). Pop wants (ph) the stuff on the table so he can get back over to the store right quick and sit in the store and talk." He wanted to stay at the store all night (ph). Nice old man, tall, and it got so he couldn't hardly hear. Boy, he could build a boat; my land. He could mill a little fishing boat – a pleasure boat – looked something just like that just come out of the factory. Boy, he could build a boat. Now I don't know if that's the same one you're talking about or not.

JL: I bet it is.

JC: And his daughter was a barber and married a man over here – Shelton Hopkins (ph).

JL: Never heard him mention that name.

RD: You said you started oystering when you were about 20, maybe a little bit earlier than that. When would that have been? You are 80?

JC: I was 72 in February.

RD: Okay. So that would have been back 50 something years ago.

JC: Yeah, I've been doing it 50 something years.

JL: I got you beat by a little bit.

JC: You have. I didn't think you were 70.

JL: Eighty-one.

JC: You are? My land. Why you don't look like it.

RD: Everyone tells him that (laughter).

JC: Boy, you don't look like you're that old.

JL: Well, I'm glad of that (laughter).

JC: I feel like I'm 180 sometimes. I got bad feet. I had gone to the hospital there and had plantar's wart on my heel and can't get rid of them. It ain't like a wart on your hand that goes up under the skin next to the bone and if you don't get the last root, they come right back again.

RD: Is that from the work on the water?

JC: I don't know.

JL: No, I don't think so. A lot of people have those even though they haven't worked around the water or anything.

JC: I painted in the summertime all the time. I don't know whether it's standing on the ladder that's hard on your feet.

RD: How did you like working on the water? Did you enjoy it all these years?

JC: Yeah, I liked that. I wished I was able now to get down there.

RD: Yeah. If the oysters were out there do you think you'd be going out?

JC: I suspect I would.

JL: Did you ever do much fishing with a net?

JC: My land, I used to help my uncle over here with a fish pound (ph) all the time.

That's all I ever done one time in the summertime.

RD: Is that right?

JL: I was a pound netter.

JC: Fish pounder and used to go up the Bay with a man down haul seining every summer and stay all the summer up there around the Bay Bridge and up the Magothy; you could fish up that river there then, but they stopped that.

JL: Were you ever in Fry (ph) Pond?

JC: No. Bodkin Creek. You know where that's at, don't you? Bodkin.

JL: Oh, yeah.

JC: Went up the Susquehanna River fishing.

JL: Sure.

JC: Every summer.

RD: Did your father have a rig then?

JC: No, my dad didn't ever. He never even had a boat.

RD: Is that right?

JC: I went with somebody else. But, my uncle, he had four fish pounds and I used to help him put them out and fish with him besides the fyke nets.

JL: I saw you had some fyke nets there.

JC: But, you didn't get nothing for your fishing then. Man, you'd go down there in one net and pull up there in your boat and there'd be so many hardheads in there, the water would be boiling and load the boat under one net. Sometimes, you couldn't get enough to pay the freight on them.

RD: Is that right?

JC: And now if you had them, boy you got a sturgeon (ph) wouldn't you .

JL: Yeah.

JC: I used to like doing that. Man, I liked working on the water. Man, in the summertime, when I weren't doing nothing, I'd go down there and sit in my boat. I'd rather be sitting in instead sitting up here on the road. You know, people would see me sitting in the harbor or in the boat. I'd just like watching the boats go up and down. I like it on the water.

RD: When were the best years for you for oystering?

JC: Oh man, way back there.

RD: Back in the '30s.

JC: When there were plenty of oysters, yeah. Man, I've loaded that boat many a times. Come in about 11 o'clock. I took two women with me one day right in the middle of July and we caught 110 bushels.

JL: My lands.

JC: They were (unintelligible). Loaded that boat take them to oyster house.

RD: Well, you'd sell them right down here?

JC: Yeah. Got a dollar a bushel. Sometimes, we got 50 cents (ph), but, my land, there were oysters then.

RD: How was it last year you were oystering? How did you do?

JC: Oh, there wasn't much then. They were scarce. Boy, they were hard.

RD: Yeah.

JC: No matter how hard they are, but (unintelligible).

RD: How many bushels were you catching towards the end?

JC: My land, the last time going out, couldn't catch but two or three bushels.

JL: What was Connie's (ph) maiden name? Maybe he would know her parents.

RD: I don't know her maiden name.

JC: I went down the river one morning oystering. Man, times was tight then and man, I found a place down there where the man who owned the oyster bed (ph), didn't even know he planted them there. And, I forgot him and I caught – and boy I made a day's work. I made \$40 that day. That was a lot of money then. And the next day he didn't want none, because he had plenty of oysters and I went out there in the river oystering and man, the boat was coming by me was Candy (ph), and hear one of the guys say, "My god, that boy made some money." They said he made \$40. I guess the man (unintelligible). They were talking (unintelligible). Man, I thought I'd done something. I needed that day.

JL: Yeah, you hit a good spot, didn't you.

JC: Man, you could buy something then. A pair of tong heads right up there in the store was \$5. The last pair I bought I think they cost I think \$50 or \$60.

JL: And they weren't as good, were they?

JC: No, my land. Go up there at this store and buy a pair of hip boots; the best boots that ever was made for \$5 and the best (unintelligible) for \$4 or \$5.

RD: Yeah. Where did you get your shafts from for the tongs?

JC: Over there in Nanticoke. They still make them over there.

RD: Do they?

END OF SIDE A

RD: Look at the boat.

JC: Yeah.

JL: I want to take some pictures of her, too.

RD: I took some pictures when I was here last. These are just some of the ones that I took of her. (Sound of car engine).

JC: Boy, they're good. Boy, she looked ragged looking back there in the stern, though.

JL: But, one side looks good and the other side is not so good. I don't know if you've done the other side yet.

JC: What I want done is take a sander and sand her down and paint her and putty all them old seams up there and paint them. Then you wouldn't see nothing up there.

RD: I know she'd be pretty smooth. She looks in pretty good shape.

JC: Yeah, I got a picture. I took a picture of my old boat in '77 you know that winter – all that ice in the harbor. I'll bring it to you.

RD: Still has a nice shape to her, doesn't she.

JL: You got all her negatives.

RD: Yeah, these are the ones.

JC: I bet the ice was that deep.

JL: My land.

JC: I was standing on the ice back there in the harbor.

JL: Yeah, I see you're standing on the ice.

RD: Now, is this this canoe out here.

JC: Yeah.

JL: (Laughter).

RD: Man, she's frozen in there, that's for sure.

JL: I hope we don't have anymore...

JC: I think I got an old picture of that hulk in there.

RD: All right. That's a nice picture, isn't it?

JL: Man, I hope we don't have any more ice that much.

RD: Got a couple of pairs of tongs in there.

JL: Yep, and a scrub brush.

JC: This one's mine and that belonged to another guy. That's a smaller boat than mine. And the other boat, I don't know whatever happened to her. There were three of them. There's two of them here.

RD: So, that's two of those canoes, then.

JC: And here's a picture, I don't know who that was. That man down there in the harbor took them and give me them.

JL: Uh, huh. Yeah, some of her fastenings are starting to rust a little bit, aren't they (laughter).

RD: So, that's your canoe on the right before the cabin was put in there.

JC: No, here is mine.

RD: Oh, this is yours, okay, on the left. Yeah, she had a small little cutty up there.

JL: Yeah, this has still got the ice in the harbor.

RD: Oh yeah.

JL: That's in the summertime.
JC: Some man was down there taking pictures and he brought 'em to me.
RD: Oh yeah.
JC: But, that boat there...man, that thing is so wide.
RD: Yeah, she's big.
JC: She's one of them (unintelligible).
RD: Yeah.
JL: Yep. Rise and straight.
RD: Let me see if I can copy this one with my camera.
JL: Yeah, get the sun on her.
RD: Yeah, should be able to get her. (Sounds of snapping pictures.).
JL: Get one of that one too setting in there...
JC: I was just studying her. I don't know about that summer. Man, if that's the same one you're talking about or not. Boy, he was a nice old man.
JL: Well, he was quite a mechanic. He built a lot of boats.
JC: And you say you're 80 what?
JL: Eighty-one.
JC: God, why you don't show it. What are you doing for yourself to stay like that?
JL: Nothing. Travel around with him. Go down to the museum once in a while and look around.
RD: Keep out of trouble.
JC: I bet when people see it, you know what he went and done?
RD: What?
JC: Took her down there to Fairmount (ph) and had a man there and sawed her in half and put a square stern on her. Boy, that was something. A nice boat like that.
RD: Strange.
JC: And after he done that, she went down through the head, she was so heavy and they had to put weights in there and everything to keep her down to the stern. He said she was too long.
RD: Strange.
JL: How long ago was that done?
JC: Oh, it must have been about a very good while ago. He got her back up at (unintelligible). He's dead the man who built her (ph), but his boat is still there, cut in half. That same boat, but I suspect she's rotted by now.
JL: Which side of the road did he live on?
JL: Over on that side. He lived next to the water. Never was nobody who ever done that before.
RD: What was the earliest engine that the old canoe had? Do you remember?
JC: I ain't never had but two engines in her and each one of them had a six cylinder Ford).
RD: Six cylinder Fords.
JC: But, my lands, she's had all kinds of engines in her. When I first had her, the man who had the store up here, had a one cylinder engine in her – a great big fly wheel, that's what he put in her.
JL: What make was that?

JC: I believe it was a Faction (ph). Man, big fly wheels, spark plug up in the top of them. Boy, they'd run though. Weren't much stopping them from running. Man, anybody could run them. Never had over two horse on them. One man had muskrat (unintelligible) around the carburetor to hold it on. (Laughter). You know where (unintelligible) shakes. (Unintelligible).

JL: Did she have much vibration to her?

JC: Yeah, that's what I'm talking about. And, boy when they backfired, that was something. They'd kick your toes if you didn't have that timing gear right.

JL: Yeah, if you didn't catch her right.

JC: Yeah. I seen in a magazine not long ago one of them in there one of them motors.

JL: Yeah?

JC: In an old magazine. I don't know whatever happened to it.

RD: We got a number of old motors at the Museum we're restoring; old Palmers, Regals.

JC: Yeah, maybe that's what that was.

RD: Palmer.

JC: Yeah, I suspect that's what it was.

RD: They were pretty common down here on the workboats at that time.

JC: There were a lot of different makes of them.

RD: Yeah, a lot of different ones.

JC: My uncle had one with a two cylinder and he used to pick up sailboats down there; those old big schooners and stuff and go up and haul (unintelligible) and he used to tow them up there. It had two cylinders.

RD: It sounds like a lot of people in your family were watermen.

JC: Yeah. It would take all day to get up there (unintelligible).

JL: Yeah, well that's not a short trip from here and a pretty good current, too.

JC: That was a pretty sailboat when I was a boy seeing them coming up the river all them sailboats; three masted some of them. I guess there are none of them left around here.

RD: It must be quite busy in the river down here when you were growing up.

JC: My land, they used to all (unintelligible).

RD: Yeah. Was *Mt. Vernon* ever a steamboat (ph)?

JC: Yeah, there used to be a steamboat about right up here.

RD: Yeah, that's what I thought.

JC: Had *Victor Lynn* and *Red Star* and two or three more boats around here. They used to stop at White Haven.

JL: All run out of Baltimore.

JC: Yeah. From Baltimore to Salisbury. The reason why I know is 'cause I used to work up there on the dock helping load them things. Had these little old hand trucks with armed wheels. Boy, that was something (laughter). People around here then said if they had chickens or straw, or birds or anything you want, just get in your wagon and go right over to the steamboat and put it on the water and about two or three days you had the kit in the mail (ph)

RD: How are the mosquitoes around here?

JC: My land, they're not as bad as they used to be, though.

RD: Is that right?

JC: 'Cause they're spraying now all the time.

RD: It was pretty fierce when you were growing up (laughter). Well, you want to go have a look at the boat, Joe?

JC: Yeah, I didn't know what to do while standing here and looking. I was afraid she was going to sink on me.

RD: Is that right? Was she making water though?

JC: Yeah. But, I stopped it (unintelligible) and when the ice got kind of soft, I brought her up on the shore and boy I thought sure I was going to lose her.

RD: I was going to ask you when you hauled her out, when do you usually haul her out?

JC: I used to go to Deals Island, but when I first got her, there was a railway down the road there.

RD: Oh, was there?

JC: Ralph Krassen (unintelligible)

RD: I guess that's all gone now, is it, the railway.

JC: Yeah, it's all gone, yeah.

JL: Did you know Mr. Albert Brown over in Winona, the sail maker?

JC: Yeah, I didn't know him; I hear tell of his name, I didn't know him very well.

JL: His shop was all the way down at the end.

JC: Yeah, a little shop.

JL: One of his boys worked for me for about seven years –Tom. He had two boys, Tom and Henry and a daughter. But, Henry is in a nursing home up there in Princess Ann now. He's all crippled up. Old Mr. Brown.

JC: Did you know the man that used to own this railway down here now? His boys took it over—Willy (ph)? Did you know the old man Willy (ph)?

JL: No.

JC: He was a major owner (ph) and his boys took it over, now there's two boys.

RD: Are you talking about Junior Willy (ph)?

JC: Junior Willy.

RD: Yeah, I know Junior.

JC: What's that boy's name?

RD: I don't know what the other one is.

JC: Yeah, one of them is named Junior.

RD: Yeah, I know him.

JC: Allan (ph)

RD: Allan (ph) yeah.

JC: He was a nice man. They are nice people, though, them two boys are nice. They got a big business down there. I thought maybe you knew Willy (ph), the old man.

JL: No. I knew a few around, but not too many.

JC: Where did you say you were from? (Unintelligible). I told him before he bought me a mess of stuff. He went down to Crisfield there one day and he says I'll find you some down there. He come up with four boxes about that long with strings, plumbing and (unintelligible) around these pipes. He says I got you something to cart your (unintelligible) (laughter). If you sand her down, boy you wouldn't see the seams on her.

RD: There are only a few pieces here and there.

JC: She needs one, two, three pieces of wood underneath it. And when you caulk her...the last time I caulked her and put her on the boat she didn't (unintelligible). I painted (ph) her, the bottom laying in the water. In the summertime, I put boards over

her, so she wouldn't crack open you know, she's so tight. I believe you're better off if the boat leaks a little bit...keep her wet inside. I started that engine the day before yesterday. Every time I stepped on the starter and she went right over.

RD: Is that right?

JC: Yep, it needs a piece in here, and a piece in there, and a piece up there on the bow. Now, that side over there is all right.

RD: When do you hope to have her back in?

JC: I don't know. If there's any oysters, I'd like to get her back in and put her to work (unintelligible). I don't know if there's any more of them boats around here or not. I know there was over at Nanticoke there; that's been a right good while. There was one over there.

RD: She's now...

JC: I imagine she's gone now. 'Cause I used to see her down the river a long time ago. You could see right the stern of her, two color (unintelligible).

RD: There's one laid up there now for the last couple of years. A fellow by the name of Waters had her.

JL: She's a five logger.

RD: She's five logs.

JL: (Unintelligible, too far from microphone). A little girl in there the other day was scraping the paint off of her. Now this (unintelligible) boat on this side I got to tear off of her. Now, that side's all right. Just rotten up there in the cabin (unintelligible).

RD: Have you replaced any of the knees in there or are they still the old ones.

JC: They're the old ones. Man, she had a pretty cabin on her when I got her.

RD: It was a smaller cabin, wasn't it?

JC: Yeah, man, she had port holes in her. These are brass ones. I had a door in there and that man had it all fixed up there. The man must have stayed right on board of her (ph).

RD: Why did he replace it?

JC: Well, there's plenty of oysters and I took it off so I could get more oysters in there.

RD: Oh, I see.

JC: I've had her loaded clean up in the cabin of her. High as your head.

RD: I'll be darned.

JC: That's why I took it off and I was planting oysters for people and give 'em more room to shovel. (Unintelligible) so I took it off. So one day, me and another boy put that plywood on her just to get out the rain before they eat or something, or the wind at lunch time (ph).

RD: So, you pretty much put her back to the old way when you took the cabin off.

JC: Oh, she's made many a trip down that river. As far as I ever been up then was Crisfield.

RD: Is that right?

JC: I started out at Smith Island one day down there and it got dark on us, and I've never been up that creek – we turned around and come back. This collar board here, part of her, and this here in three places.

RD: That's not too bad.

JC: A man come here not long ago and rebuilt her. But, I've seen some work he'd done around the south (ph), but, I don't know about him. He wouldn't (unintelligible).

RD: You have to be careful of these kids.

JC: You got to have stuff on the boat that's right. If you don't, you'll have trouble leaking.

RD: Somebody who knows what they're doing.

JC: You know that boat that you got a picture of, she had so many patches on her bottom, you couldn't put another patch on her with people patching her up so much.

RD: Is that right?

JC: You cut a piece out of her, something like a wedge piece (ph) like a butterfly so it would stay in like (unintelligible). Boy, that man could do that whoever owned her and it didn't leak.

RD: I wonder why this canoe seemed to hold up better than the other one.

JC: My land, that other one is about twice as old as this boat.

RD: Oh, you're talking about all your previous boats.

JC: Yeah, that old one.

RD: Oh, I'm sorry, the old one, yeah. Do you know whatever happened to her?

JC: I gave it to a man who lives up the river and he put it on the shore for a (unintelligible) keep it (unintelligible). That's still under the same (unintelligible). I went up there one day and I seen part of the stern sticking out. Man, he done some funny things, that guy did.

JL: You said this one was about 30 something (unintelligible).

JC: Take care of that boat. He said that boat would outlast you and I think that (unintelligible). He hit it right. How in the world did they ever get a bin in that? My age (ph), I guess that's how they done it (ph).

JL: Chop her out.

JC: (Unintelligible) around like a ...

JL: Had an adze that was like a scoop to chop her out. They called them cold foot (ph) pads. I got a couple of them home. Once in a while when they get a job down there at the Museum or something, one of them fellows that come along want to borrow them off of me because they don't make them anymore.

JC: She's had a lot of holes (ph) in her when she had (unintelligible) engine. I drugged them up and can't find them now. But, she's had a lot of different kinds of motors in her. Here's where they had a hole on each side of her like that and when they took the motor out, they didn't close the holes up and she sunk in the harbor with all that rain and stuff. She stayed there about a year.

JL: And this one was built in '33.

JC: Yeah, that was his last one that was built – them three boats down there.

RD: That's pretty late for log canoes.

JC: Even the man down in Virginia said they'd come up here down from Norfolk and bought one up here. Really, he bought two. Yeah, I forgot, he bought two while he was up here. Yeah, I forgot all about that, (unintelligible) right there to the harbor when he come in there and towed them away.

RD: Is that right?

JC: And the man that owned her, he told him he would send him a picture of her and put the sails on her.

RD: Whatever happened to her?

JC: (Unintelligible, background noise). Put sails and stuff on her and sent him a picture of her.

RD: Well, I don't want to take up more of your time.

JC: I ain't doing nothing. No, one of them boats we were just talking about is in the (unintelligible) here though I haven't seen one of them for a long time. Like you said, you seen one up there.

RD: You don't see any down here anymore.

JC: What do you call them?

RD: Break tail (ph), Hooper Island launchers.

JC: They're hard to keep tight. If you know somebody to come on back of you, first thing would hit, they'd hit the pine up there and get her leaking.

RD: I guess a lot of people chopped the stern off eventually and just put a transom stern or something on her.

JL: That's quite unique that big chunk and put it right in here. See that. And look at that cross block they got in right there.

RD: Is that so that it will stop water.

JL: Yeah, to stop water. Strip (ph) pieces of this – the grain runs right across and that was put in and then this chunk put in to it to fill up the top of these logs. That's spliced into that wing log there. See it? Right under that. Well, that's how it's put in on top of these.

RD: I see most of the wood on this boat is, at least the hull, is original, isn't it?

JL: Yeah.

JC: Boy, she's heavy, though.

RD: Once she gets going, I imagine that she moves along, doesn't she?

JC: Yeah, she goes along good. The man had a V8 (ph) motor in her. Boy, she goes just like a speed boat.

JL: I see this side is different from that. See that chunk put in there?

RD: Yeah.

JL: Don't have any on this side.

RD: You're right.

JC: You know why that was.

JL: You overlap them like that. See, it's spliced in the same up at the top of that wing log right here. The same construction as this one.

JC: Just like it, yeah. Just a little bit bigger.

JL: A little bit bigger.

JC: I had her all painted up, cleaned up, inside and out.

RD: Well, you looked after her.

JC: When we put her back on board, she (unintelligible) was cracking a little bit.

INTERVIEW ENDS HERE.