

Interview Log

Interviewee: Otis Turner

ORAL HISTORY #97

Interviewer: John E. Aliyetti

Date: July 8, 1996

Location: Bellevue, Maryland

Topics Wm. H. Valliant and Bro
Bellevue Seafood Company

Theme:

Comments:

Documentation:

Audio:

Transcribed by

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NAMES

William Samuel Turner (Otis Turner's father)
Alma (Moore) Turner, second wife of William S. Turner, Otis Turner's mother)
Aubrey Turner (brother), founder of W. A. Turner and Sons .
Eddie (brother)
Kermit
Rachel (first wife of William S. Turner, Aubrey's mother)

SITES

Bellevue

BOATS

S. J. Delan
Thomas A. Jones
Mary F. Croswell
Catherine
William S.
William A.
Jocko Graves

BEGIN SIDE A

JEA: I don't know if it will come out any good, if it doesn't I'll throw it away (laughter)

OT: Aubrey started in 1937 until...they shucked oysters in that old garage, shucked from '37 until '41 when World War II started.

JEA: I just want to back up a little bit. Your brother, wasn't he a captain on a schooner for Valliant.

OT: I was, too.

JEA: I know. Your father, William S. Turner, (Samuel Turner), wasn't he also a captain on a schooner?

OT: He was, too.

JEA: Because Joyce asked you, and I got the names of those ships that you were on down there....do you have any idea what year your father arrived here?

OT: My father came here from...he told me he was born in Kentucky and he left thar at the age of 4 years old. His father carried him from thar to Chicago, Illinois, and thar he stayed. He didn't tell me what age he was.

JEA: Well, he must have been a pretty young man when he got here.

OT: He was a young man. He come here with his Uncle horse trading (phonetic). I think he said he was 16 years old and he told me he was born in I think in '65. And he said that he come here, he come up to Baltimore, and man walking up the street thar and asked did he want a job on a boat and he told him yeah. He said he left his uncle to come down and enjoy (inaudible). He come down thar and take a boat and come down here and he landed up Norris Creek. And he says he was trained up in Norris Creek and thar he kept sailing over thar and that's where he met his first wife at. That was Aubrey's mother, Rachel.

JEA: That was Rachel, was his first wife.

OT: First wife named Rachel married William S. Turner, then (inaudible) and finally his mother died and married my mother which was Alma Turner.

JEA: Emma?

OT: Alma Turner, her name was Alma Moore at that time, but he changed her name to Alma Turner and he married her and at the same time she helped Aubrey, and he come up as I had come up (inaudible).

JEA: When did he come down here to start working for Valliant? Must have been after he had been out working up in Norris Creek for a while, I guess.

OT: Before he did, I (inaudible).

JEA: But he did eventually come down here and start working for Valliant?

OT: He was captain of a boat called by the name of *S. J. Delan*.

JEA: Uh hmm, the Delan.

OT: That's what he did and all the time that he was captain of the boat called the *Thomas A Jones*, a great big old 175 ton schooner.

JEA: Yeah. A big boat like that, now did they do more with that than just go between here and Baltimore. Did they go down to Crisfield, or anything like that?

OT: All the time. They used to go over to Washington, used to go to Norfolk, Richmond, Philadelphia and all.

JEA: So, they went all over the bay.

OT: Went all over the bay.

JEA: And they hauled freight mostly for Valliant?

OT: For Valliant and they hauled up Richmond (phonetic). I used to go up thar with him.

JEA: So in 1937, when he started shucking oysters here, he was still skippering a boat or was he working on the water?

OT: Well, he had given it up.

JEA: And how about you? What were you doing then?

OT: Well, I was a captain of my own boat then. I was captain of my boat at the age of 18.

JEA: That was pretty young.

OT: Pretty young. I couldn't even get a captain license, I had to have somebody go with me.

JEA: What did you have to do to get a license?

OT: I had to, according to the Turners (phonetic), I had to get a sailing (inaudible) license until I turned 21.

JEA: And what did you do, go up to Baltimore?

OT: Go up to the Custom House.

JEA: The Custom House.

OT: Then later on in years, I used to go up in Jersey and I come cap'n my boats up thar in Jersey.

JEA: Doing what?

OT: Dredging oysters.

JEA: Dredging?

OT: I come cap'n my boats up there for years thar, I come cap'n my boats up thar (inaudible). I started up in Jersey, used to go up thar and...

JEA: So your brother started here shucking oysters, or he had a business, and he had a couple of people working for him shucking oysters. How did he get the oysters?

OT: He got 'em out of the river here.

JEA: He did it himself?

OT: No, no, he bought 'em.

JEA: He bought 'em?

OT: He bought 'em.

JEA: And he did that, he must have done that for a couple of years until the war started, right?

OT: No, that was in '36. The war started in '41 (inaudible) '41, December 7.

JEA: So between '37 and '41, wasn't he doing pretty much the same thing?

OT: No, I tell you what he done, he shut down the business. Him and I used to run to Chester, Pennsylvania, to Penn Steel and worked.

JEA: He worked up there?

OT: He worked up there.

JEA: What year would that have been?

OT: 1941, worked up there in 1941.

JEA: So when the war started, you did that? And how about Eddy? Did he get drafted, or what made him leave?

OT: Eddy got drafted and he served.

JEA: Yeah. So he left about that time, too.

OT: Yeah, well he went into the service, I didn't. I went up to Penn Steel. I worked in Chester, Pennsylvania and worked up there until '45 when the war was over.

JEA: You lived up there also?

OT: Come home every weekend. I would come home every weekend until the war was over and when the war was over, there was a colored folk by the name of Ernest, he was from down South, and the war was over, and I said to him, I said "Old man". I said to him, that colored man (inaudible) superintendent. He was a white gentleman, he was a fine man. He was superintendent of Penn Steel, and the war was over and Ernest said, "Oh you can't go home." I said "the war's over Ernest I am going home." He knew what I had in my mind. He said what I had in my mind. Everybody that had gone to a steel (inaudible) on the farm. Come off the war you know, because of the war, we were fine here at the time.

JEA: Well, who was working on the water?

OT: Nobody. Them oysters were out there multiplying. I was thinking about Mr. John (inaudible), you come home here. Anywhere you put your (inaudible), get your boat in the water. That's what I had in mind.

JEA: Everybody was dredging then.

OT: (Inaudible) with tongs.

JEA: You were tonging.

OT: Everywhere you went, (inaudible) catching boat loads.

JEA: Well, who did you sell them to?

OT: Well at that time you come home, you ...

JEA: Aubrey?

OT: That's when he bought a place down here and that's where he (inaudible) and I would sell 'em to him.

JEA: Aubrey did that.

OT: Yeah.

JEA: How come Valliant sold him that land? I thought Valliant was being kind of hard about things about selling land.

OT: Well, let me tell you about that. He told him to go in the chicken business. That's what he told him.

JEA: Told him he was going to start a chicken farm or something like that.

OT: He said he was starting a chicken farm. Before it got sold, he already bought it out. Find out he was (inaudible). (Laughter).

JEA: Now money must have been tight. How did they pay for that land?

OT: I tell you, he must have been making money. I'm gonna to tell you about that. One day I was setting on this porch when Aubrey said to me, "Your brother Eddy come here, right after shucking days were over. Come on, how are you going to keep (phonetic) the furniture if there is a money problem (inaudible)." And he said, "Bet you can't tell me how much money is going out." I said, "No, I can't." He said, "There is \$144,000 what I cut out shucking oysters this fall". I said "What, \$144,000 cut out clean money." That's what he said. He told me he wasn't able (inaudible) was no lying man. "I'm going to tell you about it (inaudible), shucking days is over (inaudible)."

JEA: So how do you (inaudible) them, just shovel them off.

OT: Just shovel them out (inaudible). Put out a boat load of shells (inaudible). And he come out here, he said "Oh lord". He said, "Now I thought you couldn't plant no shells. He said, "If I had planted all them shells, all them oysters, (inaudible), laughter). And I said, "You never know. I said, "You know," I said, "You never know what the future holds."

JEA: Well, then about that time, is that when he started W. A. Turner and Sons? Did he build the building then?

OT: Yeah, and he built the building (inaudible).

JEA: Leon kind of remembers building the building while the war was still on.

OT: I guess he had about 35 or 40 shuckers then.

JEA: Yeah, and so after the war, Eddie came back, but he didn't come straight back here, did he?

OT: (Inaudible).

JEA: Didn't he go to work in a defense plant somewhere?

OT: No, he come right straight back here.

JEA: How did he learn how to build boats?

OT: He learned that during the war, (inaudible). Before he went to war (inaudible). Sun Ship Building, that's where he learned ship drafting?

JEA: When was that? Before the war?

OT: Before he went in the war.

JEA: Before he went in ...

OT: (Inaudible) in the war with Sun Ship Building. He had done ship drafting and all that kind of stuff. Unsure how many boats he (inaudible).

JEA: Uh, well so after the war, he came back here then.

OT: Yeah.

JEA: And were they just doing oysters down here, were they doing any crabs then do you remember?

OT: They were picking crabs and shucking oysters?

JEA: They were picking crabs.

OT: Picking crabs and shucking oysters.

JEA: And were they getting it from the local people, or was somebody bringing them in?

OT: (Inaudible) boat called the *Mary F. Croswell*.

JEA: Now, okay, the *Mary F. Croswell*, whose boat was that?

OT: Aubrey Turner's boat.

JEA: Did you skipper that boat?

OT: Him and I both together.

JEA: Then he had the *Catherine*.

OT: Yeah, she was a buyboat.

JEA: How did he use the *Catherine*?

OT: Well, he would go to out and buy oysters

JEA: He would go right here in the river and buy oysters.

OT: Buy oysters from the tongers

JEA: And bring them all in here.

OT: Bring 'em in here.

JEA: And you took the *Mary Croswell* out and you would dredge with that.

OT: I would dredge with that.

JEA: And would you bring it right straight back into here?

OT: I would bring it right over there and unload it up here.

JEA: At about that time didn't Eddie start doing some clamming?

OT: Yeah. They shucked clams here. They done all that.

JEA: Was that all part of William A. Turner?

OT: That was all part of the business.

JEA: That was Aubrey Turner.

OT: They shucked oysters, shucked clams and picked crabs. It was a great business at one time. I'll tell you now, I'll tell you about this year's crabbing. Before I come in here, they said, ""What about the crabs this year? There are no crabs. I said, "What I know about the crabs," I said, "Let me tell you something, (inaudible) "I crabbed for years." I said, "You had a freeze last year." I said, "You know where the king (phonetic) crab come from, from the freeze" (Inaudible) back when I used to crab way back thar in the freeze, you had no crabs. I said, "Now mark what I tell you." I told him that day, I told the fella sittin' thar way back thar, I said, (inaudible), "You're gonna have crabs, they're gonna be late. You know why, because all your old crabs died off. Crabs got (inaudible)."

JEA: I hear that's a normal cycle when you have a freeze like that, that the crabs...

OT: Nothing you can do about it.

OT: This is what I'm trying to tell you. When a man don't know and if he don't know it's pitiful. You know, like god (Inaudible). Where were (inaudible). He wasn't there, and I wasn't thar and you wasn't. It's part of the creation. He wasn't thar (inaudible).

JEA: Do you remember the year that your father died?

OT: Yes I do, 1950.

JEA: He died in 1950.

OT: 1950, in March.

JEA: Is he buried in Easton?

OT: Buried in Easton.

JEA: Is that at the same place where Aubrey is? Is it called Richardson or something like that?

OT: Yeah. (Inaudible).

JEA: Somewhere, doesn't ...Aubrey died in...

OT: 1956.

JEA: Okay, now somewhere in there, doesn't Eddie split off part of his business, or isn't the business divided up somehow?

OT: Yeah, since that time, (inaudible) got one part of it and he got the other part of it.

JEA: When, since 1956 since Aubrey died or before?

OT: No, I tell you what happened. In 1956, when Aubrey died (inaudible), John...

JEA: Yes, John took over the business.

OT: John took over the business with his mother and she died 1958. She had taken over the business, you know, and I think before she died she told him---(background noise),"John, you got to grow up, (inaudible, you got to grow up and take the majority this business (indiscernible)." Eddie didn't know so many times what you're doin'." So one day (inaudible), and finally they had a law suit.

JEA: They had a disagreement about how to run the business.

OT: No, about the money part of it.

JEA: How to divide it.

OT: (Inaudible) and John had taken the money his father had in the business and by the time he (inaudible).

JEA: I heard John did pretty well.

OT: Oh man, John (inaudible).

JEA: So then, after Aubrey died, then John and Eddie had a disagreement about whatever, and so then Eddie started his own business.

OT: Eddie started his business (inaudible).

JEA: Now he called it the Bellevue Seafood Co.

OT: Called it the Bellevue Seafood Co.

JEA: Was he just doing clams or was he also shucking oysters?

OT: He shucked oysters down thar and they also shucked clams.

JEA: How about right after when they first split up...

OT: That's right, I tell you about the clam industry. You know in June, do you recall the hurricane we had in June?

JEA: Yeah.

OT: Hurricane, what do you call it, Agnes?

JEA: Yes, Agnes, okay.

OT: And, do you know, I used to (inaudible) down there for him too before then. You know, we had no clams around here before (inaudible) Agnes. Not now. But the (inaudible) clams come back up north...

JEA: I don't know about that.

OT: (Inaudible).

JEA: Do you know anything about an invention that Eddie made about clamming? Did he invent something later that he could dredge clams up easier or anything like that? Do you know about it?

OT: All I know is this much. He made some nice clam dredging. I know that much (laughter). He did very good with (inaudible). I tell you what I did, I clammed a boat of his and boy she could pull them in (inaudible) the bottom and rake that bottom up and put them clams (inaudible). He would be up there on (inaudible). He got a basket coming off, taking them off. He set 'em back on deck and (inaudible). You know what he did? He had the (inaudible).

JEA: You were taking too many.

OT: (Inaudible).

JEA: Well, during that time, weren't you still dredging with the *Mary Croswell*.

OT: Yeah, all year I was dredging, until she tore (phonetic)..

JEA: But, what happened to the *Mary Croswell*? How come...

OT: I did that after Aubrey died (inaudible).

JEA: So he just left it out there and didn't keep it up?

OT: (Inaudible).

JEA: John took over that boat. That was his boat then, right?

OT: Well he didn't bother with it. He just let it go.

JEA: He just let it go?

OT: (Inaudible) John at that time (inaudible).

JEA: But in the meantime, Eddie, he wasn't doing that, he was down there working hard on the water.

OT: (Inaudible) Eddy (inaudible) about 1989.

JEA: Yeah that's what I remember, 1989. And so, there still was a W. A. Turner and Sons in existence, and then what happened to it after that? Is that when Kenny got involved in it? Did he run it.

OT: When he died (inaudible), when John died (inaudible), but Eddie (inaudible) after John died (inaudible). Now Hayward and Edzel, Eddie's boys, they take it over.

JEA: I was down talking to Hayward last Thursday, in trying to get what he could remember about how his father did, how he started the business and doing all like that and what they're doing, and of course he said the crabs are getting even worse now. They're not getting better yet.

OT: No, I think when they had no crabs (inaudible). I said you'd be surprised. I've been saying this about the natural resources. I'm going to tell you something, "I'm gonna to tell you, Mr. John, if you don't know what you don't know, don't (inaudible).

JEA: Well, you're the most experienced man here, and that's why I'm talking to you about it. You know more about it than anybody else.

OT: Meanwhile, I'm 90 years old.

JEA: I know you are, and there is nobody that knows any more about it than you do, and so we gotta get some of this written down what you know, so we can pass it on (laughter). We don't all have the time to learn by experience.

OT: (Inaudible) going back there in the early forties, '42. Then you're hauling so much, but...

JEA: Why did Leon or Kenny, why did he get out of the crab business?

OT: Well I'll tell you, his wife (inaudible) some controversy (inaudible). And she died (inaudible). And she went off selling crab cakes, you know. And she got quite a good business over thar selling crab cakes all along the Western Shore. (Inaudible) shut the business down.

JEA: Okay, but the name is still in existence, it's just not doing anything (inaudible).

OT: He started doing something and then he quit. I asked him if he was going to do anything and (inaudible).

JEA: I know everybody knows he's a clever guy. I mean he does things, he can make things. He's very mechanical. Tell me this, did Eddie build the *Jocko Graves*?

OT: He built (inaudible). I'm going to tell you what boat he built, Eddie built the *Jocko Graves*.

JEA: He did build the *Jocko Graves*.

OT: He built the *William A*.

JEA: Were they all work boats?

OT: He built the *William S*??

JEA: They were big work boats (inaudible). The *Jocko Graves*, that's the same one that Sam is working now, isn't it?

OT: Eddie built her in 1974. The *William S*. and the *William A*. built in 1978.

JEA: The *William S*., he name it after his grandfather and his father.

OT: He named it after my father.

JEA: Yes. Tell me, what happened to Kermit?

OT: My brother, that's my brother, he died.

JEA: Did he die young, a long time ago?
OT: No, he died about four years ago.
JEA: Did he work on the water?
OT: No, he didn't work on the water.
JEA: When I'm talking to other people, his name never gets mentioned, and I can't find any recollection of where he worked. So did he work on the workboat or dredges?
OT: Yeah, he used to work on (inaudible).
JEA: Whatever happened to the *Catherine*?
OT: She just went to pieces.
JEA: (Inaudible).
OT: (Inaudible). My other son (inaudible).
JEA: Well now who's living in that house now?
OT: Eddie's brother (inaudible). He bought it. He bought it from Laura, his sister. He paid her \$79,000 for that house.
JEA: Wasn't this Laura's house?
OT: That was her house at one time.
JEA: Well this was John's house? Which one was John's house?
OT: That was Laura's house (inaudible). You know why (inaudible). You know at the same time she was working for quite amount of change. (Inaudible) \$150, \$175,000 and then she turned around, got a lot of money from John (inaudible). I said, "You know Laura, I said, "You know a person has to (inaudible). I said, "When greed takes over in a person's life," I said, (inaudible). I said, "You gotta be careful, you know, what you say and what you do about money."
JEA: But she died before her husband.
OT: She did. She died in August 1994. Her husband died (inaudible).
JEA: Yeah, and I guess they went to court after that. (Inaudible).

Interview ends here. End side A

Interview Log
ORAL HISTORY #97

Interviewee(s): Sarah Moore and Joyce Landman

Interviewer: John E. Aliyetti

Date: July 8, 1996

Location: Bellevue

Topic: Recollections as children growing up in Bellevue.
Community life in Bellevue.

Theme:

Comments:

Documentation: Audio: Tape #OH #97

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Two Turner women being interviewed believed to be Sarah Moore and Joyce Landman.
Hard to discern each one on interview.

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- NAMES:** W. A. Turner
Otis Turner, son of W. A Turner
Lavinia Moore, Sarah Moore's maternal grandmother
Stephanie (ph) Moore
Ernest Moore
Peggy Moore (cousin)
William Valliant
William Dawson
Earle Field
Eddie Turner
John Turner
Novella Flannary
- SITES:** Clay's Hope Farm
Dawson House
- BOATS:** Mary A. Croswell

BEGIN SIDE B

JEA: So, Sarah, you've lived here all of your life, right?
SM: Yep.
JEA: When would that have started? I mean, what's the earliest recollection?
SM: Of the W. A. Turner?
JEA: What's the earliest recollection you have living here in Bellevue?
SM: Oh, I could say back to about when I started elementary school at the age of 5.
JEA: So, that would have been when the school was here?
SM: Here.
JEA: It was here then.
SM: Uh, huh, and that would have been nearly 67 years ago.
JEA: How did your family get here? I mean how did you end up here? Were they sharecroppers, or watermen, or what?
SM: No, my grandfather was Otis's uncle.
JEA: Your grandfather was Otis's uncle.
JL: Uh, huh. My father's mother was a Moore. His mother was a Moore, Lavinia Moore. And Lavinia Moore and her mother's father were brothers and sisters, so that was the Moore family. That was Stephanie (phonetic) Moore, Ernest Moore, so Peggy's in there too.
JEA: And Peggy's in there? And what's your relationship to Peggy then?
SM: Cousin.
JEA: First cousin.
SM: No, my mother and Ernest were first cousins. Ernest was a first cousin.
JEA: So, when your family came here, how did they make a living?
JL/SM: Well, more likely from my memory that they all worked for William Valliant. .
JEA:
Shucking crabs?
JL/SM: Shucking crabs, shucking oysters, tomatoes.
JEA: That was a big operation.
SM: Yeah, he did crops of string beans, spinach and vegetables. He canned vegetables down there.
JL: Now that was the canning end of it. Now my family did the carting up and down the....
SM: My grandfather was a captain, what they call a spiritual captain. But he was a captain out here in the waters and he took the crab meat from the factories and from the farms to Baltimore to market.
JEA: Okay, that's how they got them out of here.
JL: That's how they got them out of here.
JEA: They took them all out, because there wasn't any real good transportation.
SM/JL: Oh no,
JEA: But there was a railroad station up in Newcomb.
JL: Okay, so you got the farmers, they would come—see everything was just up here on the water. All the farmers came to the water. So the water was a natural way to move let's say to Baltimore.
JEA: And did they use schooners?

JL/SM: Yeah, that's how they would haul, by schooners.

JEA: But you know, now, when I look at the watermen here, I don't know how they got these things in here. There's no water. It's so shallow.

JL: Well the deep water is right there where that edge is that comes up here.

JEA: Where the ferry slips are?

SM/JL: Right in here where they came into the factory.

JEA: Okay.

JL/SM: The oysters were mostly shipped by that railway.

JEA: Now, when they did the oysters, did they can them? They didn't can them?

JL/SM: No, they were packed in I think they were called gallon cans, big cans.

JEA: Were they sealed?

JL/SM: Yeah, they were sealed, hermetically sealed and put into barrels of ice and shipped that way.

JEA: Okay. But, your father talks about being a captain of a schooner.

JL: Him and his son.

JEA: He talks about making pretty good money doing it too.

SM: A lot of money.

JL: Yeah he got so much per can, per crate, you know they figured it out how much he could get. It all depends upon how many, and when he came back, he brought back empties. See, he left loaded.

JEA: Was it Valliant's ship?

JL: It was Valliant's. He retired. My grandfather, I hate to say it, came here and how he started out is a mystery. I personally cannot trace his roots. Now they have said that he came out of Tennessee. That's what I thought, was he came from Tennessee. They can't, they can't know that definitely and they don't like me to say it, but I must say it, that he came here on a boat out of Baltimore. He told my father at the time...my grandfather was a kind of a fellow he didn't talk much about himself and I was ready to listen for him to talk. You know, he stayed right there in the house with us. I didn't know enough to question him. Had I been a little older, I would have tried to try to find out more about it had I been able to have writing skills and things. But anyhow, he came here by way of Valliant and somehow, him and Valliant became sort of friends. He took my grandfather and would go down there to that house that you see out there, where they had the house on the corner, (both talking together). Well, anyhow, they said my grandfather used to go down there and sit on the porch because he believed that my grandfather was Caucasian. The pictures that we have of him are over here. Lonny (phonetic) came into a place like this and married my (unintelligible).

JEA: So he just came on his own one day.

SM/JL: He just showed up. That's the way a lot of people came here, a lot of people. In fact, in those days, a lot of people came here through Valliant. Gave somebody work, you know. ...

JEA: What about your family.

SM: My family originated from here.

JEA: They had to have worked on the plantations or farms and if they weren't slaves here, they became sharecroppers or something after that.

SM: They weren't sharecroppers (laughter)

JL: (Unintelligible). The Moore's were joined through that farm right there behind daddy's.

SM: And in the Clay's Hope history nobody has said anything. When I was a child and I know you all have heard of him, there was a man that owned that Clay's Hope Farm and that house sat next to Earle's. It was a tenant house on Clay's Hope and it still got the original tin roof on it.

JEA: Uh huh.

SM: Mr. Earle Field's house (unintelligible) Uncle Billy (unintelligible).

JL: And when I was a child it moved over here.

JEA: So you were a child that happened?

JL: Yeah, they moved that house here. They used to call him (unintelligible) great uncle.

SM: And he worked for that (unintelligible) guy.

JEA: But your recollection of your family, mainly, is that they worked all down at the Valliant plant.

JL: All at the Valliant's.

SM: Uh huh

JEA: And Valliant also had a fertilizer operation here also.

JL: Yeah, he did shell. He did fertilize, fish and shell and they did about everything down there you could name (laughter).

JEA: Did you ultimately rent a house from Valliant?

JL: Valliant, I think so and where I lived, it was a two story house where I was born and that house was ...it was bought from the Valliants.

JEA: So it had two rooms up and two rooms down.

JL: Yeah, uh, uh. And it was bought from the Valliants.

JEA: Because the Dawson houses that I read about were mainly one room up and one room down.

JL: Well, there is a good example of one right there that yellow house that was (unintelligible).

SM:/JL: Original Dawson house.

JL: I tell you what, Clayton, had right next to the church where they added on to was the Dawson house. They built that (unintelligible). That's what used to be called Dawson's Alley.

JEA: Oh yeah?

JL: He used to own all of the houses there. Valliant used to own most of the other houses.

SM: Yeah, but Honey Nichol's house was Valliant's house

JL: Uh huh.

JEA: Your father, or Eddie, in one of the interviews said that the black people that lived here couldn't start buying their houses until Turner started his seafood business.

JL/SM: That may possibly be true and I'll tell why. Mr. Sam Green (phonetic), grandpop...(unintelligible).

SM: I lived there before that, because my grandmother's house used to be dubbed the mechanic, Uncle Dan (ph), and he was a carpenter and he built a lot and he worked for the Valliants and that house was bought before the Turners.

JEA: But the brunt of the problems was just getting the land to build the houses, wasn't it?

SM/JL: Yeah. The Bill Dawson's house was not owned by the Valliants. That was ... his sister-in-laws.

JL: He had something to do with the store there.

SM: Yeah he had a store there, (unintelligible). I can't think of the name, but he was a Jew and he owned that.

JEA: I saw a reference to that in one of the interviews.

SM: Yeah, he owned that house.

JEA: I got that from Hazel

SM: And then in the 1950s, he buys that store and the house and all that property and then sold them.

JEA: Okay, so when you were growing up, you remember your family working down there and did you work down there?

SM: Yes I did.

JEA: For Valliant?

SM: I worked down there for Valliant. I shucked oysters for 20 cents a gallon. (laughter), when I first started.

JEA: Twenty cents a gallon is a number I saw in other people, they started at 20 cents a gallon, but your father says they had to shuck 10 pints and when I went back and I looked, I said, "There should have only been eight pints in a gallon." Now he talks about 10 pints in a gallon.

JL: Well, let me tell you something. I know where he got 10 pints to a gallon, because Valliant got...he always made sure he got his own...and so we were supposedly shucking gallons, he was getting about 10 pints (laughter). So he always had a way of gettin' it. (laughter). And that was one of the ways.

JEA: Have you, or have you seen anything, let me get this picture here...these things were tokens that were used. Did you use the tokens?

JL: Oh yes, I did tokens, yeah I did it (laughter).

JEA: They gave you a token...

SM/JL: (Unintelligible) and you put your bucket (unintelligible) and they dumped it and they put the token in there

JL: And you collected your token. After that it used to be 2 cents, 3 cents, 5 cents (laughter).

JEA: Did you make more than a dollar day?

SM: No, not much.

JEA: Long hours?

JL: Ten cents an hour.

SM: Oh yeah.

JL: The work was 10 cents. And then whether it was the WPA or something came in and made him pay. In fact, they had taken over his place and his office and paid the people and the staff a lot of back pay.

JEA: That had to have happened after 1945. Was it before that?

JL: Before 1945. W. A. Turner had his place then.

JEA: Well, W. A. Turner, according to what I read, started in 1937 with three or four people in a garage shucking oysters.

SM: Yeah.

JEA: Do you know anything about that?

SM: Yeah, I remember that, I remember when he built W. A. Turner back when I worked down there. Most of the people left Valliant and went to W. A. Turner.

JEA: When Valliant went out of business, there wasn't any other way here to make a living, was there?

SM: No.

JEA: And there wasn't a very good way to get out of town. Transportation wasn't very good, was it?

SM/JL: No, but whoever owned the (unintelligible) would pick 'em up.

JEA: Yeah, they would come and get 'em. They were good for laborers, bring them in.

SM: And they skinned tomatoes where Chesapeake Landing is now.

JEA: Way down there. But did any of your family, can you recall, if they went to work with Turner?

SM: Yeah. I did and all of my family I believe of that generation... My grandfather...

JL: (Unintelligible) Aunt Sarah working there?

SM: No my grandfather(unintelligible)

JEA: Novella Flannary says...

JL: She picked crabs and my grandmother picked crabs and Aunt Sarah did.

JEA: Let's see, Novella Flannary says, "Did any of your family ever work with Turner," and she said "Yes, as I can recall when I was in my early 20s, that I picked crabs there at the Turner factory and it really seemed to be a family gathering place, and this was because everybody in the community knew each other. Everybody that was old enough to work, the women, they worked there in the crab house."

SM/JL: That was true.

JEA: You were a lot younger, and you would have been a kid. Can you remember anything? Your dad was not involved in it.

JL: No, he didn't. Daddy had gotten involved early on, but they sort of separated for some reason. I don't know why. He was in the crab picking end of it.

JEA: Now, the way I have this in my own mind, is that John was running the crab picking operation and Eddie was running the oyster part.

SM/JL: After uncle Eddie Turner died, none of them was involved because when he died, John always worked there. John took over that.

JEA: The whole thing?

JL: Yeah. My uncle died suddenly in 1957. He died from a massive stroke, just like that. John, at the time, was the only child living at home. But John was there and John took over the office end of it. He took over running of the business. So that's how that happened.

JEA: Was Eddie (unintelligible) at that time?

SM/JL: Eddie had his canning business. Eddie was canning up here in Oxford

JEA: They had a canning operation over in Oxford.

JL: Well, there was clamming. Eddie discovered some sort of a way to dig clams and Eddie was working in that end of it, but he started out in the old oyster house shucking clams. That's how he how ...

SM: Shucking clams.

JL: Eddie had patented a way to get clams out of the water, you know.

JEA: Was it some kind of a dredging thing

SM/JL: I think the man's name is Hinks (phonetic). They were partners.

JEA: (Unintelligible) in business I think

JL: Yeah, cause he's the first one that brought canning down here.

JEA: Can you remember, or what your recollection is, of when the people that worked there, did it seem like the way Novella Flannary described it?
(Unintelligible, all talking at once.)

JEA: So everybody was working together. One of the interesting things that I see when I read all of this, this community, and maybe some day we could do a history on the whole community that this can be a part of, has a very high incidence of sending its kids to school and college. Many of them went on to get their degrees and those kids never came back because there were no jobs or work here.

JL: Nothing for them to do.

SM: And what happened, most of the older people, none of them had a lot of education, and I think our school went to the 7th grade and the 7th grade then was equivalent of I would say the second year of high school. So you got a better education...

JEA: So, your recollection is that going to work, they put in long hours.

SM/JL: Uh huh.

JEA: Did they work at night?

SM/JL: Oh yeah. I had worked to 1 o'clock in the morning.

JEA: Even at Turner, they worked at night. I know they worked at night at Valliant.

SM: They worked at night at Turner.

JEA: Did they use lamps or did they have electricity by then?

SM: They had generators.

JEA: Uh uh (affirmative).

SM: And then (unintelligible) by Thanksgiving time, was a busy time for oyster seeding. You would go to work anytime after midnight and be there all day.

JEA: Do you remember if they did clams, or just did oysters?

SM/JL: They did only oysters. They had no clams then.

JL: Clams came later.

JEA: So they did do clams later?

JL: Yeah. And clams, to me, was the way Eddie got into it

SM: That's where Eddie got into the seafood ...

JL: You see, after Uncle Aubrey died, John didn't bother with the oysters I believe, because he let the dredge work die. He let everything die.

JEA: So there wasn't anybody shucking oysters.

JL: Right after Uncle Aubrey died, no.

SM: Not then. No.

JEA: Tell me that year again.

JL: It was 1956, that's the year before Aubrey died.

JEA: Where is he buried?

SM: In Easton at Richardson.

JEA: Okay.

JL: And once John took over, John concentrated on the crabs, the crab business end of it.

JEA: How many people would be working down there picking crabs?

SM/JL: There was thirty or forty.

JEA: That many?

SM/JL: Yeah.

JEA: Can you remember about how many people were living here back in the fifties?

SM/JL: Oh god, back in the fifties this town was full. We had maybe a couple of hundred.

SM/JL: And children...

JEA: There were young people, so there were children. You were one of them?

SM/JL: Yeah.

JL: When (unintelligible) (laughter). The school bus had to come here, John, twice to pick us up...In other words, the (unintelligible) one school bus and then we would leave. Of course, the schools were segregated then and we went to St. Michaels or Easton. We didn't go off. But, anyhow, the school bus would come to pick up the little ones and take us to Frederick Douglas in St. Michaels.

JEA: Yeah.

JL: Yeah, and they'd come back and get the high school kids and take them to Moton in Easton. And that happened for many, many years.

SM: When I started high school, there was no school bus.

JEA: There was no school bus for you?

SM: Uh uh. So they had to pay. They had to pay to go to school. What I did, I paid. So the first year of high school I went (unintelligible) and stayed with my aunt, Hennie (ph), and I stayed there that year and went to high school and then the next year, we had free transportation and then I went to Moton.

JL: But you know, one thing, somehow, these people in this town, though uneducated, knew that education was the key. They knew that in order for their children to survive, we were not allowed to, but what goes on in school now, we were not allowed to do it. My parents had very strict rules about school. You were to respect the teacher. You were there to learn. There was a purpose to it. And they instilled that in you. And that's why I think some of these children in this community went to college.

SM: Here, your parents didn't have to tell you to respect the teachers, because the teacher makes you respect them (laughter).

JEA: There was a stronger family unity maybe than you see in some of the cities now. But it seems from other things that I have read, that it was pretty common for the grandparents to bring up the kids.

JL: Yeah. My grandmother brought up all the kids.

JEA: Was that because of the parents working.

JL: My grandmother raised me from a baby. The reason my grandmother had raised her children was because the reason I really discovered is there is a bad string of heart disease in our family. Her daughter grew up and got married and died early and left small children in their home and no one there to tend to them but her, so she had to do it. So there was another reason for (unintelligible).

JEA: Sarah, in your recollections about when Turner started in business and it was all a community effort, what role did the church play in that?

SM: I don't think the church really played a role in that. He bought that property from Valliant and Valliant didn't know he (unintelligible).

JEA: Because then he was competing with him.

SM: And he didn't realize that he was (unintelligible).

JEA: Eddie says that they bought two acres of land for \$1,000, and they made a \$300 down payment with money he saved while he worked for the Civilian Conservation Corps and then they had to pay off the note at \$100 every six months which was kind of tough to get \$100 every six months.

SM: Oh yeah, I can imagine that.

JEA: But, going back then to...what I meant was...it seems to me that the church has always exerted a strong influence in this community.

SM: Most everything that's been done here.

JEA: So since a lot of people were working down there, I was wondering what kind of influence, if any, that the church had there. Or did the work stay separate from the church.

SM: The church did, that did.

JEA: Were a lot of the social activities centered through the church?

SM: Definitely. All of Gardner's property, Mr. Gardner, owned that hall where he used to have things upstairs in the hall. But I don't know how he bought. That (unintelligible)

JL: But, the Gardner's family, they were people that had resources.

SM: And he worked at the railway. He came from Philadelphia, the Gardners did. Most of the Gardners moved here. He always cooked somewhere. I think on the railway or something, and that's how he got his resources. Now how he got that (unintelligible) down who had owned that property beforehand.

JEA: What was the sense of well being in the community? Did they feel poor?

JL: No, we didn't know it. We enjoyed what we had and we lived liked (unintelligible).

JEA: The community had a sense of well being?

JL: Everybody was like one big family and we were loved by your family and we were loved by our family.

JEA: So, there wouldn't be a segment of the community that didn't work, or was really deprived or did without. The community took care of them. Everybody worked their share in the community.

JL: I tell you what has happened in this community.

JEA: Now, first of all tell me how it was then.

SM: Then, it had been the same way. If anybody was ever in need, they always rallied around and helped. The community was always taking care of their own.

JEA: Doesn't that happen now.

SM/JL: Most of the time, not like it used to be. Their sense of community is really a lot of what's mine is mine, what's yours is yours now, but during that time, everybody opened up and helped.

JL: If you knew of a family that for some reason didn't have children, you shared what you had and that was just the sense of it. Because now I was a girl among boys, and I know in my own experience, I looked like a little boy. But there were other ladies who worked like at home, but they worked for someone like Peggy, and Peggy would

have children and her children ...now that was Peggy's mother, Ann Moore, worked for people, you know, and they would give her girls' clothes. She would in turn give the clothes that her children were not using to me so that I would have clothes.

JEA: Peggy's mother's name was Ann?

JL: Ann Moore.

JEA: I see.

JL: So a lot of that went on. It was a sharing, you know, Ms. (unintelligible) used to give me clothes.

JL: My mother had money. What money she had she had to put on the boys. Now I was just a little girl, but I looked like a little boy so until someone gave me clothes that's the truth, you know.

SM: They shared in taking care of each other.

JL: Nobody in Bellevue went hungry. Of course, we didn't know what it was to leave this community and go ask someone else for something. We took care of our own and the church has always been the center point, it's always been the direct center. Anything that happened in this community, if there was a fire, the church (unintelligible). Anything that happened, you know, it was the church.

SM: What really happened, when people were sick, like now they have home counseling or whatever. (Unintelligible).

JEA: When they had babies, they had babies right here, right??

SM/JL: My grandmother, she brought a lot of people into this world here.

JEA: As a midwife?

JL: (Unintelligible) before my grandmother (unintelligible). That was your grandmother.

SM: That was your grandmother. She was first. Then my grandmother died and then my grandmother did it.

JEA: Sarah, you worked for Turner. Did you pick crabs then?

SM: I picked crabs and I shucked oysters there.

JEA: And you shucked oysters? Did you do that in the same building?

SM: It was in the same building as the crabs. There was a partition. All (unintelligible) by the water and the crabs ...

JEA: We talked about it when Mr. Aubrey Turner died in 1956. John came in and took over the operation.

SM: The whole operation.

JEA: The whole thing and that included the oysters and crabs.

SM: It was John.

JEA: Was he the oldest?

SM: No, he was the youngest, and he always worked in there with his father.

JEA: I see.

SM: So he knew more.

JL: John had a business education too.

JEA: Okay, so John went in and took it over and then ran...

JL: My aunt Jane (phonetic). The thing went to Aunt Jane which was their mother, Sara Jane.

JEA: John died unexpectedly.

JL: Yes, he died very suddenly too.

JEA: And then, is that when his business got split up? Somewhere along the line, Kenny gets...

SM: After John had (unintelligible) that's how that happened.

JEA: And what did they do then, split off? As you can recall...

JL: No, long before John, before John died...

JEA: And then what, Eddie took over the oysters.

SM: Eddie and John, basically they couldn't see eye to eye (laughter).

JL: That part of this property included the oyster house.

JEA: Oh, there wasn't an oyster house there before.

JL: No, (unintelligible) aren't there now, no...

SM: No, Eddie built that.

JEA: I wonder when that would have been. I'm going to go back and talk to Hayward, he will know exactly when that was.

SM: He will know exactly when that was started. Because that used to be the old railway (unintelligible).

JEA: But what happened after that? When Alice was doing clams at that time?

JL: Eddie did clams for a short while. Eddie started with clams and then Eddie (unintelligible) and picked crabs. They did crabs and oysters and then he finally did just crabs.

JEA: Okay. So, do you recall then at that time that the seafood industry...was it still doing well? Were there still lots of crabs and oysters?

SM: Oh yes, with John, John was the one that had (unintelligible) said there was a lot of oysters.

JL: We still had lots of oysters.

JEA: But then, you started getting into the point where you were getting older and some of the young kids started going to college.

SM: We really had no work for 'em and we used to bring in kids.

JEA: Oh, they did bring in other people.

JL: Oh yeah, they brought in people. Oh, yeah.

JEA: Oh, so they would go into St. Michaels and get them.

JL: A lot of them moved from Crisfield and ...

JEA: All the way from Crisfield?

SM: Aubrey brought the (unintelligible) family here.

JL: But, they never used his nephews and nieces. Those were Aunt Helen's children.

SM: I know, but he brought (unintelligible) here...

JEA: Okay, now somewhere along the line also, old Earl Fields gets involved.

JL: With John. Okay, now here's how Earl...my grandfather by my earliest memory is what I was prepared to tell was my grandfather steaming crabs. I was a little (unintelligible) and I would follow him down to the old crab house to steam crabs, that's what I am saying. And somehow, Earl took over from Uncle Sam, you know, doing that. But Uncle Sam used to steam the crabs. That's my earliest memory, running down there with him to see him steam the crabs and seeing him build them up on the table there,

SM: Merle was in that.

JL: Yeah, well Earl Fields is really a Turner. His father, Merle, was my Uncle Aubrey. Merle was an illegitimate child of Uncle Aubrey's.

JEA: And he was the first son, okay.

JL: Merle Fields took his mother's name. .

JEA: So Earle is really a Turner. Okay, so as I understood it from what I can read, he was managing or running the crab picking part of the operation after John died.

SM/JL: Earl and Donny Gardner were running it because they used to (unintelligible)

JEA: This was only the crabs.

JL: Aubrey had an oyster boat that my father would take, what they called a dredge boat, but you know the skipjacks. Okay there was a skipjack, Mary Croswell ...

JEA: Did they call the skipjacks dredge boats?

SM: No, that was (unintelligible) before the dredge boats

JEA: Okay.

JEA: They were skipjacks.

JL: They were skipjacks.

JEA: Because I know he talked about having a couple of dredge boats, and I'm trying to figure out when I go all this stuff, what was a dredge boat?

JL: It's a skipjack.

SM: Dredges only dredge up the oysters.

JL: Now Uncle Aubrey bought a boat called the *Mary A. Croswell*. She died out there in Tarr's Creek.

JEA: Now I want to show you a picture and you tell me if it looks familiar to you.

JL: That's Turner's.

JEA: Is that the *Mary A. Croswell*?

SM: I think that is, because they always (unintelligible) back of the Turner.

JL: That's her right there, (unintelligible) because we had masted up

JEA: That's the same picture. Now in one of these pictures, the boat is floating and in the other one the boat is sunk.

JL: Yeah, well she died out there in Tarr's Creek where John let her die. That's what they...

JEA: These are all pretty much the same. I got these from the guy that owns the Clay's Hotel (ph), Chris. Burk (phonetic), somebody had given it to him and I'm only just borrowing them.

JL: Yeah, this is a typical (unintelligible).

JEA: So that was the *Mary A. Croswell*. How do you spell Croswell?

SM: C R O S W E L L.

JEA: Okay.

JL: She was captained by my father, Otis Turner, and John...

JEA: Who owned it?

JL: W. A. Turner, my uncle owned it. John took it over at his death and John wouldn't recommission it to the dredging, You have to recommission it, license and all (unintelligible). So my father, my daddy must have worked it for three or four years I guess. And then he did own all the oysters and crabs in that Tarr's Creek too and Uncle Aubrey would take the boat out and he would get the oysters, so the oysters that were coming back to the oyster house, they came off that boat.

JEA: Do you remember more than one boat?

JL: I remember more than one skipjack when they did the (unintelligible). My dad only had one skipjack. But what they had out here is what they called buyboats.

JEA: And how did that work?

JL: Okay, there was a boat anchored out here. The men would catch the oysters and they would go to sell them to what they called the buyboat and the buyboat would pay \$5 to \$10 a bushel for whatever they're buying and then he would contract and sell them to the oyster houses. And that's how I think it worked. But now, they bring the oysters to shore and years ago, they never brought them to shore, they met the buyboat and the buyboat got the oysters and then they brought them into the shore. And then people like that, what's his name, at the Crab Claw, Billy, I can't remember his name from the Crab Claw.

JEA: I don't know.

JL: Higgins and the other name, yeah. They were the ones...

SM: There was not a Higgins.

JL: No, he is not a Higgins, but anyhow, they started having the boat come to shore and sell the oysters, cause they were processing oysters. Greg Jones was processing oysters, cause he had the place down there at Navy Point where the Maritime Museum is.

JEA: Well, uh, did you ever hear of any instances where people wouldn't sell oysters to the Turners?

SM/JL: Yeah, they had (unintelligible).

JL: I heard my father say, there was a time when for some reason Uncle Aubrey couldn't pay his people and they had to work for him and hold money you know until the end of the season. He couldn't pay them. So maybe that's what you're talking about, there was something that happened then...

JEA: There were some references, and I've heard it said two ways that some might say that the white watermen wouldn't sell to ...

SM: We didn't have many white watermen. (Unintelligible) over here, what's the name here (unintelligible). He was the only one. Someone with a lot of children.

JL: George Simmons (phonetic) was the (unintelligible). George, he was a Rhode watermen. But there weren't that many white watermen around here.

JEA: And the other version I heard was that there were times when you just couldn't pay the price that they could get somewhere's else. Didn't they directly affect the economic life of the community when you couldn't go to work there if they couldn't buy the oysters.

SM: Well, I'll tell you one thing, well it seems like when that happened, there was something in Oxford to do, all you had to do...

SM/JL: It seems like when there was nothing to do here, there were some other crab houses (unintelligible) and it was just a matter of jumping on the ferry ...

JEA: And you could always...

JL: And you could get off when you got to Oxford.

JEA: Can you remember in the winter time, and I've heard stories how winters used to be a lot more severe than they are now.

SM: Oh yeah.

JEA: How would they, would they cut open the ice to get to the...

SM: As a child, I remember that they used to be ice in here all over this river hauling Oysters.

JEA: From the ice.

SM: From the ice. And I can remember that.

JEA: Yeah (laughter). Okay.

JL: You know what would be nice (unintelligible) now they cull them into baskets. But when my father was out here and (unintelligible) and men like that with these long crab lines...everything went into a barrel and crabs were sold by the barrel. They didn't cull them.... There was no separating them.

JEA: They didn't separate them, they didn't try to pick out the females

SM/JL: No, and they picked with a shovel (unintelligible) everyday.

JL/SM: And I can remember as a child (unintelligible) what we did when we were sitting in the crab houses picking, we would come in the morning and the crabs would be iced and cold left over from what we left there the day before, and then the next time they would fill the tables, they would be hot. (Background noise) what you call channel crabs and they would just dump. Whatever you got...

SM: (Unintelligible) piled up. You couldn't see, it was that high.

JEA: Is that how they actually did it. You sat at a table.

SM: Sat at a table.

JEA: And they dumped a bunch of crabs out for you.

JL: And you picked them.

JEA: And how did you pick them? You had a knife?

JL: A knife and then we had a tray in front of us and we would separate the lump or the back fin from the regular, and the children cracked the claws.

SM: You didn't have these cans...

JL: Another thing I want to tell you (unintelligible) in a pan and then they packed them in a can. But anyhow, another thing that I wanted to tell you was that my earliest memory too of going into the crab houses where the people there, when they dumped the crabs out, and as you were a little child, you weren't supposed to be in there. The health code said you couldn't be in there. But we remained there and the old ladies who (unintelligible) and everything, you would run up to 'em and you would crack the crabs and they'd give you maybe 2 cents or something, you know, something you went to the store with. I would stand there and would let an old lady named Cousin Virgy, (phonetic) she used to have (unintelligible), and I knew that she couldn't back her crabs very well and I would go there and stand by her and I could see by my hands...

JEA: What do you mean by back their crabs?

JL: Pulling the top shell off. You pull the claws off and put 'em out in a basket, or put them in something separate for the claw crackers

JEA: Okay.

JL: And they you would take the top shell of the crab, just pick it off and expose the crab and you would pile it for them, so they could just trim the crab or pick it or you could (unintelligible).

SM: I can remember that they didn't even know where the top shell was. Yeah, they used to go and pick that out. The top shell was saved and cleaned and went through some kind of process and put in cartons and shipped.

JEA: What did they use that for?

SM: That restaurant. They used the (unintelligible) the top shell, that's a part of the (unintelligible) they were big and they were part of the businesses shipping the top shell.

JEA: I didn't realize there was any market for anything like that.

SM: Oh yes there was (laughter).

JEA: So did the crab season run about the way it does now? Now it's shorter.

JL: See, what happens, okay, after oyster season which ended anywhere about March, then they would seed oysters, what they would call the oyster season.

SM/JL: After the 15th the end of the oyster season...

JEA: When they called that seeded oysters, what does that mean?

SM/JL: Okay, little oyster spats that they would put it some place where they know it would grow. They would put it on some oyster bar where they knew it would grow. And they would seed oysters and once they finished seeding the oysters in this river, they would go to New Jersey to seed oysters.

SM: And then they would come back about this time of the year, yeah, they would go to New Jersey and would come back about this time of year and by that time, the crabs, my grandfather used to tell me that our crabs were going to be up to size, really (unintelligible).

END OF RECORDING