

**INTERVIEW with CARLTON “CORK” McGEE**

Date March 07, 2015

Location: Cork McGee’s Home Workshop  
McGee Ln.  
Chincoteague, VA 23336

Interviewer 1: Ennis Barbery, Museum of Chincoteague Island

Interviewer 2: Dr. Kristin Sullivan, Ward Museum of Wildfowl Art, Salisbury University

Transcription: Andrew Marshall, Salisbury University

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Barbery-Smith: So what is your full name? Is Cork your first name?

McGee: Carlton. Cork’s my nickname.

B: How’d you get that nickname?

M: I don’t have any idea.

Sullivan: How long have you been called Cork?

M: How long have I been carving?

S: How long have you been called Cork?

M: Oh, ever since I was born I guess. I don’t know. All my life.

B: You say your given name is Carlton, Cork?

M: That’s my real name, Carlton. But if I was walking down the street and anybody called my name, my real name, I wouldn’t even turn around. I don’t know why I signed it [the interview release form] like that.

B: When were you born?

M: 1931. Gettin’ old.

S: You just had a birthday, right? When was your birthday?

M: 11<sup>th</sup> of February. Gettin’ old.

B: What was it like to grow up on Chincoteague? What kind of things did you do?

M: Good lands. It was rough times to start with.

S: How so?

M: Uh... well, we didn't have nothing, did have no money, didn't... When I grew up we started out with no electric lights, no running water, inside plumbing. We used kerosene lamps the first few years.

B: Which neighborhood were you in? This neighborhood?

M: Yeah, just up the street here. I was born and raised right up here.

B: I always get them confused, what, uh, does that have a name? You know how there's Mad Calf, and there's like Down the Marsh, is this Eastside?

M: Well, this was Eastside, when I was a little small, they said they used to call it Bear Scratch. [laugh]

S: Bear Scratch. Were there ever bears?

M: No, I don't know where they got that name, and then they changed it over to Dodge City. They used to have some rough times up here on the Eastern side, especially weekends, Saturday, Saturday nights. They'd start on Friday nights and last until Sunday, and then they'd recuperate so they could go to work Monday [laughter]. Yeah, was a lot of excitement goin' on them days.

B: What, were there bars and stuff here on Eastside, or...

M: They were, uh, they'd... fight amongst themselves. They'd work the whole week together, get drinkin', and get--. Weekends get fightin' everything else. Shoot one of 'em another, it was a mess [laughter].

B: What is, uh... what did your parents do?

M: Watermen, my dad was a waterman. Mom raised young'ns. She raised ten.

S: God bless her.

M: I mean they were, she raised, it was six of us, I had three brothers, two brothers, and three sisters and uh, she raised four grandchildren from babies.

S: What were your sibling's names? Your brothers and all them?

M: My sisters, the oldest one is Ruth, and the middle is Shirley, and Louise, Eddie Tull's wife.

S: Now you said your Dad lived on Assateague, is that right?

M: He moved over there when he was just, I think, I think he was about six months old, moved over there and lived there. Lived on there seventeen years. And the

government started forcing them, you know buying up land and everything, they moved a homestead, it used to be right to the foot of the bridge. Just as soon as you hit Assateague, it was on the right-hand side. They owned a big strip of land in there, never, never got anything from it, hardly, from the government.

S: Really?

M: I think he said when they lined up they got 200 dollars apiece. [laughter] but that's been a long time, that house is up the road there.

S: So they moved the house from Assateague?

M: Yeah. Moved it over here and the people, some strangers bought it now and there was, they've re-done it and everything.

S: Alright. Is it right on Eastside?

M: Yeah.

S: I think I may know who lives there.

M: Let's see, from Wayne Drive, let's see, one, two, three, about fourth or fifth house from Wayne Drive.

S: So you never lived on Assateague of course, you're too young for that.

M: No, didn't live on, I spent a lot of time on there, but no, I never lived on there.

B: With your brothers and sisters, are you like the oldest, the youngest, the middle?

M: I was the youngest boy. Yeah we all worked on the water. And, uh... neither one of my brothers, no, they never, uh... We didn't have much in common. They didn't do any hunting, they didn't do any carving, they didn't--. I don't know, they just, they worked on the water, but that's about all they done.

B: What, how'd you first get interested in carving? I'm sure Kristin's asked you that before [laughter].

M: Uh... I tell you the truth I don't hardly know, I've been doing it a long time.

S: Yeah. Well I guess, maybe, you did it, for hunting.

M: I done, yeah, I done--. I made 'em for to hunt with, and when the plastic decoys come out I turn right over and bought plastic ones. But I decided that I, got so I could, the hunter would buy one, and buy a decoy from me that I had made once in a while, and I said daggone, I believe I can, might be able to make two or three

dollars on it, so I started carving, mostly ducks to begin with and then I started, birds, shorebirds, which I like better now than making ducks, but that's how I started. I mean I'm not like a bunch of 'em say, well I went up and sat with Mr. Miles, I knew Mr. Miles real well, but I never went up and sat and watched him carving.

S: Oh you didn't?

M: Mmh-mmh (no). I used to sell him terrapins.

S: Oh you did?

M: Yeah.

S: You, oh so did you work with Miles on selling terrapins, or did you--?

M: No, I just went, I'd go by myself and catch 'em and, sometimes Lola would go, she used to like to go with me.

S: Oh really?

M: Catch 'em with a net.

S: [Laugh] Lola is his wife.

M: Catch 'em and take 'em and sell 'em to him.

S: Oh, ok.

B: So he had a terrapin--. He had like a terrapin business too, right, so he would just put those in with his?

M: Yeah he sold them in the city...

B: Mmh-hmm

M: Up north and everywhere I guess.

S: Yeah, I think he was real successful with that.

M: Uh-huh, I used to like to do that. Was a lot of fun.

B: Did you go to the school over on Church Street? Is that where you went to school?

M: Yeah, passed for the eighth grade and I gotten away for that morning, they said that I had to go 'til I was 16, it was a law. And mom, mom got on, 'course daddy said a little bit about it, but, mom worried me to death, said they were gonna to call her, have to have fine and everything if I didn't go to school.

B: Ohhh

M: So I didn't, I guess the first month I didn't even go to school, when school started, I passed for the eighth grade. They forced me into it, boy they was hard, to have to go to school. Everything was going on, I didn't know nothing.

B: Yeah.

M: [Laugh] The teacher that day, she wanted me to get up and read my report, some kind of report or something, and I said I didn't have none 'cause I hadn't been going. "So I see, you ain't never in school." Well I said yeah, I talk to myself, I said, "You'll come over on the Eastern side see me."

S: Hmm [laugh]

M: So when the recess bell rung, stood up and run to the one end of, on the playground, I went out the front door and I come for the Eastern side. [Laugh]

S: Now what were you doing instead of going to school?

M: Worked on, I worked on the water.

S: Ok.

M: I started when I... well just big enough to go with daddy, I done worked with him sometimes, a lot of times.

B: What did he mostly do, he did oysters and crabs and just everything?

M: Oysters and clams, whatever come up, whatever season.

S: Did you all go down the bay?

M: Yeah, I spent a lot of time down there.

S: Can you talk about that, what was that like?

M: Well they, it was two, three different people on the island, that owned these Down the Bay boats. They, we'd, they would charge you a fifth of what you made. While you were down, you'd go down sometimes you stay down two weeks at a

time. And the little cabin wasn't as big as this [gestures to room]. Five, six in it. That's where you slept and you eat and everything else.

S: What kind of food did you eat on the boat?

M: Very poor, unless you went out and killed it. Mostly baked beans [laughter]. Baked beans, and you took a piece of, didn't have no refrigeration at all, ice or nothing. You took a slab of cured bacon, and you'd get a little slice of that, mornings, and two eggs, and homemade bread, everybody went down and made their own, you know, knew how to make bread.

S: Down the bay bread, I've heard it called?

M: Down the bay bread. It was good too.

S: How'd you make that, do you know?

M: Yeah, just mix flour and salt and a little bit of shortening in it. Use pure hogs lard. [Laughter].

B: Sounds good to me though [laughter].

M: If you've never used it cooking chicken, you've never had good chicken.

S: Oh yeah [laughter]?

M: It's the best chicken in the world cooking with pure lard. And you make it up and had a little stove, wasn't any bigger than that, but it had a little oven on it, and man you could get her good and hot and put that in there and just about quick as you put it in there it would cook.

S: Yeah.

M: Baked right brown, was good. And you had your cup of coffee and that was it. Go out, work all day, come back in for eat lunch, if you didn't have work through the lunch time. Whenever you come back, first one that come back, got aboard the boat, he was do the cooking.

S: He was the cook?

M: He had the meal done for the rest of us. And most times you had baked beans, or, that's all you got, baked beans and bread.

B: What season was it when you guys went down the bay? Was it summer, winter?

M: Both, but we always, in the fall we'd start in October. Get ready for to go down getting seed oysters. We would bring them up here and sell them to the people

that owned the boats. And they would plant them in Tom's Cove or out in Chincoteague Bay. And then after that was over we'd go to Christmas when it started freezing up and everything. The oysters would freeze and they wouldn't take them, they didn't want them. So we just, after Christmas we done whatever we could do. Did a lot of hunting and violating, a little bit of everything [laughter]. But anyway, for to get by. But anyway, we, and then when the weather started warming up in March, always around the tenth of March, we'd start going down signing clams, go down the bay signing clams. And when the weather got warm enough that you could get overboard with the wade, wade clams.

S: Ok. How do you sign a clam?

M: Just you've got to learn, got to learn what it looks like.

S: Every single hole's a clam? Just kidding.

M: No [laughter]. No, you've got to learn the signs. There's a certain time of year in the spring, right on up through, sometimes, in the summer on different bottoms. Sandy bottom, or mud. We'd always call them the keyholes, little slit in the sand or mud, we'd call them keyholes and you'd, that's how you'd sign them.

S: Yeah. You'd just dig there?

M: Just dig right down and flip them out. I saw my uncle catch over 5,000 in one day signing.

S: Are you kidding me?

M: Yeah. Over a thousand clams is hard to believe, but...

S: Yeah.

S and B: Wow.

M: I caught 4,200 one day.

S: Did you really?

M: Yeah.

B: Wow.

S: Where were you when you did that?

M: Down in Hog Island Bay.

B: How much money do you get for a clam?

M: Started out, I've got 'em, I sold them as low as eight dollars a thousand.

B: Oh wow, that's...

S: Wow.

M: We were getting about a penny a piece then, most times.

S: Hmm. Wow. How old were you when you were doing that?

M: I started doing that I was about 16. Maybe 15 the first trip that I ever went. I went when I was 15.

B: Right now we're doing some interviews about World War II history.

M: I remember it, but with so much on my mind. I got called to go twice, but my blood pressure would go up so high they didn't want me! [laughter]

B: That's a good trick.

M: When I got to a doctor now, still, my blood pressure goes straight up. What is it you call it, white coat syndrome or something?

B: That happens with my mom, too.

M: I can't help it! I'm real acquainted with the nurses and everything. But just the knock on that door, its going up. And that's what happened to me. They wouldn't accept me. I didn't want to go no way; I had too much other stuff to do, that I wanted to do.

S: Do you remember rations?

M: Ration books – I still have got one or two of them in the house. Or part of them. Yeah, I remember having to go to the store to get a can of beans – a can of beans or corn, anything; you had to take your book and tear away the stamp. If you didn't have it, you didn't get it, either. That was anything: shoes, or--. I think it was two pair of shoes a year. Of course I only got one; I was lucky to get that, when I was little.

S: What did you eat mainly then? It seems like maybe you hunted, did you hunt more when there were rations, or?

M: Yeah, hunt and fish, and oystering and clams. We lived, we eat pretty good.



B: Do you ever take hunters out, out to hunt?

M: I started in 1957 and took them 57, 58 years. Took hunting parties 58 years. I still get calls from them and cards and stuff. Just about all over the country.

B: Pretty enjoyable job, yeah?

M: Yep, 58 years.

S: One of the best guides from what I hear.

M: Started in 1957.

S: And did you take people out for ducks or turkeys or deer?

M: No, just ducks, ducks and geese.

B: Did you use your decoys ever, or just the, use the plastic ones?

M: I used mine for the first few years, and then when the plastic decoys come out, they were so light and handy, easy to handle, I just--. That's some my old, ugly brant decoys over there. First ones I ever made. Over there. [Gestures, camera pans to show decoys]

B: Ok. Oh yeah, I see those.

S: So some, you made those you said?

M: Yeah, they were made out of cork.

S: Huh. When do you figure you made those?

M: I made them in probably 1950--. I think it was 1960 before I made them to hunt with.

S: Did you? Huh. I didn't know you had anything that old here.

M: Yeah.

S: That's great.

M: And I've got some in the house, I've got, not a whole lot of them, I've got maybe a pair of each different kind of duck that I made. I still... keeping them in the house. They were her, I'd give them to...

S: I was gonna say, I think you told me one time that you used to make them for Lola?

M: Yeah. Yeah, every species of bird that I made, the first one I made I'd give them to her. And I've still got 'em.

S: That's sweet.

B: That is sweet.

M: Probably got, maybe, I expect she had probably 300 [laughter].

S: [to Barbery-Smith] You have to go in and see his house, it's... [laughter].

B: I want to see the 300, yeah.

M: Well I mean, I would show them all to you 'cause they're scattered everywhere.

S: He even has a Kristin Sullivan in his collection.

M: I'd show you a big lot of 'em.

B: Oooh.

S: Could you tell us about how you met Lola, your wife?

M: She was working to a little restaurant in town, right on the corner of... what's the name of that street? It's sort of a gift shop now. That used to be a hangout, it's right on the corner, it's--.

S: Off of Main Street?

M: Right on the, right in town.

S: Hmm.

M: Let me get my head together now, let's see, go past... it's almost across the road from the medical center.

B: Ohh.

M: So you turn down that street, I can't think of the name.

B: Cleveland, Mumford?

M: Cleveland... I believe its Cleveland.

B: Cleveland's the one with the grocery, is that the one with the grocery store?

S: Yeah that's where Meatland is, or the grocery.

M: Yeah.

B: Is it?

M: It's the little building right next to Bill's restaurant now. Right, it's right on the corner then its Bill's restaurant.

B: Mmh. Mmh-hmm.

M: And that was the hangout, and she worked there.

B: The hangout. I like that.

S: What was that called? Was it, the name of it the hangout?

M: The grill. Yup, Chincoteague Grill. Had a dozen owners, or people that runned it. Yup, that's where I met her.

S: Was she a waitress there?

M: Huh?

S: Was she a waitress there?

M: Yeah.

S: Ok. And about what year was that?

M: 1948 I believe it was. We got married in '50.

S: You were married a real long time then.

M: 43 years, 2 months, 20 days [laugh].

S: Longer, if you were married in 1950... had to be over 60 years... you were married. Well, I'll have to think about it later.

M: 63... 63 years.

S: Yeah, 63 years, yeah.

B: Mmh-hmm.

S: Wow.

M: I was only 17 when I started going with her, and we went together two years before we got married. I didn't know if I wanted to do it or not [laughter]. I used to always kid her when I got ready to go get married, I told her, I said if anything would happen we'd have to stop along the road, I said I'd probably went in the woods and hid [laughter]. Russell, Russell's dad took me and his mom, they stood up with us.

S: Oh really? Russell Fish's dad? That's sweet.

B: What was Lola's maiden name?

M: She was a Daisey. Well see, she had been married before, but her husband was... he turned out, he was one of them, what do you call them? Town winos. He turned out to be that. So anyway, Theresa is my step-daughter. I don't see any difference at all in her and Amy.

S: And you have a third daughter too, right? Adelae?

M: Adelae, yeah, well she always lived away and, she got married and she hardly ever come to Chincoteague, once in a while, but not very often.

B: Adelae, that's a pretty name. I like that name.

M: Well anyway, she uh... Theresa lived with us, I took her in when she was only two years old. Anyway she's mine and she calls me daddy. She's my other daughter and she calls me daddy anyway [laughter].

S: You've been there for her her whole life.

M: Yeah.

B: Did you ever try to get them interested in carving? Hunting? Did they go out hunting with you?

M: Amy tried it but didn't work out. She didn't care too much for it I don't think.

S: Lola used to go out fishing with you, right?

M: Used to go all a lot with me. Used to go oystering sometimes. She'd go clamming with me and sat up in the boat while I clammed.

S: [laughs] That's pretty good.

B: Yeah that's a nice spot.

M: Yeah. Yeah she used to go fishing, that's one thing about her, she's... no matter where she went, she dressed up. Like she was going to church. I've got pictures of her fishing with the, all dressed up [laughter].

S: And you did the same too, right? No, I'm just kidding [laughter].

M: Good lands, she used to fuss with me [laughter]. Well she didn't really fuss, but she'd say she was sometimes ashamed to go with me, all dressed up and me go knees in my pants all busted out [laughter]. Yeah, we had good years together.

B: So how'd you first learn to carve, you said you didn't go see Miles Hancock, did you just teach yourself?

M: No, I went up like I said, I sold him terrapins, and good friends with him, but I never went and sat and you know, watched him or anything. I don't know, I just... I don't know, I just start. The word got around that people would, different ones was carving. I used to visit Cigar, there was a bunch of us, we used to hang out at Cigars like they did here. We used to go up there and he'd be sitting there carving, cussing and going into that mess. [laughter] I guess maybe some of that rubbed off on me, I don't know. He's only about two years older than I am.

S: And that was in what, the 1960s?

M: Yeah. Real early, maybe 1960 or something like that.

S: And who all would go and hang out with you there?

M: All of them's passed away, every one of them: George Clark, and some of the Clark boys, John and Clarence, you know Clarence down here? Yeah, his brother. He lived next door to Cigar. They lived down on Piney Island, down on this end. And they would all hang out there and Cigar would spin them big yarns [laughter].

S: No. And I'm sure none of you all did the same.

M: Yeah, everybody about the same. So maybe some of it rubbed off.

S: And did you ever, did you know Ira Hudson at all? No?

M: No. I mean he was still living, but I never--. I didn't even know him. I knew some of his, one or two of his boys. But I never knew him.

S: Yeah.

M: Mr. Doug Jester, I had been... I didn't go and sit in there or nothing, but I'd been in his shop before. I don't know what I was in there looking for [laughter].

B: To see what was in there.

M: Probably there with somebody else just--.

S: Yeah.

M: So... I just don't know. And I had to have a rig to hunt with.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: So I think through anything together I could get together, and used it. See the plastic decoys come out. Carrylite started early, they made decoys a long time ago.

S: Yep.

M: And you could get them, get them then for about a dollar and a half a piece, for a duck decoy.

S: Oh wow. And what would you sell one of your decoys for at that time? Or were you even selling then?

M: Ten or fifteen dollars.

S: For a decoy? Really? That's pretty good.

M: And a lot of the hunters that hunted with me, they want to buy one, and I'd give it to them.

B: How'd the hunters find you, did they, just word of mouth, heard that you were a guide?

M: Yeah, word passed around I guess, and, of course they wrote a lot of--. I used to take a guy who worked from the Washington Post sports section, Hank Burchard was his name; he wrote a lot of articles. Got a lot of them in the house that he wrote. When he'd go back, he'd write them and send me a copy or bring it to me. He hunted with me for a pretty good while too. And then I don't know. A lot of different people wrote books, magazines, the articles in magazines for a hunt trip down here. So I guess that's how the word got around.

S: Huh, so you start at that and then you end up as a Jeopardy clue [laughter]. That's quite a life.

B: That's right, yeah what was the question?

M: That was last, I think that was last year.

B: What was the question, what was the clue or what?

M: Had me sitting there or sitting here carving, I don't know who took the picture. I have no idea.

B: [to Sullivan] It was probably yours [laughter].

M: It was on a camera because I was there carving.

S: Was it a video or was it a--?

M: Yeah, it was a video. The question was "What is the guy here... what is he doing?" And the answer was, I believe it was a lady that answered the question said, "He's whittling."

S: Oh. Did they give it to her?

M: No. [laughing]

S: Oh good.[laughter]

M: I guess the answer was carving.

B: Or decoy carving. Yeah.

M: I wasn't very long on there. But, I carried parties from, scattered around, not every state, but a lot of 'em.

S: Hmm.

M: Washington state, I had a guy up there who was a real, he's one of the best artists, waterfowl artists in the country.

S: What's his name?

M: Dave Hagenbaumer. He passed away last year, he was 96 years old.

B: I'll have to look him up.

M: He'd come all the way out here to hunt with me. I've got about six, maybe six of his artworks. One original, the rest of them's print.

S: That's pretty good though.

B: Did you ever have groups from Europe or from outside the US? Not too much?

M: No. I've got decoys over there. I've got some in Japan, China. People they'd come over here and, I guess they, different people would bring them by here and they'd get a decoy.

S: Now, you also worked, did you work for the Refuge at some point?

M: Worked partially, a little over two years just, the way they had it set up you'd work 700 hours and then they would lay you off and hire you right back again.

S: Huh.

M: For 700 more hours.

S: Go ahead.

M: It was a good crew, it was a good job, I really liked it. It was the only steady job I ever had in my life. Got paid, you know, every two weeks.

S: Yeah. What kind of work did you do?

M: Maintenance work, running sand fences, barbed wire fences, I done mostly in the field. Had little plots up in Area 5, up in that area, of course I done it all over the beach, but they had some plots there they were trying different kind of feed for to grow, they even planted corn and sorghum, all different little plots.

S: Oh, on Assateague. Huh.

M: And I done about every bit of farming.

S: Huh. I don't think I realized that they did any farming over there.

M: Yeah, I mean, just small plots, I mean a little plot here and here, and you'd have corn in one and sorghum, they planted a lot of Japanese millet.

S: What were they doing that for?

M: For to see if it would work, to see if it would grow on there, and work so they could plant it for the birds and stuff.

S: Oh, ok.

M: But it didn't last too long. But that Japanese millet, they would plant that in low bottom, drain all the water out, and plant it in low bottom. And when it grew up it grew with a seedhead on it.

S: Huh.

M: And in the fall they would flood it, and the ducks, the pintails, you wouldn't believe it.

S: Huh.

M: I mean that place was loaded.

S: Wow.

M: This year, I went over there, I didn't go a whole lot, but I went over there a few times and looked around, just ride around and trail different things, there were the least ducks I've ever seen in my life over there this year.

B: Hmm.

M: No snow geese, or very few snow geese.

B: Hmm. That's true, I was looking for them too and I couldn't find them.

S: Why do you think that is?



M: They drain every bit of water out in the summer. And they don't have, used to be, I called it widgeon grass, the water in the summer, the water would be that deep.

S: Huh. Wow.

M: And they, I called it duck grass, would grow up and even grow up on top of the water. And there's a lot of ducks raised there. A lot of broods of ducks. Teal, blue winged teal, a lot of them and mallards and gadwall and different ducks. You could go darn walk all over of Assateague and didn't see a duck now.

S: Yeah. Hardly see anything besides mallards.

M: Yeah, they dry everything up in the summer and they've got none. But they used to, you know, keep the water in there.

S: Yeah. Huh.

M: But it was bad, I seen some pintails, and little Russell remembers a lot of them too hunting trips. Out in that Chincoteague Bay they would, the clouds of them would get up.

S: Really? Yeah, I know Ryan went out hunting with Russell this year and all he saw was the dippers. It was...

M: Yeah

S: Dippers and mallards, but the mallards weren't close enough to get. There weren't, you know black ducks, or...

M: I took little Russell up, and I call him little Russell because his dad was big Russell [laughter].

S: [unknown 33:05], yeah.

B: That's what I thought.

M: But anyway, I took him up one day, out in the bay, and you never saw so many ducks in your life.

S: Yeah.

M: And this game warden, he was a refuge assistant manager, and he come up, he done a little hunting up there too, and his boat got loose from him one day. So I told Russell, I said take the boat and go get him, get his boat for him. I said, she was drifting off over towards Wild Cat.

S: [laugh] Oh no!

M: I said and if he wants to bring him here in this blind and we'll show him what hunting's all about [laugh].

S: You did? Did he come?

M: Yeah.

S: Oh! [laugh]

M: George Payton. And he, we brought him, put him in the blind, we could shoot ten point ducks. We killed... me, and him, and little Russell killed 39 pintails, and one black duck.

S: Wow.

M: That day. So then he was only gonna take three, said he only wanted about three for to eat, I said oh you're gonna take ten.

S&B: [laughter]

M: I said I'm not going down the bay, we're not going down the bay with over the limit of ducks.

S: Ohh [laughter].

M: He said that was the best hunt he'd ever been on in his whole life.  
S: Huh.  
M: But he was the game warden up at the refuge.  
S: Could you talk a little bit about the relationship between hunters here and the game wardens over there on Assateague?  
M: [laugh] They did not like any of them.  
S: Uh-huh.  
S: Do you have any stories you remember from the stuff that people used to do?  
M: Well they did a lot of hunting over there.  
S: Mmh-hmm.  
M: Sneak in there. Of course after they put the bridge across you didn't have much chance to go over there and do anything.  
S: Yeah.  
M: What we would do, there would always be somebody watching.  
S: Mmh-hmm.  
M: When they went over mornings, they'd go in a boat, you could count how many people was in there in the boat, and they'd be watching three o'clock in the afternoon you'd see the same crew come back.  
S: Mmh-hmm.  
M: If they did you'd go do whatever you want to do.  
S: Oh, ok.  
M: They didn't have many vehicles, very few vehicles on there and wasn't no hard surface road on there then, nothing but sand roads.  
S: Mmh-hmm. Now did you ever do any of the outlaw gunning stuff? [laughter]  
Well I've got a camera, so don't incriminate yourself!  
B: Yeah, don't do that!  
M: Yeah, I did, yeah.  
S: Statute of limitations has to be up on that [laughter].  
M: Yeah I did. Done a lot of it I guess. Most of it for survival.  
S: Sure.  
M: Yeah.  
S: What were your tricks? Did you... I'm assuming you got over the limit?  
M: [unknown 36:02] limit then.  
S: So I know some people put ducks down their waders or do different things, did you have any tricks to get away with...  
M: I've hid ducks and stuff. When I was hunting in a blind like out in the bay, I mean Russell, Big Russell one day, the geese was coming out off the refuge one afternoon like crazy and we got right on Point of Course marshes, island that sits out in the bay.  
S: Ok.  
M: And Russell's blind was down to the south of it. But anyway, we killed 22 Canada geese and just as soon as we'd get the limit I'd take them over to Wild Cat and hide them in the bushes [laughter]. And we killed 22 Canada geese there one day from 11 o'clock 'til 3. I don't know what we could have killed if [laughter] if we'd stayed there and shot 'em.  
B: Yeah.

M: But I'm not gonna lie about it, I was always scared, everything I done I was scared.

S: Yeah.

M: I always looked over my shoulder [laughter]. Big Russell said I was, said you were the scarest person for to do what you do that he'd ever seen. I told him I said I've not been caught yet now have I?

S: [laughter] That's true.

M: I was, I was always scared, afraid I was going to get caught.

S: Did Mrs. Lola know what you were doing?

M: Yeah.

S: [Laugh] She did? Ok.

M: Yeah. Yeah, she knew, I mean, she knew before I ever got married 'cause her stepfather took me under his wing when I was real young.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: And he started me out on hunting, he started, he was the main one that I really started hunting with. We hunted, done just a little bit of everything.

S: Yeah.

B: What was his name?

M: And he was the best hunter that I ever hunted with in my life.

S: Really?

M: He knew what he was doing, if he'd come home and told it, said anything about it 'round the store or anything you wouldn't go no more.

S: Hmm.

M: You didn't dare to say anything, but he was a good hunter.

B: What was his name?

M: Charles. Charles Clark.

S: Charles Clark.

M: But he was... he's passed away. But he was a good hunter. I'll tell you, with him we hunted night and day [laugh].

S: Yeah.

M: When I wasn't working on the water I was hunting.

S: Yeah.

M: And Lola knew it. She knew it before I got married 'cause we was hunting together, me and him was hunting together before we ever got married.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: [unknown 38:47] I ain't never had no intentions of marrying her or anything at that time.

S: Well that was good, you were in with the in-laws before you got married.

M: Yeah.

S: [laughter]

M: Well they lived right up the street.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: She only lived, she lived part time with her mom after her and her husband separated. And only about three or four houses apart, so didn't have to go very far.

S: Mmh.

B: Now how do you, once you get a duck, how do you prepare it? I don't think I would know how to...

M: Just got to pick it, got to pick the feathers off him and clean him up and put him in the... Lola used to, she always put them in the oven, like you'd bake a chicken or in the roaster and cook it until it got done.

S: Hmm. Would you cook the whole bird or would you breast it?

M: The whole bird. Just clean him out good and cook the whole bird.

S: That's a lot of work. Getting all the feathers off and doing all that.

M: It's... it is for some people, but I don't at all mind it or nothing.

S: Yeah. Which is your favorite kind to eat?

M: Corn-fed black duck used to be about the best and mallard. Pintails is good duck.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: But I eat all kinds, everything when we're growing up we eat whatever Daddy brought home when I was growing up we'd eat.

S: Did you eat shorebirds then too?

M: Yeah. I've paid two fines in my whole entire life, all the hunting and everything I've ever done. And the first fine was shooting shorebirds [laughter]. And that was, I was only about 15.

S: Huh.

M: And I was down to... in Hog Island Bay, on board of a Down the Bay boat. My uncle was captain then, and I was crazy, all I wanted to do was kill something, get out in the marsh and shoot when I wasn't working.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: So I went and shot this little bunch of shorebirds. I mean it must have been about 50 or 60.

B: [laughter]

M: All kinds of yellow legs and everything. And we cleaned part of them and put them in the pot and started cooking them before we went out to work so we could have them all ready for when we come in to eat.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: And the game warden come by and saw some of the skins and stuff from the birds laying along the bank. They went aboard the boat and searched the boat.

S: Ohh.

M: And found them.

S: [laughter]

M: Hell they were waiting in the boat when we come aboard that day. Nobody wasn't going to own up to it, so they said, it was three of them. He said, well what we're going to do if somebody don't take the blame, we're going to take the whole crew ashore. So I [laugh]...

S: So you took the blame?

M: I had to take the blame. But anyway I was, boy I was worried, I was scared to death.

S: Yeah.

M: Come home, and had at certain times I had to, for two weeks I had to go to Eastville court.

S: That's a long way.

M: Yeah.

S: And you don't drive.

M: No. A guy that we used to get groceries from, when we were going down the bay, we would go there and get our grub bill. And he offered to take me down there and a couple of the crew went along too, and they all chipped in and paid, I thought it was going to, it was a big fine then, twelve and a quarter [laugh]. Twelve dollars and twenty, and a quarter was what the fine was.

S: Alright, what was the second time you got a fine?

M: Up on Wild Cat and I hadn't done anything. They had me staked out, and what it was that I took two of, I guess it was undercover people. I went up, and nobody knew that... where I was going, not one soul knew where I was going that day. Of course Lola, she knew that I was going up the bay gunning, but not exactly where I was going to be. And how they knew it I don't know.

S: Hmm.

M: But anyway, I went up, put two guys in the blind back in the marsh and only had two snow geese then. So I sat in the boat, didn't even take my gun out the case or nothing. I sat in the boat, [unknown 43:20] marsh, and kept watch at 'em. So they finally, they killed a, first flock came in they killed two, and the next flock that came in they killed four, so they had two over the limit. So I hollered at 'em, you know I was at, you know hollerin' distance, I didn't... and just down the bank from me was a game warden staked out, he was hid in there. [unknown 43:42]. I didn't know he was there, he told me everything. When he come out that day he wrote down, he had everything wrote down in the book. Everything. And when I hollered at them, I went back to them, I went and picked the snow geese up and put them to the blind, and told them it was all over with because that was all we had. Well the game warden come up there and act like he was writing them up but he... I smelt a rat anyway.

S: Hmm.

M: So he wanted to see my license and asked me a load of questions and I said, "How come, what are you doing this for?" He said, "Well, you brought, got... give me a ticket for aiding and abetting, attempting to take over the limit for snow geese."

S: Hmm.

M: I said, "You seen I didn't take my gun out of the boat, I've never had my gun in the blind or nothing. I said I only went back to the blind one time for to pick up the geese. He said, "Well you brought 'em up here and put them out." He said, "And you were attempting to get over the limit."

B: Ohh.

M: Cost me a hundred dollars.

S: Ooh was a big one.

B: Uhhh. Where were they from? The guys you were taking?

M: Up around Cambridge or up in that area somewhere. Annapolis.

S: Hmm.

M: Larry Thurman was the game warden.

S: You remember? [Laugh]

M: [Unknown 45:04] think of him.

B: About what year do you think that was?

M: That was sometime in the 80s. It was the only time that, only two times I've ever paid a fine. One for something I did do and the other for something I didn't do [laughter]. And I got a, I carried a lawyer friend of mine, who's still a friend, he hunted with me the whole time that I took hunting parties, and we're still good friends now. He lives in Virginia Beach, so he always told me, said, "You ever need me for anything, you know where I'm at, just call me." So I called him and we talked it over and he checked around and everything, he said, "I think you'd be better to pay your fine." He found out that they mailed it to me and I didn't have to go to court.

S: Oh.

M: He said, "I think you'd be better to pay the fine than you would go through all this." Cause he wasn't going to charge me anything. He said you'd have to go to court up in Annapolis if I'd have had to go to court.

S: Yeah.

M: So I paid the fine and that was it.

S: Hmm.

M: And he's still my lawyer, had a lawyer for all these years [laughter].

S: That's good. Good, [unknown 46:24]

M: I've never had to use him for anything, but you know different papers and stuff, when Mom died he took care of it.

S: Yeah.

M: Her house she had, but we've been good friends, I mean [unknown 46:39].

S: You made some good friends through your hunting.

M: Yeah, I met some good friends.

S: So I happened to think when you were talking about shorebirds about the different names for all the birds that you have. Can you tell us some of the different Chincoteague names for ducks and like different, like what's a bufflehead?

M: Dipper.

S: Yeah, dippers. And...

M: Little dippers. Hooded mergansers we named, called them hairy heads.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: Red-breasted we call them shell ducks.

S: I never understood that one, why are those called shell ducks? They just are?

M: I don't know. [laughter] That's what we always called them, shell ducks. Somebody when, growing up when somebody said they saw some mergansers I wouldn't even know what they were talking about [laughter]. And a goldeneye was a bullhead.

S: Huh. And a Virginia rail?

M: Marsh hen. Oldsquaw was south settlers.

S: South settlers?

M: South settlers, I don't know where that comes from.

S: Huh, I haven't heard that one.

M: We never called them oldsquaw.

S: Now I think they call them longtail ducks.

M: Yeah, longtail ducks.

S: They changed the name on you.

M: And curlews was curlew then but now they're whimbrels.  
S: Oh. [laughter]  
M: And black breast plover we always called them hollerhead.  
S: Hollerhead? [laugh]  
M: Always all my whole entire life called them hollerheads. But they went most of the time, they went by the sound that sounded like, when he hollered, when he makes a sound they said it sounded like he was hollering saying hollerhead. [laughter] That's where I guess he got his name. The green heron was called scouts.  
S: Ok. That makes sense.  
M: The white egrets was squoggins [laughter].  
S: Squoggins?  
B: Squoggins. I like saying that.  
M: Squoggins I don't know where the name come from. And a black crown heron they were whops.  
S: Whops, [unknown 48:48]. And what's a mudsucker?  
M: Just a little shorebird.  
S: And did you call widgeons anything?  
M: Bald crane  
S: Bald crane? Ok.  
M: Yeah.  
S: Trying to think what other ones.  
M: We had the name bald pate, bald crane, widgeon.  
S: Yeah, I heard over in Crisfield they call them bald pates.  
M: Pintails, they always went by sprigtail.  
S: Sprigtail, yep. Did you call blue herons anything?  
M: Cranky.  
S: Cranky? [laughter]  
B: Cranky?  
M: Yep, cranky.  
S: That's pretty good. Looking around here to see other birds.  
M: The red knot we'd call them robin snipe.  
S: Robin snipe, yep.  
B: What about oyster catchers? Do they, is that just oyster catchers?  
M: Sea crows.  
S: Sea crows? [laugh]  
B: Nice.  
M: And dowitchers grayback, they were called grayback.  
S: Oh, ok.  
B: What are those ones that have the really big feet, we have them in the museum, it's like right beside the boat.  
S: It's coot.  
B: Coot, ok. That's already got a cool name.  
S: Yep.  
M: Let's see, coot, we called them chicken ducks. [laughter]  
B: Chicken ducks? Oh I like that!

M: And then we called a surf scooter, we called them coots.  
S: Oh, well that's confusing [laughter].  
M: We called them coots, but the real coot we called chicken duck.  
B: [laughter] Because it tastes like chicken?  
M: No, I've eat 'em but they're alright. Wasn't too bad.  
S: Yeah.  
B: But their feet, I guess? You're saying their feet are like...  
M: Yeah, they had big feet on them for the size bird.  
S: Yeah, they do. Uh-huh. They have different names for everything.  
M: Yeah.  
B: What's your favorite thing to carve? Nowadays, you said shorebirds?  
M: Shorebirds.  
B: Any particular kind?  
M: Curlew and the marsh hens. All the little shorebirds I like, I like just about all of them. I've not been carving songbirds too long, but it's not been but in the last three years I don't think.  
S: Yeah, I don't know if you had any really when I first met you, maybe one or two. A few years ago.  
M: Yeah I didn't, I mean maybe I tried it, you know a few years ago.  
S: I think when I first met you, the first time I came here, someone told me to get from you a marsh hen and a heron. Those are your specialties.  
M: Yeah.  
S: Yeah, pretty good.  
M: Yeah that's all I've got to do now, so...  
S: How many do you think you make in a month or a year or whatever?  
M: I couldn't tell you if I... I couldn't... no way, come close to it, don't even know.  
S: Yeah. And what kind of wood do you use?  
M: Bass.  
S: Basswood?  
B: Where do you get the wood from?  
M: I got another friend that hunted, used to hunt with me, or he hunted with me all the way up until I quit. I think he hunted with me about thirty, over thirty years. From Pennsylvania and he was in the construction business. And the sawmill where he got all of his lumber for to do the work, his work he did, he would get them, pick out special wood for me. And he'd deliver it right down here to me. I'm expecting him to come, not anytime, well, Memorial Day. I talked with him not long ago and I told him I was getting a little bit low and he said I'll see if I can't get you something. But he's retired now and all he does is hunt.  
S: Hmm. Good life.  
M: But he, he's got me wood just about all the whole time, very little expense.  
S: Hmm, that's pretty good.  
M: All I had to get him was a decoy or something like that and deliver it right here to the door.  
S: That's pretty good. Do you ever use white cedar also? Or?  
M: Yeah, I used it, but... it's a lot easier to carve, but it's expensive now.  
S: Yeah.



M: But I've used it, and if it wasn't you know real dry, dried out was real good. I had it sitting on the shelf and you could hear it snap.

S: Yep.

M: Big crack in it.

S: It splits.

M: But that basswood you can, I've never had a problem at all.

S: A lot of carvers I've been talking to carve in tupelo these days, have you ever used that?

M: No, I've... maybe a piece or two of it but, that's expensive too.

S: It's real expensive.

M: Yeah. No I went to the decoy show, they had a little block of it, basswood, about maybe that long, about that thick [gesturing with hands], some forty-five or fifty dollars for a little block of wood.

S: Mmh-hmm. Yep.

M: But when he brings me mine for a whole year's supply for a pair of, last time I give him a pair of flying teal.

S: That's pretty good.

M: Yeah [laughter]. I mean he won't take any money.

S: Huh. Wow.

M: He won't take any money or...

S: Now those old brandt that you have on the shelf are made out of cork you said.

M: Yeah.

S: Would you buy that or would you make your decoys out of things you found?

M: I forgot how I got it. Most of that cork was given to me, some old refrigeration cork that they said that they would get.

S: Huh.

M: It made a pretty good decoy, they were somewhat ugly, but...

S: [laughter] Brandt or [unknown 54:42]

M: Brandt didn't care. And all my wooden Brandt decoys I sold most of them, only got two or three left.

S: Huh.

M: Made out of basswood.

S: You know, I heard of carvers in other places using balsa that they would find from lifeboats after World War II, did you ever have any of that here?

M: I certainly did, I used [unknown 55:04] one time there.

S: Did you?

M: Yeah a guy give me the [unknown 55:10] big, and I don't know how big around they were. And he give me a, what I started with, really what I started with.

S: Hmm. And was that in the '40s?

M: Yeah. '40s, let's see, it was when I first started hunting, in fact I think that's the first, what I made the first decoys out of.

S: Out of balsa?

M: Yep.

S: From a lifeboat?

M: Yeah. Yeah, a guy gave me just, a pretty good size piece of it. In fact I've got, I think if I'm not mistaken Lee [unknown 55:48] cut some out for me, I didn't have a band saw then.

S: Hmm. I think he did. So he had a band saw. What tools did you have then to carve with?

M: Back then all I had was a knife, an old knife and a hatchet.

S: And can you tell us what you use now?

M: A band saw and carving knives and Fordham, one of them Fordham tools. That's all I use, still use the same thing.

S: Yeah.

Break in camera shot.

B: Alright.

S: Now you use mostly hand tools I think, right? What do you use the Fordham for?

M: Just moving down. I do most of the chopping with a hatchet, then I get the body cut down and shaped up pretty good and use that Fordham tool to take off all the hatchet marks. Use knives for the heads and stuff.

S: And what do you use for the bills?

M: Oak. I've got pieces of oak and I just cut them out on the band saw. And they're countersunk in, I'll drill a hole and just sink them in there so they won't get broke off so quick.

S: Now some carvers, some people have used tongs, prines from the oyster tongs. You ever do that, or use pieces of metal or anything?

M: I have done it, but I like wood best. You shape it and, with that metal, all you've got is one straight piece that comes out there. Yeah I've tried it, but I like the wood best. And songbirds, stuff like that, the bill is all one piece...

S: Part of the body?

M: Yeah, I don't set them in or anything, I just... shorebirds, the herons, all one piece.

S: And do you ever do feather insertion, or just do you carve it all?

M: I tried, but...

S: [laugh] It's tough.

M: I tried that, you know burning, isn't that what they call it? Burning?

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: That's too much.

S: And what kind of paints do you use?

M: I use that Joe [unknown 57:58] acrylic.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: Best paint I've ever used.

S: And you have all sorts of tricks I know for the legs. What kind of stuff do you use for making their legs?

M: That metal.

S: Yep.

M: And then I, for the feet I use, I got it in a little box down there, it's epoxy, I get it from a taxidermy company.

S: Hmm.

M: Mix two portions of it together and it's hard a just like stone. That's what I make the feet out of.

S: Yeah.

M: But with the war, anything I could find, I could make a leg out of, I would use [laughter].

S: Why do you think people like your decoys so much? Or why do people like Chincoteague decoys so much?

M: I don't know. Well I guess a lot of people [unknown 58:55] to the shows and everything, I've had the cheapest ones in the show [laughter]. They want to know why I sell them so cheap. There's a guy, the last couple of years, had his table set up next to me, wonder why I sold them so cheap, I said, "Well, I'd rather leave them here than take them home."

S: Yup.

B: When did that show first get started, the Eastern Decoy Show?

M: I've never missed one since they been having it. We started out down to Tom's Cove Campground in the club house, it was called a snow goose decoy show then. Been thirty... I thought it was thirty, I guess it would be thirty-two years, but the paper I think stated it was thirty-six, but I think they're wrong.

S: Hmm.

M: But I've never missed a show since they had it.

S: Huh. And did there used to be shows or competitions on the refuge?

M: Yeah. I think that's where they started the name snow goose decoy show on the refuge I think.

S: Oh, ok.

M: And then they brought it down one year to Tom's Cove Campground. Or where the campground is now, to the clubhouse, had it one year and then they moved up to the school.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: But that place, I mean you wasn't supposed to bring anything in there but a decoy, something related to the birds or ducks.

S: Yeah.

M: Lola had a, didn't have it for to sell them, some family up in Pennsylvania made us a quilt, and the background was navy blue, and I drew them a pattern of a mute swan, I mean it's about that long [gesturing with hands]. And they put it right in the center of this quilt, and the whole family, get the little children and everything, put stitches in that quilt.

S: Oh neat.

M: I've still got it. I wouldn't take anything for it.

S: Yeah. Well that's sweet.

M: It's a pretty quilt, and the border is red, red border around it. And I had, she took that just for the show, and Reggie Burks and Thomas Savage come over to my table that day and I got mad, I got so mad, told me I'd have to remove it, wasn't supposed to have it in there.

S: You couldn't just show it or hang it?

M: No, said you can't remove, this is a decoy show, not art, not art or whatever you call it.

S: Huh.  
M: But boy I got mad, Charlie Morris said, "I thought you were going to turn the table over." [laughter] I said... I got really mad with them over it. I ain't forgot it either.  
S: Huh.  
M: I don't hate them but I still don't like it. [laughter]  
S: Huh. I don't think I've ever seen you mad, I'd get scared. [laughter]  
B: Well now it's art and all kinds of things, they've changed it so much.  
M: Oh, and now all they've got jewelry and anything you can mention there now. Everything.  
S: Yep.  
M: And the carving is going... I said... All the difference in the world the carving is just going down.  
S: Yeah.  
M: Going down all the time on here.  
S: Are there fewer people doing it?  
M: Yeah.  
S: Or are they doing differently or what's the changes?  
M: Just people [stopped fooling] with it. And the young people's not taking it up now. Greg Daisey, he used to be to all the shows just about, you probably know him I guess.  
S: You know I don't think he's carving anymore.  
M: No.  
S: I didn't get to know him very well.  
M: And a lot of them has passed away. [Unknown 1:02:48]  
S: There are a couple of carvers who just don't go to the shows, though. I think like Mark Daisey.  
M: Yeah he don't go anymore.  
S: Oh, so some of these guys used to go to shows...  
M: Yeah, and... can't think of his name now, he carved a nice decoy.  
S: Who's that? Or where's he live?  
M: Lived up on the north end of the island.  
S: Was it Ronald Justice?  
M: Justice. Yeah, Ronald. He don't come to the shows anymore. There's nobody, me and Russell and... I guess we're the only two really Chincoteague carvers that come.  
S: Yeah.  
B: Yeah.  
M: Used to be twenty, must about twenty some.  
S: Wow. Huh. So... And then the mainlanders who used to be Chincoteaguers.  
M: Yeah, there's not many of them, just Jimmy [unknown 1:03:46], and he comes. Let's see, he's the only really Chincoteaguer that I know of that still comes. That were born and raised here.  
S: Yeah. Huh.  
M: There's a lot of big changes. It's not like it used to be.  
S: Yeah.

M: Good lands, I remember back eight or ten years ago I could... about lunchtime the first day I had everything sold near about.

S: Really?

M: Yeah.

S: Wow.

M: I mean everybody was selling stuff. Now its... ain't much going on now. Slow.

S: Yeah. Hmm.

M: Lot of stuff I sell now is in the summer and to people that bought, collecting stuff.

S: How do people find you now? Is it people that have been buying from you?

M: Yeah.

S: Or new people?

M: And a lot of the people I'd say the biggest part of them is people that's already been here and bought stuff. And they'll tell somebody else.

S: Yep.

M: But it's a lot slower than it used to be. But you know I don't have anything else to do. [laughter] Keep house and that's all I do.

B: Do you go hunting still?

M: Deer hunting. I give up duck hunting.

S: Now why'd you give up duck hunting?

M: I just... the laws and regulations got strict. Captain's license and all that mess, and I said, "I hunted all my life, and sailed in and out of the bays, and thank the lord I never had any trouble, no close calls or anything." And then tell me I had to get a captain's license for to know how to go up the bay.

S: [laugh] Yeah. Now did you get any deer this year?

M: Daddy used to hunt.

S: What's that? And did you get any deer this year?

M: One.

S: One deer?

M: That's all I got. I got messed up real bad [laugh].

S: Uh oh! [laugh]

M: I got... during the muzzle loading season I had some several nice shots. And I got messed up, I bought one little box of caps, them firing caps, and they were bad.

S: Oh no!

M: The first two or three deer, I mean just as pretty shot bucks, put up on and she wouldn't fire.

S: Mmh.

M: And I pull back and shoot and she'd go off.

S: Ugh.

M: The caps was bad.

S: Oh that's awful.

M: I give my buddy some, he got short, and I give him some, and he had the same trouble.

S: Oh.

B: Oh no.

S: That's too bad.

M: And during the rifle season... I don't know, I told John my grandson, I said, "I guess I'm getting too old." Too old to do it. I missed once and... two deer. I crippled one and couldn't find it.

S: Oh.

M: I don't like to [unknown 1:06:56].

S: Yeah, that's tough.

M: But he... my grandson he, John, he's a good hunter. He fixed us up with deer meat this year.

S: Oh good.

B: That's real good. Yeah growing up in West Virginia, it's like around Thanksgiving and stuff everybody was gone deer hunting and I was like the only person in school [laughter].

M: Yeah I like to, I like deer hunting. But I don't know how much longer I'm going to do it. I still, last year, this past year, I'd still be up in that stand, sixteen foot off the ground.

B: Where do you go to hunt?

M: We've got a... it's four, five of us that've got a farm rented, we've had it rented for about twenty years close to. Same farm, that's the only place we hunt.

S: [unknown 1:07:54] other questions. Is there anything we're missing? Any exciting, something from Chincoteague history that we're not asking you about?

M: I don't know, whatever you ask me I answer you best I can [laughter].

B: I think that's just about all we've got, I think I should say, I forgot to say at the beginning the date and stuff. This is a life history interview with, for the Chincoteague Museum, and for the... I mean for the Museum of Chincoteague Island, for the island library, and it's March the seventh, 2015. And we're here with Kristin Sullivan, a folklorist and curator with the Ward Museum, and me Ennis Barber, and Cork McGee.

S: Alright.

B: Cool, thank you!

S: Thanks, Cork.

Break in camera shot.

B: Started it again. So you were saying you cleaned the lighthouse lights.

M: Yeah, I used to, Mr. Norman Jones was the lighthouse keeper then, he was in the Coast Guard, and he would take me and Gene Murray, a friend who lived up the road here next to me. We grew up together and he would take us over for to shine the brass on the inside of that lens. All we done was use that, what do you call it, Brass-o? And just shine it until you got it shining real bright.

S: Now how old were you when you did that?

M: I was about, we were, let's see... we were about thirteen, fourteen.

B: Mmh-hmm.

S: So that must have been fun, I... sort of to go up there.

M: Yeah, for to get to go up the tower.

B: Yeah.

M: We could run up there just about then. [laughter]

B: They didn't get you to clean the glass, just the brass part of it?

M: Yeah, that's what we cleaned was the brass.

B: Not the glass, ok.  
M: Yeah.  
S: Ok.  
M: I mean, and the floor down in that... they had two big generators down in the bottom, when you went in the door. And we'd sweep up in there and clean up in there. And he would start them up and charge the batteries up.  
S: Hmm.  
M: And we'd pile, a great big pile of batteries that they charged up for the light to work on.  
B: Oh wow.  
M: And two big gasoline, they were gasoline motors then, but had them and they'd run them the whole time we were there for to charge the batteries, to last that light. I don't know how long it would last. But anyway...  
B: I wonder what kind of batteries those are.  
M: We'd go there with him and get for to get to go for the trip.  
S: Yeah, so they didn't pay you anything?  
M: No.  
S: That was a good deal for him!  
M: Yeah, that it was.  
B: While we've got this going, what was the village like around Assateague, do you remember anything about it?  
M: Well I remember some of the old houses but I don't remember anybody living in them. The last two people I knew that lived on there were Mr. Strott and his wife. But they were the last two.  
S: They left in what, '43 or so, '44 something like that?  
M: I don't know. He outlived her, a pretty good while.  
B: [unknown 1:11:18]  
M: But it's something that's in my mind, my uncle, when the Fish and Wildlife first bought the refuge, or when they bought it, the first caretaker on over there was my uncle.  
S: Oh really?  
M: Olin Williams.  
S: Now did he work for the refuge?  
M: He worked for the government.  
S: What did people on Chincoteague think about that?  
M: Well, he was just a caretaker, I mean he lived in the old Coast Guard station before they tore it down. By [Pungo trail]. He lived in there and I went over once in a while and I don't know if Sonny went or not, when we were real small. Just for keeping the company.  
S: Mmh-hmm.  
M: We'd spend the night with him or something, and he was the first caretaker. But they got it down, can't find it nowhere.  
S: Huh. Isn't that something.  
M: But he had it before Bucklew, Herbert Bucklew come over there.  
S: I didn't realize there was anybody before Bucklew.

M: My uncle was the caretaker of the refuge. He had an old black mare that he rode around on. Because they didn't have no vehicles on there then.

B: What was his name?

M: Olin, O-L-I-N Williams.

S: And what were his responsibilities?

M: To keep people off and to take care of things on there.

S: Ok. [laughter] Kick them off.

M: Daddy [laughter] Daddy would sneak over there and there was a big pond they'd call Station Pond right next to it. It'd run way down in the woods. Daddy would sneak in there sometimes and shoot ducks in there and boy he would get mad, he knew who it was, but he... he never could, you know, get up with him for sure.

B: So that was his brother? So what do you think he would have done if he did catch him?

M: [laugh] I doubt if he'd have done anything.

S: [laughter] Just gotten mad.

M: But he had an old black mare, big black, she was a big horse, and that's what he rode around.

S: Did many other kids get to go over to Assateague? And go up the lighthouse and do things that you did?

M: Not that I know of.

S: Yeah.

M: Me and Gene Murray was the only two I knew of that would go help him.

S: That's pretty neat. When did people start going over the white hills? Or did you ever go over the white hills?

M: Yeah, that was a long walk, had to walk all the way up there. Of course what we would do, would go up, would sail up that creek, James Creek, up to the north of the bridge, it's a creek that goes in under the beach light, go up there and boat and walk through the woods, had a path through there, and go right to the white hills.

S: Now what would you do up there?

M: Just play, up top of them and slide, run down it, roll down it [laugh].

S: Have you heard of...

B: Yeah, I've heard of the white hills. Now what about the red hills? Those are two different ones, right?

S: Red hills are across the bay.

B: Ahh.

M: Red hills are over, not too far from Captain's Cove.

S: When you were younger, do you remember red hills being like an entertainment place?

M: Had a sort of stands in there, yeah, used to have speedboat races.

S: Huh. I didn't know that.

M: Yep. A lot of different people had the inboard speedboats.

S: Mmh-hmm.

M: They'd have races, certain time of year they had that race.

S: That's fun.

M: That had stands, I remember going there before they had stands down, but I don't remember when they were open going full blast.



S: Hmm.

M: But I do remember having speedboats, different ones, having Harold [unknown 1:15:06], he was up in the, had the fastest one I guess. [laughter]

B: What about the horse races, do you ever remember horse races at the carnival?

M: Yeah I do, that was entertainment. That was real good entertainment.

S: Who got to ride in those? Ride horses?

M: Good lands, they had a lot of different ones.

S: But it was people on Chincoteague?

M: Yeah. Young boys mostly, most of them as far as I know is gone, passed away.

S: Yeah.

B: Alright.

M: A lot of the guys that used to ride them, boy they'd fight over it, fight and everything, who won [laughter].