



Date of Interview: September 13, 1984

**Interviewing: Buddy Wilde**  
Oak Road  
Felicity Cove

Interviewer: Jennie LeFevre

JL: Mr. Wilde, could you tell me if you were born in Shady Side ?

BW: Yes, I was.

JL: Could you tell me where?

BW: No, I can't. I guess in the hospital, I'm not sure whether it's in Annapolis or Shady Side.

JL: But you grew up in Shady Side.

BW: Grew up in Shady Side ...

JL: You grew up in Shady Side.

BW: My mother and father, two grandparents grew up in Shady Side.

JL: Could you tell me your grandparents' names?

BW: My grandfather was Frank Fenton, his father was William F. who was born in ... was born in 1844 and came here from Germany when my grandfather was seven years old ... with a brother, Harry, and a sister, Augusta.

JL: Where did they come to live in Shady Side?

BW: They settled on what we refer to as McKinley Point and had a boarding house there that the board people ... tourists from Baltimore ... they'd come down on the steamboat and they'd stay there for a couple of weeks at a time and then go back to Baltimore.

JL: Your family had the boardinghouse?

BW: My great grandfather had ...

JL: Your great grandfather. Uh, was your father born in Shady Side?

BW: Yes, uh-huh.

JL: And, uh, when he was married, where did he live in Shady Side?

BW: He lived on Parrish Creek, uh, it was this house owned by Mr. Griner, my father bought on Parrish Creek, right across from the Leatherbury Oyster House.

JL: Do you know what your grandfather did for a living down here?

BW: My grandfather bought a farm here in nineteen six and raised turkeys. He had over a hundred acres and they raised vegetables and turkeys and dressed them and took them to Annapolis to the market and sold what they grew on the farm.

JL: What's size farm did he have?

BW: It was something over a hundred acres.

JL: I see. Then could you tell me what your father did for a living?

BW: My father was a paint contractor and a waterman.

JL: Did you...

BW: By the way, I've got a copy of a title search for that property that my grandfather bought ... uh, 44 acres, \$600 to pay for it. For two years, he had two years to make the payments. But the interest was pretty odd for those days was 6%.

JL: Maybe in those days that was pretty odd.

BW: That was pretty high in those days.

JL: Is the house that your mother and father lived in still ... still standing?

BW: Oh yes, my mother's still there, living in that house ...

JL: Your mother is still living there ...

BW: They put an addition on to it, oh, I guess, back in end of 30's, somewhere in the 30's, they put an addition on to it.

JL: If you say your father worked on the water, did you work on the water with him?

BW: No, only on weekends, only on the holiday or Saturday.

JL: When you did help your father, and if he ... did you used to oyster with him?

BW: Yes, uh huh.

JL: Do you remember when you first started to work for him, how much you used to get for oysters?

BW: I remember we ... when we would be frozen up here in West River, everyone would go to Annapolis so that they could follow the ferry out from the dock, break the ice so the boats could get out, and they would get \$ .15 a bushel for those oysters that ... but they could catch a boatload in two, three hours. They could load the boat and the oysters were that deep on the bottom and they were of very poor quality, so maybe they weren't worth more than \$ .15. (Laugh)

JL: Now, I know I asked you when you helped your father and about your family, but I neglected to ask you what year you were born, if you don't mind telling us.

BW: I was born 1923.

JL: Okay.

BW: I'll be 62 years old this coming March.

JL: Okay. Uh, so how many years did your father work on the water, would you say how many years he worked on the water?

BW: Oh, my father died at age 93 and I guess he spent, well, he was in the Navy for a period of time during World War I, I guess he spent, ah, close to 55-60 years, off and on, on the water.

JL: Did you go to school here at Shady Side?

BW: Yes, and Ms. Ethel Andrews was my teacher.

JL: Do you remember who some of your classmates were?

BW: Uh, yes, I was ... Jack Nieman, Gordon A. Hallock, Betty Lou Leatherbury was close in that clique ... she was in a class behind me, and, uh, I remember a lot of the, a lot of the students but I don't know whether they were in my class or ahead of me or back because we had, we had six grades in the same school and, uh, Miss Ethel taught.. .I think Miss Ethel taught three classes and then there was Mrs. Hazel Williams, I think her name is now, was the other teacher that taught three grades.

JL: Now, Mr. Wilde, Miss Ethel told me that some of her students used to play tricks on her in school.

Were you ever one of those students?

BW: No, indeed, no indeed. I was a very bashful little boy in school, scared to death.

JL: Okay.

BW: In fact, I wouldn't go to school part time ... they had to round me up and pretty well tie me to the desk.

JL: Oh, but you had to walk to school?

BW: Oh yes.

JL: How far was it?

BW: About a mile and a half, I guess.

JL: Do you also have brothers and sisters?

BW: I have a younger brother still living, my older brother's dead.

JL: But you only had ...

BW: Two brothers.

JL: Two brothers, no sisters?

BW: No.

JL: Could you tell me what you and your brothers did for entertainment down here when you were young children?

BW: Well, during the summertime, mostly, why, uh, the Rural Home Hotel would have a boat that used

to go out twice a day that would take the guests for a boat ride and then take them out for a swim, and we used to hook a ride on the boat, go out with the boat whenever we could. And, uh, of course, there was a lot of ball games, swimming ...

JL: Uh, where did they used to have the ball games down here?

BW: I guess they were mostly at the school grounds. We used to ... we used to go down, uh, what is Avalon Shores now, of course, in those days, it was all .. it was all grown up in woods, used to go down there a lot, get together and go swimming. Of course, there wasn't any houses there.

JL: Uh, huh. Did you used to go to any dances in Shady Side?

BW: Yeah, across ... they had the dance pavilion, was at the Nowell's store and that was always a Saturday night affair.

JL: Did you ever ...

BW: Used to have the showboat, too, used to come during the summer and land over at Galesville and we'd go there by boat, go to the show.

JL: Could you tell me what type of show they had?

BW: Oh gosh, no, but it was typical showboat shows, you know, vaudeville, all that sort of thing.

JL: I see ...

BW: ... and entertainment.

JL: Uh, did you ever used to go to the movies down here in Shady Side?

BW: Oh yeah, I remember going to the movies, yeah. In fact, my cousin, Jim, used to run the projector upstairs. It would break down about four-five times during the show and you'd have to sit there and wait for him to get it fixed up, turn her on again.

JL: Would you happen to remember who were the popular movie stars at that time?

BW: Oh gosh, no, I was too young to really.

JL: Too young, you were too young ... okay. Uh, do you remember anything about the Shady Side Beverage Company?

BW: Just barely, I remember, I remember the building out there, but it had stopped operating.

JL: Was there still an ice cream parlor there?

BW: No, I don't remember that ...

JL: That was gone ... that was gone. Uh, when you used to go to dances down in Shady Side, who were some of the other people who were at the dances?

BW: Oh gosh, there would be, uh, Lucretia Lee and Winnie Crandell and Billy Crandell and Jean Jones or Jean Leatherbury then, Jean Hallock, and then there would all be girls from the hotel that would be around ...

JL: Always ... got to meet new girls?

BW: Always got to meet new girls from the hotel, yeah. They were summertime girls.

JL: Ah, but I'm sure some of them married people down here.

BW: Uh, I don't know of any. I know of a couple that was pretty, pretty serious and pretty close, but it didn't ... but didn't happen. When fall would come, where they'd go back to town, you know, and they'd forget their summertime boyfriend.

JL: Could you tell us some of the other things, maybe, that you did for entertainment down here?

BW: No, I guess that was just about it. We ... we as kids, we were trained pretty, pretty much to do our share of the work and we ...

JL: What type of chores did you have to do then at home?

BW: Oh, you had to cut the grass, and if the house needs painting, you have to help paint, and if there's any money to be made crabbing, why you'd pitch in and crab, help tend to the garden and ...

JL: Would you happen to remember the canning house that used to be down where Shady Side road *is*, or is that long before your time?

BW: Long before my time ... I don't remember that, now.

JL: Who were some of the gentlemen friends who you used to run around with? Who would you say was one of your closest friends down here?

BW: Uh ...

JL: When you were a young man?

BW: Well, Gordon Hallock and I used to be pretty close and we traveled around quite a bit. Gordon was always one of those fellows who would have a way of getting a vehicle and to get a car in those days was really something, you know, but he had a brother that lived in Washington, or near Washington, D.C. We'd drive around over that way and I guess to see some girls.

JL: I hear that sometimes a bunch of young men would get in one car and ladies would get in another car and they would go to Surrattsville for a dance. Did you ever do that?

BW: That's before my time.

JL: That's before your time ...

BW: Yeah, uh huh.

JL: Could you tell me a little bit about your recollection of the stores that were in Shady Side?

BW: Uh, one that's still standing now was Hopkins, George Hopkins, I believe his name was, George Hopkins, and then there was the Siegert Store.

Q: Where was the Siegert Store?

A: The Siegert Store is now the Shady Side Market, but it started out as Siegert, and that's one of the girls I left out, uh, Nellie Jean Siegert was one ... in my class that we used to go around together and, uh, then after the Siegert Store, Crandells built a store out there and that's the building that's next to the Shady Side Market now, that's a couple apartments in it. Then there was a Heinrich's Store down at the end of West River Road and another Crandells Store out of Shady Side, on the way toward the lumber company. And the lumber company in those days was down on Steamboat Road, it wasn't, uh, it wasn't at the present location.

JL: Could you tell me a little bit about the lumber company down there, what it looked like, and ...

BW: I can remember just a long narrow shed. It was ... it was built right on the ... on the water's edge so they could get the lumber off of the barges and store it right there, close by, and used to bring the lumber in by boat. And then they, later on, they moved the lumber company up to the present location.

JL: Do you recall the, uh, Emma Giles?

BW: I have a vision of the Emma Giles going up the river. It must have been one of her very last runs, but I can picture that old steamer going up the river.

JL: How old were you, about?

BW: Oh gosh, I don't know ... I guess seven or eight years old, something like that.

JL: I see ... I see ... so you never, ever had the opportunity to ride on the Emma ...

BW: No, no, uh huh ...

JL: Never had the chance ...

BW: No.

JL: Getting back to the lumber company, uh, where did the lumber go? Went out of Shady Side to other areas? Uh, from the lumber yard?

BW: I don't ...

JL: You said it went by boat.

BW: Well, the lumber was brought in here by boat ...

JL: Oh, I see.

BW: and, uh, I guess the builders would go there and pick up the lumber and build ... most of these houses in here were built by Captain Jimmy Atwell and Captain Frank Lee and ...

JL: The ones down here in Felicity Cove ...

BW: Right here at Felicity Cove, I imagine all these houses were built by ... by that builder because he was about the only one at that time that would take on building a whole house. In those days, they had to build everything ... they had to build the windows and doors, you didn't have a mill that would build those separate so they had to build everything. And most of the houses here were summer houses, now that are converted to year round. My house, I built myself. I just ... this house was built in 19..., 1960.

JL: How long did it take you to build this house?

BW: I started in August and had my mother and father in for Christmas dinner. Wasn't completed, wasn't finished but it was finished enough that I could have ... have them for dinner and my wife says 23 years later, that it still isn't finished. (Laugh)

JL: Who were some of the people that helped you build this house?

BW: My brother, my father and we would get a ... when we started to do the roof, why I had a whole bunch of fellows to come in, like Marion Nieman, Stanley Trott and those fellows were active in the construction business and we'd get a whole gang of fellows together and put up the heavy work but when it would come to jobs like laying the floor and putting on the sheathing, why, we'd just do that ourselves and drive nails as hard as we could to get the job done.

JL: Uh, do you recall any of the early boat builders in Shady Side?

BW: Well, my great uncle Perry Rogers was, I guess, the first one.

JL: Where did he have a boat yard here in Shady Side?

BW: Where Jerry Joyce's yard is right now and, uh, I'm told that he designed and developed the Bay bateau that was used to oyster. It was unique in that it had a stern that was designed so that you anchor the boat from the stern and the seas would hit the stern and disperse, whereas the other type of square stern boats would hit the sea too hard and you wouldn't be able to work when it got rough, but the type of boat he built was designed so that it would absorb that sea and could work in rough water.

JL: Have you any idea when he started building boats?

BW: No, I don't.

JL: Do you have any idea how many boats in his lifetime he built?

BW: In the hundreds.

JL: In the hundreds.

BW: Oh, yes.

JL: Are any of them still in existence?

BW: I don't know of any. I don't know of any.

JL: All right, I suppose he built his boats with all hand tools, there were no power tools at all.

BW: No, no.

JL: And I suppose the plans were in his head?

BW: That's right, there wasn't any plans on paper, I mean, you'd build a boat and you'd build it from memory and, uh, the most important tool in those days would be the adz, where'd they chop the keel out, which is a big job to shape that keel from a log. . . they'd have to square it up and cut the skag in the bottom to put the bottom planking on. It was a lot of wood that had to be chopped out of ... even later, after the logs, even when they got lumber that was square, there still was a lot of chopping with the adz to shape that keel to get the planking.

JL: Do you recall any other early boat builders in Shady Side?

BW: Uh, Mr. George Proctor was ... and some of his boats are still around. Uh, my father's boat was built by Mr. George Proctor.

JL: What was your father's ... what was the name of your father's boat.

BW: They weren't named, they just had a number.

JL: Just numbers.

BW: Just straight number, uh huh. If you documented them with the Coast Guard, then you had names for them, but with the state, was just a number.

JL: Okay. Mr. Wilde, would you please tell me ... then when you started to work, what was your occupation?

BW: I was in the real estate brokerage business.

JL And, uh ...

BW: I had my office in Annapolis.

JL: You had your own real estate company.

BW Yes.

JL: ... so to speak? Uh, how long was this in operation?

BW Well, I guess I'm going a little bit too ... that was later on, when I first ... my first job I had out of high school, uh, was building PT boats at the Annapolis Boat Yard and from there I went into the ... I went into the Navy as a pilot, in a Navy Air Corps, as a pilot, training. I only went through the training stages because the war was winding down then and they had more pilots than they knew what to do with. And from there, I went, I went to the ... I was a fireman at the Naval Academy and that got too boring for me, so I left there and I served eight years in county government as a commissioner and then, while I was in county government, I was also a real estate broker, that's when I started my real estate business.

JL: Now, a lady told me you were with the county, her name was Alice Griner ...

BW: That's my aunt.

JL: That's your aunt ... okay.

BW: Yeah, I spent four years ... I had four years in as commissioner, I was elected at the age of 27 then four years out, I was the youngest commissioner ever to serve. And, uh, I was four years out, I was defeated for re-election and then I won the next time around for four more years. And they were ... they were tough four years. Really tough going.

JL: I imagine. And then, then, you were also part-time into real estate?

BW: In the real estate, yes, uh huh.

JL: Okay, and then, then, when you were no longer commissioner, how many years did you have your real estate company or do you still have it now?

BW: I just give up my license this past year because I'd had enough of it and it was getting to be pretty much of a rat race to try to keep up with all the gals getting into real estate and retired people there, the Academy and Fort Meade ... anyone had something to sell, there was a relative waiting to pick up a listing so I said to heck with it, and back '68, I started the ... started to develop my oyster growing process that I'm still working on.

JL: Well, we gotta, we gotta fill up the whole backside of this tape about your oyster proposal. I think it's a very good idea. Uh, could you please tell me, are you married, Mr. Wilde?

BW: Yes, uh huh.

JL: Could you tell me where you met your wife?

A: At Carvel Hall Hotel in Annapolis and, uh, she's from Leesburg, or near, Leesburg, Virginia. A mutual friend of ours introduced us and, let's see, we've been married since 1950. We were married in 1950.

JL: You have children?

BW No, we had no children.

JL: No children. Uh, when you brought your wife to live down in Shady Side, where did you live ... when you were first married, did you come to Shady Side to live?



BW: Yes, we did. I owned the building that was the movie house. I owned that building and I built an upstairs apartment in that and fixed that up and then I built ... I was also in the antique restoration and reproduction business for a while and that's where my shop was ... was in that building and I had an apartment up over top of the shop.

JL: Uh, how long did you and your wife live at the apartment?

BW: Uh, just about five years.

JL And then, you built the house you're in now?

BW Then we moved here in Felicity Cove.

JL Was it enjoyable working on antiques?

BW: Very much so, I loved it, but the problem was it was all handwork and, uh, you had to charge such high fees that people just didn't want to have the work done. I did a lot of work for the homes in Annapolis, like the Hammond Harwood House and the Chase House and the Ridout House and Tulip Hill and, uh, I had most all of those houses where I did the restoration work for them.

JL: I see. That is interesting.

BW: It was something that was pretty difficult to make a good living at.

JL: I can imagine. I can imagine. Uh, now Mr. Wilde, if you like antiques that much, I'm sure you must have a lot of nice antiques that you've collected yourself.

BW: Yes, we do. We have quite a few.

JL: That you've searched around and found. Is there any particular favorite type of things you like in antiques?

BW: Well, I have a Pembroke table, an inlaid Pembroke table that I'll have to tell the story about. It was an old, old house around on the river that had pretty well fallen in ....

JL: What river?

BW: West River, down from where I live, and I went in ... this was before I left home to work in my shop, and I found this old, old table that was piled up with grease where they had used it to cure meats ... well, it had been painted and, uh, I scraped a little place off and I saw that it was beautiful mahogany wood under that grease and paint. And I brought it home and I stripped all the paint off and it turned out to be a very, very valuable and beautiful Pembroke table, inlaid Pembroke table. And I pride that more than anything because it was just something someone had thrown away and I just found it and restored it.

JL: Oh, my goodness...

A: But my wife is a little bit tired of antiques because it takes so much work to keep them polished up. See, they all have a waxed finish on them, they don't have a hard varnish finish on them like your modern furniture does today so it's an awful lot of work keeping them dusted and polished up.

JL: I know I'm going to change the subject but, when you were a little ... I want this on the side of the tape ... when you were a young child growing up in Shady Side, who was the oldest person you can remember living in Shady Side?

BW: I guess I had a great aunt, her name was Mary Atwell, lived down on Cedar Point Road and she ... whenever we would go to visit, she was sitting in a rocking chair and ... and she reminded me so much of

the painting, Whistler's Mother, and I can see her now, her features were just exactly like that in that old rocking chair and that ... that would be the oldest person I can remember.

JL: Uh, how old do you think she was?

BW: She had to be in her 90's.

JL: That's the oldest person you recall in Shady Side as a young child?

BW: Yes, yes, as a real young child, yeah.

#### End of Side 1

JL Mr. Wilde, you have developed something for the Bay, could you tell me about it, please.

A: Uh, back in 1968, I found a biologist who was spawning oyster eggs and hatching them and growing them until they get to the metamorphosis size and then they'd throw them out because they didn't know what to do with them. That's as far as they could go with the process so when I saw that, I decided that there should be a way to set those oysters and, and grow them, makes use of the procedure. So, in '68, that's the first, my first attempt, I got the eggs from the Solomon's lab down at Solomon's Island and brought them home and grew them to metamorphosis and set them on oyster shells.

JL: Could you tell me how you grew them?

BW: Grew them in tanks of water and on shore, then I had 'em in my garage here and I would haul the water every morning from the bay in a wheelbarrow in tanks to the garage and change the water every day and then haul that water back and dump it back over, then I'd do this early in the morning before the sun came up because if anybody'd saw me hauling water back and forth, they'd send me to the nut house, so I did it before anyone could see what I was doing. And I set those oysters on shell and I had a tank here in the yard, and had the shell in the tank, and they were growing, I changed the water every day, I moved the tank down closer to the bay and, at the same time, I had a tractor trailer load of piling come in for ... to build a pier, and I wasn't home at the time and the tractor trailer got stuck and they scooped up all these shells there, the tank I had my oysters on them to put under the tires for traction. They thought it was just a playbox, you see. So that was ... that was how my first year project was destroyed.

JL: It was destroyed.

BW: Destroyed completely. So, then after that, I developed the process where I could get the larvae to grow to metamorphosis in 9-10 days, whereas, uh, ordinarily it would take anywhere from 25-30 days, so I cut that process down considerably and, then, I developed a way of ... of the oyster going through metamorphosis without it attaching to another shell and this has turned out to be a very valuable process for me because I can grow many, many oysters in a very small area on a floating tray.

JL: How long, excuse me, how long did it take you to develop it?

BW: Well, I hit upon the idea almost the second year, back in '69, I found that method would work.

JL: I'm sorry I interrupted you.

BW: But ... that's alright ... but, uh, no one in state government or in the universities in the laboratories gave it any value, they said they couldn't see where it would have any value as far as oysters were concerned, it didn't make any difference whether they were nice single round oysters or whether they were a clump of oysters, it didn't make any ... any difference. But, it does make a lot of difference as far as the quality oyster is concerned and the way that I grow the oyster in trays because if you have these big massive clumps on a shell, why you can't grow the volume. So, I've developed the system and it has,

through selected breeding, I have developed an oyster now that has three times the meat yield of a bay wild oyster and I can grow it in one third of the time that it takes a bay oyster. I can grow an oyster to market size in 12 months where out here, it takes, when I say out here, we're sitting here looking out at the bay, so, uh, 12 months and out in the bay takes 3-4 years. So, that's quite an accomplishment in itself.

JL: So, when you presented this to people, what did they say?

BW: They didn't think it had any application at all. They said, it's too much labor involved and that you couldn't get the price for the oysters, but I get \$.20 apiece for each one of them now, and that equals \$60.00 a bushel, compared to \$12.00 for what the waterman are harvesting. So, I think it's, uh ...

JL: And they're bigger and better?

BW: They're bigger and better and the restaurants really like them and they ... they call in for them all the time. I can't grow enough. I could sell more than I could grow. But I had an idea that this would ... would snowball into a chicken production-type of operation where waterman or farmers or anyone who had access to water would be able to get the equipment and get my seed and grow it to market size and then send it back to ... to ... my company for marketing and then they'd participate in the profits but, uh, it's pretty hard to convince these people that there is a new way and they don't respond to it at all.

JL: They have pretty set ways, then?

BW: Yeah, they're pretty set in their ways, all right. Then question it.

JL: And I'm sure you keep trying to find people who are interested in it?

BW: Yeah, I had three calls this morning with people who are interested in it but they don't seem to want to invest the capital that's necessary to do it. And, another thing, it's very hard to find a secure location where you're protected from hurricanes, protected from freezing weather, you're protected from pollution of the bay and you're protected from a lot of the predators that are always there waiting for their chance to get in the trays. But the tray system that I have developed, it's pretty foolproof as far as predators are concerned. It keeps the crabs out, and the gulls and the ducks ... the only problem is it doesn't keep those two-legged predators - man - out. He can find a way to get in there.

JL: Do you think maybe the reason that the officials that you have talked to don't like your idea because they just hope that maybe you'll just give it to them?

BW: Well, I guess. They've tried hard to find out what I do and, uh, I keep telling them that it's a secret process that I developed and I don't want to divulge it, and never will forget, this biologist from Horn Point was over and he kept pressing, kept pressing, to find out what I did and, finally, I told him, I said, you know, when the oyster larvae gets ready to set, it has a little foot that comes out. Now, these animals are only 75 microns so their invisible to the naked eye. But, I said, you know, that little foot comes out and he finds a place to settle down on a shell. Yeah, that's right. I said, well, what I do is I take a little tiny, tiny hatchet and chop that foot off and, of course, that burned him up and made him pretty angry because it would be impossible to do that without, you know, having a microscope and really getting into fine, very fine, ... so, I told him, I cut the feet off. (Laughter)

JL: A gentlemen was telling me, uh, we'll come back to the oysters soon ... a gentlemen was telling me that he thought that they had really declined over the years. What is your opinion?

BW: Well, we first started losing the shad ... the shad was disappearing very fast and, now, there aren't any.

JL: Do you know why?

BW: Yeah, because the spawning grounds' been destroyed.

JL: What destroyed it, in your opinion?

BW: Well, the pollution in the Susquehanna River is the worst thing for shad spawning and now pollution has gotten the shad, the herring, you can hardly catch a mess of herring anymore. I remember we used to go out and the boats, they could get two or three boatloads of herring, take them up to Woodfield's and they would cut them for the herring roe which is very delicious. But you can't find enough herring anymore to even think about freezing a couple cans of herring roe. This past year, the perch have disappeared; the white and yellow perch have disappeared ...

JL: The rockfish ...

BW: The rockfish are now pretty well all gone and the only thing that we really have left is crabs and eels and they say that the catfish and the carp are pretty plentiful but when catfish and carp get pretty plentiful, it's because of water quality. Catfish can live in a sewer system and they're able to survive along with the carp and that's about all we got left.

JL: And bluefish ...

BW: Not even too many bluefish. The blue fishing has not been too good this year. Uh, all the clams are gone and most of the oysters are gone. This is going to be a pretty bad year for oysters because there hadn't been any small oysters setting naturally and here, again, is state government mismanagement, I think, they had seed but they couldn't move it ... didn't have any money to move the seed. So, they still are planting shells. I sit here in my front yard and watch the barge loads of shells go down the bay to be planted to catch more seed and they don't have money to move what seed they already have. Then the next day, I sitting here and here's the same barges or appear to be the same barges, going back up the bay. Now, what in the world would they be doing sending barges down the bay with shells and the next day, the barges going back up the bay with shells. Looks like a pretty funny game going on there to me. Well, anyway, I think that's a ... that's a management problem but, of course, it's a pollution problem also because there's some reason why the oyster larvae are not surviving to set. Uh, I guess the next thing to go will be the blue crab; that'll be about the end of it.

JL: And that'll be the end of the Maryland industry, almost ... the seafood industry, anyway ...

BW: Yeah. Yeah, if you have a bay working boat today and you want to sell it, you can't even give it away. No one wants it. No one wants a boat. Cause there's nothing out there.

JL: Would you take a guess ... how many men in Shady Side still work on the water?

BW: I would guess, maybe, 20 to 30, somewhere in there.

JL: And in years past, everyone worked on the water.

BW: Just about, yeah, yes, a couple of hundred ... if not more. Yeah.

JL: Oh, another gentleman, told me that the bay was so dirty. He seems to think that's one of the reasons, he said that the net gets terrible, had to be pulled up and washed.

BW: That's a bryozoan that grows on the ... it grows on everything, you can look down in here at the shore on the stones and it'll grow, it looks like a sponge, and it's a bryozoan, and it feeds on bacteria, so it's so much bacteria in the water that this stuff grows so fast, that, uh, a piece of string, in a matter of weeks, gets as big as a half to three-quarters of an inch with that stuff that grows on there.

JL: That's how junky our water is.

BW: How dirty our water is, yes. And that ... that started real bad after we had the tropical storm Agnes, when we had the bay flooded out, that's when it started getting real bad because when all the sewer plants from the Susquehanna were flushed out from that storm ... all of that water ended up right here in the bay. When that storm came through here, I found a sign out here in my front, from way up above Harrisburg, was Mechanicsville, way up ... way up the Susquehanna where this sign had washed out of this person's front yard. It had the name of the house on it and the address. So that's how far the water came from way up there and it flushed out every septic system what was.

JL: Would you tell me a little bit more about your oyster process. I don't want to know your secrets but I want you to just keep talking about it because I think that's interesting.

BW: Well, what I do, uh, um, I bring my brood stock in. And my brood stock is selected from the very best of every year's group that I grow. I pick out the fastest growing, the best shaped and the deepest cup and use that for my brood stock. Well, this is in reverse as to what happens in nature because the waterman always harvest the fastest growing oysters because they get bigger, quicker and they're the ones that go to market first and the runts are left for spawning for the following year. Well, you don't do that with anything in agriculture, you don't do it with your race horses, you always pick the best, the fastest and the most beautiful shape and then same thing, with even flowers, so why not with an oyster. An oyster's another animal and that's what I've done for the last sixteen years is to pick out the best and that's why, I think, I have the high meat yield and the fast growth, plus the system that I use, the oyster gets the most food that's in the water because the most food's in the top layer, rather than down deep in the bottom because of the sunlight so they get more food to eat and the way the trays are tied in the channel, they get the good flush, uh, of water so that they have plenty of food to eat. I've also found out that an oyster will grow almost twice as fast in the shade than it will in the sunlight. I don't know what the reason for that is but I have proven that that is the case.

JL: You said 16 years. You have been trying to convince the State for 16 years?

BW: No. I give up on convincing them anything; long time ago. I just give up on convincing them because they have the attitude if it isn't developed by the University of Maryland, someone who has a Ph.D., then it can't be done, so they don't even listen to you, so I gave up on the State a long time ago. But what I started to tell you was I bring that selected brood stock into the building in March and I heat the water ... heat the bay water that comes in and condition those oysters to bring them up to spawning condition real early in the season, say like, the first of June, whereas in the wild, it's July, August, before they, they spawn. This way, I get a jump on most of the natural predators. There's a lots of worms out there, 'specially one called the flatworm that eats oysters. And, there are other worms that eat 'em. So, if you. . .if you spawn them out of the natural cycle, you get rid of most of their predators and their very small stage. So, that's the reason for the early spawning, plus it gives you ... gives you extra weeks of growing during the growing season, which is from, from March through November. So, after I bring them in, I have them conditioned to spawn, I spawn 'em and I put. . .I have 250 gallon tanks in the hatchery that I put as many as 100 million eggs in one tank. And as the eggs hatch and the larvae grow, each day I screen those larvae onto a screen and each day I increase the size of the opening in the screen so that if there are any slow-growers or any that have died, I automatically flush them out of the system, get rid of them. So, out of the original batch that I start with, I may end up with only about a million of the very best of that whole group, but it is the strongest of the whole group because I get rid of the slow growers, even though they would ... they would make a good oyster, I still get rid of those because a million is more than I can handle anyway, so why worry about having any more than that. So then, from the hatchery, they go out into the marsh areas in trays and I grow them from there on up to market size and then market them to the restaurants; for the half-shell trade.

JL: Well, I'm glad you're doing that. That's great ... that is a marvelous idea, it really is.

BW: Well, I think so.

JL: I can't uh, see why they wouldn't listen to it.

BW: Well, there's ... they have their reasons.

JL: Well, what did your wife think about this when you discovered this thing? Did she say, you were just the smartest man?

BW: No, she said, I'm still waiting for you to be a millionaire and she is, she's still waiting. (Laughs) She's had to put up with an awful lot.

JL: Yeah. Well, when you talk to people about Shady Side ... some of the older waterman around here, what do they think of that idea?

BW: Well, they, uh, they don't have ... they don't have much to say about it. I've asked my father to come down here a couple of times and he wasn't interested and, finally, I got him down here and he put his hand down one of those trays and pulled it up, and he looked at them, and said, My God, never seen anything like that. Finally, I got Captain George Proctor to come down here and he looked at them, said, "Boy, you really got something there". And I thought so, too, you see, I still haven't made that million.

JL: And Mr. Proctor thought it was a good idea?

BW: Well, he liked the oyster and, uh, he hasn't, he hasn't said much about the way I grow them because, of course, he's ... used to going out and taking what nature provides and letting it go at that. Uh, a lot of the waterman are concerned that a new idea like this can get in the hands of a big corporation, say, like, Campbell Soup or, or one of the big food companies and they can out produce what nature is providing for them to catch and it would put them out of business.

JL: Well, that's understandable...

BW: But, ah, that isn't the case. I don't see how that, that could happen but that's one of their concerns.

JL: Could you tell us. . .you said that the restaurants liked these oysters. Could you tell us what restaurants you supply?

BW: I supply? Well, I'm not supplying any of them right now because I had the bad freeze during the winter and my stock is very low so I'm not supplying now. But I was supplying Fox Chase and Steamboat Landing, O'Leary's in Annapolis and Chart House in Annapolis, and for a while I supplied two restaurants over in Alexandria but that didn't last too long. But there isn't any problem in getting rid of what you grow, they're waiting for them.

JL: But you're going to have to ...

BW: The quality is that great.

JL: But you're going to have to catch up a little bit you say since the freeze?

BW: Yeah, yeah, I will have to but I have another crop coming on. I expect to get started in about two or three more weeks.

JL: Speaking of freeze, I forgot to ask you, when you were a young man, did you used to skate out on the bay?

BW: Oh, yeah, yeah, I can remember one winter we had a freeze, the ice was about 18 inches thick out

here, right in front of this house, and my cousin, Norman, and I walked out there ... I don't know, it looked we must have been out there for miles and that ice was 18 inches thick, and the whole bay was just, just frozen over solid. I tell you, I've never seen that again, I hope I never do.

JL: But you ... but you did skate out there, too, as a young child?

BW: Well, not too much skating here in the bay, most of it was back in the creek where the ice would be smoother but, yes, that was ... that was a past time in those days, we'd be skating, the creek would be filled up with people. But you get a freeze-over now and, last winter, I'd go around to my mother's house. I never saw anybody out there on that ice. It just wouldn't be anybody out there, period. And when we were kids, why the place would be filled up all day long, half the night. . . . they'd have bonfires out there.

JL: Yeah, I heard that they used to put bonfires ...

BW: Yeah, bonfires out there to keep warm, yeah, that was ... that was the past time.

JL: Uh, did you tell us about maybe some of the parties you went to in Shady Side? I hear that there were a lot of parties going on, different people's houses, at least one a week?

BW: During Christmas time, quite, quite a lot, yeah, but I don't remember too many parties as a kid.

JL: What did you all used to do on Halloween?

BW: Same thing that kids ... all kids do, we used to do what they call rub rosin. You know what that is? You put a string up under the piece of weatherboarding or shingle on a house, with a spool of cotton, and you ran way back off into the field somewhere. And you rub rosin on that string and it'd make a noise that sound like your house was falling down and you had to be far away because most the times, the owner of the house would come (Laugh) out with a shotgun, he would shoot; of course, would scare us to death but, I don't imagine he was aiming at hitting anybody because that would happen so often, they knew exactly where it was ... what the noise was from. But we weren't destructive. I never remember destroying anything. We'd do tricks like that but, we never destroyed anybody's property.

JL: I heard that they had Halloween parties at the school. Did you ever go to any of them?

BW: No, no. That was later ... that was later, when kids got to the point where they were destroying property. They tried to entertain them so that they'd keep busy and not do those kind of things.

JL: Is that ... is that about the only tricks you would play on people?

BW: Yeah, that's about all I remember.

JL: Are there any stories that your parents, or perhaps your grandparents, told you about Shady Side, that you might like to share with us?

BW: Nothing I can remember.

JL: Nothing like, uh, some storms coming through, or uh ....

BW: Oh well, we had bad storms ... In those days, they called them Northeasters ... they didn't know that they were hurricanes coming up the coast but, when we had northeasters, they were pretty bad, way back, when I was a kid, the roads would flood out, the trees would blow down, of course, this was even before we had electricity so current wouldn't go off, but, um, didn't have to worry about your freezer thawing because we didn't have freezers and you had your own ... your own well, where you pumped your own water, so you didn't have to worry about that. You had water. But, uh, uh, it's quite different today. We can watch the storm on television and get it's exact location and know where it's coming and when it's coming and how bad it's going to be.

JL: Well, we hope the one's that coming now won't come up the bay.

BW: No, it's going inland but we know now where it is but, you see, in those days, well, we didn't even know that storm was there and wouldn't anybody, wouldn't anybody, have any time to prepare for it and today, why, you know exactly where it is. I thought sure we was going to get some heavy winds from that storm but it isn't too late yet, still packing something like 75 mile an hour. It's going inland and it'll slow down as long as it stays inland. But they've been known to go back out to sea and pick up speed and hit again. So, uh, I worry a little bit here. I've got a stone bulkhead here but a real, real severe storm, that bulkhead wouldn't be sufficient to, uh, to take care of it.

JL: Did you put the bulkhead in there?

BW: Yes, I had ... I hauled ... I didn't haul it, I had the stone hauled in and we had one storm here that wasn't a hurricane, wasn't announced as a hurricane, it was a November storm, and those rocks that you see there were washed way back up here to the walk.

JL: How many feet do you say that would be?

BW: At least, uh, fifty feet.

JL: Oh, my goodness ...

BW: They're not ... they're not huge rocks, but they're what you call, uh, one and two man rocks.

JL: Thank you, Mr. Wilde, you're very nice to talk to and we appreciate the information that you've given us.

BW: Thank you. Very glad to help.