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Name of Interview: Bobby and Barbara Owings

Interviewed by: Janet Surret

Transcribed by: Donna Williams, April 12, 2004

[Tape begins with interview already begun, but it may be that only the date is missing?]

Q. This is Janet Surret, and we are at the Capt. Salem Avery House Museum, and I'm here today with Bobby and Barbara Owings, and we're really pleased to have them here to share their memories of Shadyside. We appreciate your being here today. Bobby is a long-time resident of Shadyside...a native...his family have deep roots here in the community, so thank you both. I'd like to start out by asking you about your family...about when and where you were born [Janet moves to seat facing interview subjects.]

A. Well, actually, I was born in Butler, Pennsylvania, and my father was...it was during the Depression in 1932, and he had taken a job there in a clothing store, of all places. Any how, there was four men that lived there, I think three months, and he couldn't stand it and moved back to Shadyside.

Q. So, did your whole family relocate there?

A. Oh no!

Q. Just your Dad or...?

A. Just my mother and father were just there for the three months. I mean, he came from Shadyside. He couldn't stay away.

Q. Right, right

A. So that was when I was born.

Q. Now tell me about your parents.

A. Well, we got through the Depression. My father worked with my great uncle...my grandfather died when I was one year old, and he kind of took over the business. Grand-father had a store right down where I live. And when he died, that was the end of the store, but that's when my father went to work then with my great uncle and another cousin, and they opened...which everybody calls Dixon's now, but they built a ...they had a cement block factory and a filling station. And they built the blocks right there and built the station right out of the blocks. But during the Depression, that's when everybody owed them money and they to just tear the building up, and that was it. That's why my father went to work in Pennsylvania...I guess six

months, but then he came back. And they kept in that business until, he did, until about 1939, I guess. And then he started his own business of floor sanding...floor covering, and he was drafted in the Navy...he was 38. That was a real rough time. Got out of the service and went back into business, saved him for fifty years. That's it.

Q. Now what were your parent's names?

A. Preston and Adeline.

Q. Now I understand your Mom was a very beautiful woman?

A. Yeah, she sure was.

Q. Can you tell us a little bit about her?

A. She was the life of the party...all parties. Loved to party...loved to cook. She was a wonderful cook...and just...they had a wonderful life...traveled a lot...really enjoyed themselves.

Q. Did you travel when you were a kid...as a child?

A. Oh yeah well, as much as we could, you know...around...different...what everybody did. Ocean City, Atlantic City...places like that, but that was about it. No overseas or anything.

Q. Did you have brothers and sisters?

A. I had one brother; and he went to the Maryland Institute of Art and graduated and was an art teacher at Southern High School for I don't know how many years. And then he retired and went to Vermont, and now he's a baker. [Laughs]

Q. Now I understand your grandfather was a candy maker?

A. On my mother's side, yeah.

Q. Tell us a little more about him.

A. But he came from Durham, England. He was just a little boy when he came with his whole family, and he was a candy maker. They settled in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. And that's where my Mother was born. And he was a great candy maker. At one time he used to make candy kisses over at Beverly Beach when he had a stand there for apples, you know...candy apples and taffy and all that. [Laughing.]

Q. Now how did they get up in this area?

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A. Well, they came and visited, my mother and father, of course, he loved it. My grand-father loved it around the water, so he came here and Mr. Cobb owned it and he went over and he was tickled to death to have a candy maker come and the salt water taffy, you know. So he stayed there till he passed away. I forget what year it was.

Q. Now how did your parents meet? Was your Mom still living in Pennsylvania when they met?

A. No. They met in Washington, DC. My mother had come there to work there also during the Depression time, and my father worked there, too. So that's how he met my mother. And then she was a bookkeeper and he was a salesman, and then they offered him a job to manage a store in Butler, Pennsylvania. So that's when he went there for a little while. So that was that story.

Q. Well now did you work with your Dad?

A. Yes.

Q. Tell us a little bit more about that.

A. Well, we had all floor coverings, started in floor sanding and of course, it gradually went to everything...now mostly ceramic tile and marble, so it just progressed.

Q. Is that what you did for a living?

A. Yeah.

Q. Now I understand your great uncle, your Uncle Bob, right?...

A. Yeah.

Q. Built a lot of homes here in Shadyside. Can you tell us a little bit more about him and the houses he built?

A. Well, he built summer homes and a lot of big homes around Owingsville. He built a couple big houses up there. He completely restored 'Holly Hill' near Franklin, and he did the first restoration on 'Tulip Hill' for Ms.(?) Flathers, which he(?) owned, and 'Norman's Retreat' for Dr. Daniel. That was my first paying job when I think I was about twelve years old, waxing floors. [Laughing.] So...

Q. Now the house you live in now...who built that?

A. Good grief! That went back 17__ something...but my great grandfather bought it in 1876; and actually, his wife bought it because she was a Hartge, and they sold it to her. No she wasn't a Hartge either; she was a...The Hartges raised her. I think her parents some how died during the flu or some epidemic then. She was orphaned, but she lived with the Siegerts. [Laughs.] The Siegerts lady was a Hartge, so that's how they got the land; they sold it then to my grandmother and grandfather. 4.

Q. So the house was already there when they bought it?

A. Yeah.

Q. I understand they did some work on it?

A. Yeah, they added on a room, I think. Well, when I was little, it was a summer kitchen then [coughs], and it had a barn and a cow and a horse; and of course they had chickens, hogs...the whole works. The only thing they bought was sugar [Laughs.] and salt and flour.

Q. Now where would they go to buy those things?

A. What I can remember, we used to go to Annapolis; and Maude(?)Roan had a store out on West Street and they sold everything, and they'd buy it by the barrel... flour and the sugar. [Voice of woman in background says: "The barrel was there when we moved here, and we made strawberry barrels out of it. We made a table top cut out of a table. You know... the top"] From

the flour... when they rolled it, from the flour...

Q. Right.

A. [Voice then adds "still in my kitchen." and laughs.]

Q. Now when they'd go up to Annapolis, to buy those things, how would you go... by car or boat or...?

A. Oh, yeah, when I can remember, yes. We went by car.

Q. Tell us a little...do you have any memories at all of the store that your grandfather owned, or did you hear stories about it?

A. Yeah, not when it was open...but the store was there. I can't remember when it...they tore it down. One thing I remember...the tide would come up [Laughs.] about two feet when they had a north-easter so...

Q. Into the store?

[For this next section, both Mr. and Ms. Owings are answering the questions, sometimes overlapping one another and making it difficult to transcribe.]

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A. Into the...yeah, into the store [Female voice (Ms. Owings?) says: "They'd shoot ducks out the window...bedroom window...second floor"]

Q. Of your house?

A. [Female voice next to Mr. Owings (Barbara Owings?) again speaks: "Grandmother's house... and she had the only phone there. And Mr. I (?) was a T-Man...Treasury man, and a call came in for... collect...they called Al Capone there, you know call..."] And they notified him by phone, but he didn't have a phone [Laughs.]

Q. Right, right...they notified him? Tell us more about that...sounds like a good story.

A. He started the ugh...the treasury agent. He was the head of that. And they had summer homes there. And, of course, my grandfather's store was the closest telephone, so, you know, I guess everybody used it. There was very few calls then but this was very important, I suppose. [Ms. Owings: "And the gasoline station, Glorie had took that out on the road, but the law(?), and had a pool house made with it(?). Glorie Morris was a cousin."] Well, he had a little building there that they sold kerosene. I guess...then, and that was the only thing they had in that day. I

guess they had to have it away from the store, and oil and everything(??) anything for boats(?).

Q. So it ended up turning... becoming a pool house for...?

A. Yeah, yeah. That part(?). [Ms. Owings: "and a swimming pool".]

Q. So it's still around?

A. It's still there.

Q. I understand a lot of the houses in Shadyside were actually made from lumber from the Johnstown flood.

A. Yeah, a lot of 'em...or parts of 'em, you know. And our house is, I think, when they put an addition on the...a dormer on the front, and that wood came...Owings know that because some of it was burned and everything. And to this day, when it's damp, you can still smell the burned wood.

Q. Now the home you live in now, is that the home you grew up in?

A. No. I lived there a couple years, and then my father and great uncle built my father's house, which is just up the road a hundred yards or so, and still there. And when they pass on, my cousin [chuckles]... ours through another Owings brother, has bought the house. [Coughs.]

Q. Tell us about some of your memories growing up in Shadyside, growing up in that house.

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A. Oh, well, the main thing was the cow. A cow is a lot of work...had to milk it every day...

Q. Was that your job?

A. No, not my job, no. But it was a lot of work to make the butter, and the cream and the clabber and all that; but the main thing, growing up, I think every boy in Shadyside was a duck hunter. And that started, I guess, from probably...I might've been ten years old when I first started shooting a 12-gauge shotgun... but it almost knocked me down [chuckles.], but those were the days when everybody hunted...Of course, in those days, everybody you knew...every soul in Shadyside, I mean, it was no... [someone sneezes in background.] and Deale and Galesville combined. [Laughs.]

Q. Well, tell us a little more about duck hunting...where did you go and how did you...?

A. Oh, well, we had a good friend of ours from Violet...Lem Bussey (?) and Tom Bussey. Well Mangells Harold, the syrup people, you know, they made King Syrup and Molasses, they had a

summer place here, and they were great duck hunters. And Tom Bussey took care of the blind for them then. [Laughs.] Of course, we were baiting the ducks, I mean, every day...that was the thing to do then, and luckily when the Mangolls Harold weren't down shootin' ducks, we would go up there. [Laughs.] They took me and, see, I was a lucky boy. This was down off of Columbia Beach when they had water blinds. The blind was probably 200 yards out in the bay. It would be awful rough. Most time you had to row, then outboard motors came and they half-way worked [Laughs.], so we still rowed for a time. They were wonderful days.

Q. Now which time of year would you go duck hunting?

A. Oh, all winter.

Q. All winter?

A. We would...and then after Tom Bussey died and the Mangells Harold...we got the blind. And we kept it (???), my father and Alva Lee, Thomas Mason. We just kept shootin' it until it went down...ice took it down. Then we hunted off the shore. Then the ducks went away for four or five years, I guess, and finally came back and now that people don't want your ducks, so...

Q. Did you eat most of the ducks that you caught?

A. Oh, yeah. We would eat ducks two or three times a week.

Q. How'd your Mom...does your mother fix them? '

A. Oh yI. Roast or baked...I never got tired of 'em.

Q. Now I long would a duck bl'nd last out there?

A. Oh, twenty years, I guess, until the ice, what happens is, a 'lotta ice and the ice pulls the stakes up.

Q. And then it just floats away?

A. Yeah, and just mashes it down.

Q. Did you have to...every season, did you have to add(?)...?

A. Oh, yeah, you would brush it every season...put the green brush on... brush em and, I don't know why [Chuckles.] why the ducks thought they were being fooled there with the (?) green brush in the middle of the bay, but they were, mostly, (?) the corn, I think.

Q. What other...you put corn on it?

A. [Laughs.] Well, you'd put corn to feed the ducks to make 'em come back. One time it wasn't illegal...now it is.

Q. Now what other kinds of things did you do for fun... for sport?

A. Oh, mostly hunting and fish, I guess, and bull frogs, and we did it all, I...whatever...

Q. Tell us....yeah...

A. Whatever came in season you were after...softcrabs, hardcrabs. In those days, you could just go out and catch your crabs for your breakfast...anytime you wanted, mostly, when the tide was right..

Q. Did you eat a lot of hard and softshell crabs?

A. Oh yeah, yeah...mostly crabcakes. We didn't eat...nobody...well, sometimes, maybe on Saturday nights. I had one uncle who'd (?) carry(?) his own crab night. If he came to your house on a Saturday night, and you didn't have crabs, well, he'd go somewhere else [Laughs] till he found 'em. But he was from Baltimore... [Laughs.]

Q. Now how about school? Tell us about school.

A. School? Well,...

Q. When and where did you go to school?

A. Well, Shadyside Elementary. I went there. My father went there, same school. Of course, Miss Ethel taught us. We didn't have any running water or anything then. We had the out-houses and a pump, [laughs], but then my class was the first one to catch eighth grade...we didn't
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have eighth grade until I was lucky enough to catch it. [Chuckles]. Then we went to Southern High School and that was it.

Q. And did you go by bus to high school?

A. Oh, yeah...bus.

Q. Well, tell us a little more about the school, what it looked like and what a day, what a school day was like?

A. You mean grammar school?

Q. Yeah, grammar school in Shadyside.

A. Well, [Laughs], I...of course...guess you would be with three grades in each room. So it was kind of difficult teaching. You would teach one grade one thing, and one grade the next. One day...and we had an old coal stove... in there, and it was Ray Bast's job to put the coal on the stove. And Raymond...he was in and out the class anyway, and he'd slip...he had the last seat... and he'd slip out the door whenever Miss Ethel would look... [Laughs] somewhere else and he'd be gone. And one day he put a shotgun shell in the coal and threw it in this stove and blew the stove up [Laughing.], fire...and all we could see was black smoke in the whole school room. Needless to say, that broke the stove for about two weeks, I guess..

Q. Were you scared? Did you know what was going on or...?

A. No, nobody was scared...everybody knew exactly what it was [Laughing.] But I don't know, I guess if you did that now, they'd put you in prison...[Laughs.], reform school or something.

Q. What happened did he get in trouble?

A. I don't know. Probably not, because nobody told on him or anything. But he was the only one with the coal bucket, so...Miss Ethel did, I'm sure.

Q. What was Miss Ethel like as a teacher?

A. Oh, she was strict, but you had to learn your lessons, I'll tell you that much. She'd make you sing every day, and we would always sing different songs. She was a great believer in singing.

Q. What were some of the songs that you sang ?

A. Gosh, I can't...different Maryland songs mostly and...ugh...that's about it

Q. What other kind of memories do you have of school?

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A. Well...

Q. Things that happened or things you (?)..?

A. Not much...we didn't have many activities. They would have what they called 'Flag Day', I think it was, like once in the spring, or something like that. Other schools would come or you'd go to other schools and play games but no, you know, no actual sports, like playing soccer or baseball or anything like that.

Q. What kind of games did you play?

A. We did play softball and Miss Ethel would always umpire [Laughs.] Needless to say, Shadyside got most of the good calls. [Laughing.] Some of the other schools would get so mad. She was the umpire.

Q. Which schools did you go to or did you play with?

A. Oh, the only thing I can remember is Owensville, that was a long way away then, I think. If we did any trips or anything, you'd walk where ever. I can't remember where it was now, to tell you the truth.

Q. Would you walk up to Owensville?

A. Oh, no...didn't walk to Owensville - no. As I say, that was the only...and I guess we did go to Galesville one time...that's about the only one I remember.

Q. What other games did you like to play at recess?

A. God, I don't know. We... what's that...dodge ball, I guess...that's about the only thing I can remember. Softball. [[Lady next to Mr. Owings says: "You were in a mock wedding, weren't you?"] Yeah, but that wasn't the school. That was something they had...

Q. Was that as a child?

A. Yeah. I was the preacher. [Laughs] and they had it on Leatherbury's lawn there across from the school. And they had a mock wedding, everybody dressed up, you know. They had the... [Woman again interjects: "Christy Sommerville."] Christy Sommerville was the bride, I remember, and I can't remember the groom. Clifford Ford, he was, I don't know, he was the Man of Honor or something like that. Can't remember who the groom was, but that was a big to-do, you know.

Q. Was that a one-time thing?

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A. Yeah, just a one time thing. And we were all about eight or, you know, about like that [Indicates height using right hand.]

Q. It would be great to see pictures of that.

A. [Woman again answers: "I know, (?) but nobody has 'em.

Q. Was this done during the summer time?

A. Yeah. I don't know who got it up but...

Q. Did a lot of people come for that?

A. Yeah, I think so. 'Course I was so small then, I don't half remember the... [Woman again interjects: "And you were... did the World War II blackout?"]

Q. I wanted you to tell us a little bit more about what you (??) did was like in Shadyside during World War II what your involvement was.

A. I was a messenger. The regular sirens, you know, when they had the blackouts. And Jerry Joyce(?) was the Air Raid Warden; he lived right across the road. But I'd have to run out to the school, 'course I could see a bomb dropping every step of the way [Laughing.], and they'd tell you...I'd have to go around and tell everybody to put their blinds down, you know.

Q. All around the community?

A. Well, from the school house back down to West Shadyside. But that was about it, I guess.

Q. So, were there other messengers in Shadyside?

A. Yeah. They had different... you know... one would go, then the other.

Q. And were both the messengers like kids?

A. Kids.

Q. Ten, eleven, twelve...something?

A. Twelve, I think I was... I was either 12 or 13. See my father, he was the oldest man to go in...to be drafted. He was 38...had two children and a business.

Q. Did he end up going overseas?

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A. No, he didn't go overseas. He was lucky, but it was right at the end. And then I think...six years later, I was in the Korean War, so; but I lost my uncle in the Battle of the Bulge, which is tough.

Q. What was it like in Shadyside during the War?

A. I don't [Laughing.]...I tell you the truth, you know, nobody moved around much, 'cause there wasn't that much to do. So you 'kinda stayed where you were or you know...The people in West Shadyside, they would...you'd go to a store...and that was about it...you didn't...no gasoline or...

Q. Did rationing affect you a lot?

A. I don't think it affected us, I mean; we probably didn't have enough money to go to Annapolis any how.

Q. Did you get a lot of news of the War?

A. Oh, yeah, yeah.

Q. How did you get your news?

A. Oh, the radio.

Q. At that time, did most people have radios here in Shadyside?

A. Oh, yeah, I'm sure everybody had a radio.

Q. Well, growing up, what other kind of modern conveniences did you have and did you not have?

A. Well, we had, I guess... you know, running water and bathrooms...I don't know when they came out. I can't remember. But they weren't, you know, they weren't...prevalent, because we didn't have electricity. We had a Delco plant where I am now, which was a... run by gasoline, then you got the electricity. But a lot of people didn't because they didn't have...it must've been probably '35 or '36, something like that when they got it... I'm guessing, but ... [Woman next to Mr. Owings interjects: "I have pictures of roads when they were oyster shells built."] Yeah, it was...

Q. Were the roads still oyster shell when you were growing up or had they already been paved?

A. No, they hadn't been paved when I was growing up. Well, they were from the schoolhouse up, but you know (?) they weren't there(?)

Q. Now I understand during World War II, your Dad sometimes took you into Solomon's Island?

A. Yeah.

Q. Tell us about that.

A. When he was stationed down there, he ran a...it was a mine test station; and they tested the torpedoes. And they would run 'em out to Bloody Point. It was the deepest part of the bay. And he ran a boat to find the torpedoes after they'd fired 'em. And I would go down there and stay, and 'course I had the dungarees and sailor hat and everything. But as I say, I was 13. I stayed right in the barracks, and ate and went on the boats, everything.

Q. Did you do that for a long spell at a time?

A. No, about a week at a time.

Q. What was it like for your family with your Dad away?

A. Oh, it was rough. They didn't get much pay then; of course, then with my uncle getting killed. Well, everybody went. Yeah.

Q. What did Shadyside look like during that time or during your childhood? What was here then?

A. Gosh, well, they had.. I guess the center of everything was right at the corner, where everything's gone now from where the center is(?) where the old hotel was. And Miss Mary's had a bar which was open-screened porch, and that's where everybody collected in the summertime.

Q. Was that...where was that in relationship to the hotel?

A. Right across the road... right where that telephone pole is where you make that sharp turn.

Q. It was a post office there?

A. Yeah. Post office and a bar...all in the same [Laughing.] in the same building. They had a movie theatre at one time over top...across from Shadyside Market...in there.

Q. Right.

A. But I don't think that lasted long.

Q. Did you go to the movies there?

A. Yeah. I was real small then, if I can remember. People would stand up and holler

[Laughs.]...if they had any body on the...you know... the cowboys...most of them was cowboy

movies. And they would holler "Watch out! They're going to shoot you." They thought it was real. [Laughing.] It was funny.

Q. Talk about Saturdays in Shadyside.

A. Oh, not much. I'd say Miss Mary's was the only...activity, I guess.

Q. What was Miss Mary's like?

A. Well, it was just a little...it was a bar...they sold beer. And it had a juke box. Everybody just gathered there. One thing, though, was every body would have in the stores was deviled crabs, which you don't see now. It would...the people would pick the crab meat and put it in a crab shell. Just put 'em on the counter, I don't know. Some of them stayed there two or three days, I guess. They never seemed to hurt anybody. I think they were a quarter a piece or something like that.

Q. Now as a young boy did you... what kind of chores did you have to do?

A. Oh, mostly cut the grass. And then I...all the summers, and everything, I worked with my father. Tried to help him.

Q. With the flooring?

A. Yes...floor sanding we did mostly, and re-finishing. And 'course he crabbed and fished all that was the thing(?).

Q. Did you sell a lot of what you got when you went out on the water.

A. Well...you tried to.

Q. Oh, you did it mostly for your family?

A. Mostly for your family. I sold some crabs, but most those times. You know, you didn't have much market, and a pound of crab meat was \$1.00, and I don't know what in the world...crab...softcrabs, I don't know...I don't know how much they would be, about a \$1.00 a dozen, I guess. But everybody had their own... so you couldn't sell 'em to any body... [Laughing.], especially fish. You couldn't give them away.

Q. Now in the '30's, were there still...were there a lot of summer visitors coming to Shadyside?

A. Yeah, there were...

Q. What (?) Shadyside...?

A. Not that many. I mean Avalon Shores, I guess, and Idlewilde; but they were just small summer cottages. Nobody stayed year round. I mean you could...In Avalon Shores, when I was small, we used to squirrel hunt all around there. They was what maybe five or six families lived there actually, till I was gone out of high school, I guess - wasn't too many. So, as I say, there wasn't much to do but hunt and fish. That was about it.

Q. Now I'm always interested in how people celebrated the holidays and which ones you celebrated, you know like Thanksgiving, coming up this week, and Christmas and Halloween, that kind of thing. What kinds of things would you do here in Shadyside?

A. Oh, the usual, you know. But they'd used to...they would shoot...for some reason, on Christmas Eve, they would shoot the shotguns up in the air. Somebody said 'we're shootin' Santa Claus away' - why they did that, I don't know. But Crandall Trott, he did that a lot. But then I guess a lot of people did. Just a way of celebrating, I suppose. [Woman's voice says something in background: "(?)Bobby Halleck(?)...he used to(?) walk home from school?"] Oh, well, he had a farm there...walked...'course he didn't have a bus(?) going there to meet him(?) He had to walk out to school, you know. And he had a...always had a...coming home from school...he always had a turnip patch. And we would go through it(?), pick the turnips and eat 'em. And always stop at his house... always stop and get a drink of water at his pump...always...we were exhausted, I guess, by that time...thought you were. But they were...everybody they'd celebrate just like you do now.

Q. Were Halloween or Easter, those kinds of things,

A. Ugh, I guess Easter was, but Halloween wasn't...didn't do much

Q. Did you do pranks?

A. Oh yeah, we did do pranks but that's when you got older rope and rod string and nail in somebody's house, and you would rub the rod supposed to be making this noise, but I yet why it was supposed to scare somebody, I don't know.

Q. I'd like to hear...

A. It was just quiet, I mean, 'cause you had to walk everywhere, I mean nobody had a car. When I was growing up, till you got out of high school.

Q. Now I wanted to hear about how you and Barbara met.

A. We met at a sailing regatta over Labor Day, it was always a big regatta, and a friend of hers who had a summer cottage down here brought her down here and introduced me. That was it. [Laughs.]

Q. Was that Norma Hazzard?

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A. [Camera pans back as Barbara Owings says: "No, she was...Ruth Redman's uncle had died down here and I came down here. And she'd known Bob about ten years. And she called up and said 'do you have any engagements or anything', said 'no'. Did you want to go to a sailing regatta? And I said 'yes'. And we stayed at the Andrews Hotel. I said I'm the only one to ever stay there that I knew of, you know, recently. And Miss Ethel watched out for us...wanted to know what our girls(?) were up to!

Q. What was it like staying at the Andrews Hotel...was that like in the '40's?

A. No, it was the '50's. It was nice, you know. It was sparse then and she very...you know... supervised us very well, and that was it. But that was it. Met Bob in September and married him in May. So it was a quick romance.

Q. Now did you actually meet here in Shadyside?

A. [Barbara]: Here in Shadyside and then Galesville. Spent the whole weekend over at 'Pirate's Cove', more or less. And Betty Hardesty(?) was making pizza on the pier.

A. [Bobby]: It was Zang's then, Zang's Pier...

Q. Right, right. Tell us more about Zang's Pier.

A. [Barbara]: It was a hole in the wall then. I mean it wasn't decorated at all. You know. It was the kind of place you could go in and get a crabcake. That was it. It was a hole ...You met everybody from town there. Anybody that was anybody, I guess. And we used to go back for years and years to come, you know, but never could go back and meet people, you know. The same people.

Q. Well tell us about your courtship...was it a long-distance courtship 'cause you were living in Virginia?

A. [Barbara]: Yeah. He came over every weekend. I came down one weekend and he came up the next. And...My mother used to say I couldn't stay out late, but after I dated him, she just said, you know, 'you're on your own'. [Laughing] But he always got me home early.

A. [Bobby]. I got caught in a blizzard over there one time. I come home and I had a '55 Thunderbird. The first...it was only that high off the ground. And we were coming in... and I was coming out of Suitland Parkway, and I was the only one behind the snow plow. But the snow plow left me that much snow [demonstrates depth of snow using hands]. So all of the steam from the mufflers would come... I had to drive with my head out the window [laughs]. I

got far as Deale, and that was it. I spent two days in Deale. Well I was worried about my great aunt and uncle. My mother and father were away, but when I got there, they were fine. They were in their '80's and they had been through it so many times...they didn't pay any attention.

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Q. It wouldn't be appropriate to do this interview without reference to all the wonderful work that Barbara has done for the Shadyside Rural Heritage Society. She was one of the people most instrumental in its formation, served as President for two years, and was one of the most creative members and continues to be one of the most creative members of the Society. She started a number of programs that still carry on, including the children's tree trimming party, which will happen in another week or so. And we know that her daughter Katey was present every year as a youngster. The Winter Luncheon Series also began under Barbara's leadership, and today it's one of the most successful undertakings of the Society always selling out well in advance. When you hear the stories about how you carried the museum around in the trunk of your car before there was a museum and you were responsible for a lot of the early acquisitions of the Society. You served as Acquisitions Chairman, and because you knew so many people here in the area, are so loved, beloved, and are still loved, they willingly shared their treasures with the museum. So the Society owes you so much gratitude for all that you've done, we're hoping that you'd tell us something about the early days of the Society and how this place got started.

A. [Barbara]. Well, we used to be called the "shady ladies of Shadyside" [Laughs] I don't know. I loved it and everybody seemed to love it. We started meeting in St. James' Church...St. John's Church and then we met at the Methodist church. We also met at each other's houses. And we didn't have any money, so we auctioned off lunches to get money. Then we started having our programs...started having oral programs and luncheon programs. One of the first programs we had was at St. John's Church with native grasses...bouquets of native grasses; that was the very first thing we showed. And then we started doing the 'Showboat'...we did the 'Showboat'. [Bobby then interjects: "Well, you did that."] Yeah, I did that [laughs]. We did it together and... [Someone sneezes in background.] Then we did a house tour, and Peggy did that. And, I don't know what else we did.

Q. Well, how many people were actively involved in the early years?

A. Well, in the original...it was 20. We had 20 members, and then we grew somewhat and forever growing, hopefully, and I don't know what else.

Q. Now can you tell us a little bit more about the showboats coming. Who some of the cast members were? How it was presented, how it came to be? We're very glad that we have a video of it down in our video collection... hear more about how

A. Oh dear! I don't know, you know, I took off from the 'Showboat'. We did one act... Who was rolling across the stage? [Bobby answers: "It was Lerch Crandall."] Lerch Crandall, and Miss Ethel was Act II with the school children, and we used all the people that had been her

pupils then; and Alice Grinder said...we have her on tape...said "Shadyside is a pretty name." Then we did the amateur hour, and Wendall Browning played the harmonica, and Tom Coleman sang. Betty Boop was the chorus line, and we used a lot of local people. And that was it.

Q. Did you do lots...did you do one production or did you do it over...

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A. No, it was all one production and it was three acts. And that was it.

Q. And where was it presented?

A. The Kiwanis Club...made it look like a showboat inside. Originally, you know, it has the play with tent-house... What was it called, "One Act Play"? [Bobby responds "I don't know."] I don't know, I've forgotten now. Poster said what it was. And we filmed it...Ed Harris filmed it. And we have a tape, you know...

Q. Downstairs in our...here in the library.

A. Yeah, umm huh.

Q. Now I understand you have some personal memories of actually going on the 'Showboat'?

A. Bob did, yeah. [Bobby responds: "The only time I ever won anything was a...used to get a ...when you got popped corn, they'd have a ticket in there, a number. And I was real small, and I won a pot...cookin' pot! That was it.]

Q. Were you excited?

A. [Bobby laughs.] Oh yeah!

Q. What did you go...what plays...did you up there and see productions?

A. At 'Showboat'? Oh yeah. They'd have all different acts, you know, like the...mostly plays...skits, you know.

Q. Now are there other stories you want to share with us about the early days of the Society with (?) 'Showboat'?

A. No, they did a tremendous job, I think, with the showboat, putting it on with all the, you know, 'cause almost everybody's gone now that was in it...really.

Q. Did they use local people to...

A. Oh, yeah.

Q. I mean the 'Showboat' the Society put on was local people with Miss Ethel...was it up in Galesville with locals (?) also?

A. Oh, no. That was a travel act. [Barbara interjects: "I don't know, it's a grand bunch of people; and, as you know, it's all volunteer. And I think that's to be commended for the amount of work they do...and still do."]

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Q. Well, I understand you all are members of the South River Club and...which is quite an honor. Can you tell us a little bit about the club and how you became involved?

A. [Bobby: "Well, they ask you! You dare not ask or say you want to be a member, 'cause it's only 25 members, and it's actually the oldest continuously meeting club in the United...in the Western Hemisphere, they claim. There's one club in Philadelphia that's almost, but they were five years behind. I think it started in 17...1735, so the clubhouse is actually 300 years old...still the same interior and exterior. It's wonderful...people from all walks of life but mostly the older families of Maryland settlers (?) And we meet...well you have a...you put on a dinner once every seven years, it's your turn, so I think I've got five more years before I have another turn. Then we'll have two oyster roasts, a Hunt Breakfast that's about it. No rules, no regulations, except no hard drink after 4 o'clock in the winter and 6 o'clock in the summer. And that's the only rules we've got. So, that's about it. I'm very lucky to be a member.

Q. What are...(??) that's sort of one of the things I wanted to ask you about, and that's how your family ended up coming here to Shadyside or here to this area of Maryland, and also how they ended up coming...where they came from and how they wound up here?

A. Well...

Q. I know you two have done a lot of research on that...

A. Well, the settler came...he was a captain in the rangers in 16, I think it was 1640, around there. And then he eventually settled in Owings Mills, he built the mills...he had three mills there. And then on down the line...I mean...I guess he's my 5th or 6th great-grandfather. And they had land all around and through inheritance and everything, they came here...see what was left of the plantations...and terrible plantation [snickers]. The land they had in Talbot County...the brothers...compared to that. And then my great-grandfather enlisted in the Civil War. He went South. After the War was over, he came back and married my great-grandmother who owned the house...well, they bought it after...through her family. And that's it. He had a store and he was a steeple builder. He went all over the state. That's about it, I guess.

Q. Are some of those steeples still out there?

A. I think. Well, I don't know, though, because he did a lot of work up in Western Maryland and Conowingo, up around there. And then my great-uncle built the steeple here on Centenary, of course, that's burned down now. But I gave them the plans for it when they rebuild it. I don't think they used it...they've got a steel one now - his was wood [laughs].

Q. I know... I heard you tell you tell a story about your family building a jail up...

A. When they built the filling station and hardware store, they got broke into so many times that my great-uncle and my father and cousin said, "Well, we'll build a jail. We'll donate it. We'll build it and give you the land and build the building, if you'll put the police station...we didn't

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have a police station down here. So...with the stipulation...the key stipulation...I can only tell you one...that if they moved it, then they'd get the land back and the building, and they did. So that was it...that's how it came about...for protection.

Q. How many years...when did it stop being a jail?

A. Oh, probably '58, somewhere around there, I think. Then they built them one up at Edgewater. That's it I guess. I can remember when they built it [laughing], 'cause they put me down in the jail with the bars...scared me to death.

Q. Were you just a boy at the time?

A. Oh, yeah, I was a little boy. In those days in the magistrates...you knew all of them. Of course they wouldn't bother any body from around here. Those were the days.

Q. You two have certainly seen a lot of changes here in Shadyside during your lives. What are some that you have particularly observed?

A. Just the growth of the people. I mean...sometimes... when I was a teenager, we would go to the movies, and there was no bus or anything. Then they had a bus in later years, but that didn't last long. But you'd walk all the way from Annapolis home, without...nobody would... no cars on the road. That's hard to believe, but it's the truth. Then we had one 'fella... Sheldon Rogers...who was a boat builder, model builder and everything, he was a character, he really was. He was one of the few who had a car, and somebody bet him \$5.00 that he couldn't back the car to Annapolis. And he did it! [Laughing]

Q. From Shadyside?

A. From Shadyside...for \$5.00! He says he had a stiff neck for five years. [Laughing.]

Q. Now when did he do this?

A. This was, heck, it was in...well the '40's...late '40's. That shows you how much traffic was on

the road.

Q. Try that today! We have a couple things here from your family. I wanted to make sure we got the chance to put them on camera and hear a little bit about them. One is this photograph, if you could hold that [Hands photograph to Mr. Owings.]

A. Well, this is my grandfather's log canoe. They used to oyster in it; and, of course, for pleasure, too. But that was the only transportation then other than a horse. And they had a horse; he was named 'Sir Barton'. [Laughing.] [Speaking to camera man] Need any more? So that was their mode of transportation.

Q. That was your father's father, that grandfather?

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A. Yeah

Q. And his name was? Did you tell us...

A. He was William Wallace. He was William Wallace, Jr.

Q. Did you ever go out on that boat?

A. Oh no.

Q. Now the other thing that you've brought for us today is this family Bible, and [Hands Mr. Owings a large brown volume.] if you all could tell us a little more about it?

A. Well this was... two maiden aunts who were my great-grandfather's brother's daughters...grand-daughters. And they never got married. But they were in the Norris family, which is one of the oldest families. Dr. Dent...everybody's (??), he was part of the family...the Norris family. I think Dr. Dent's daughter...grand-daughter still owns the land down there. It was a farm...I forget the name of it now...What was the name of that home? [Barbara responds: "I don't know."]. Any how, they left us when they died the Bible. They also left me my great-great-grandfather's desk from his mill.

Q. Oh, from Owings Mills?

A. Yeah. And I'm very proud of that 'cause it was all handmade..he handmade it. He must've been a craftsman, too. [Chuckles]. Yeah.

Q. Well, we really appreciate your being with us this afternoon, both of you, and sharing your stories. Is there any story that we need to make sure we get on tape?

A. Oh, I don't know. I guess there's plenty other stories [chuckles] You can't tell 'em all, you know? I guess one thing about Shadyside is the tee-totalers and the drinkers. I think there were...there was a big separation, I think. But I don't know what to say about it.

Q. Now which one was your family?

A. Well, they were half and half! [Lots of laughter!]

Q. Half and half...there you go.

A. I wasn't the tee-totaler. [Laughs]. But we had good times, I know that, especially the duck hunting. We were in business what's Dick's name? You know the...Parks...Richard Parks, and he was building a house up in Annapolis. We were supposed to do the floors in his house, and I ran into him about ten years ago and he said, "You know your father, I said, 'Preston, I've got to get into my house'. He said 'when are you gonna do the floors'? And my father said, "Well, Monday if we don't go ducking." [laughs]. Needless to say, we went ducking! That's the way things were then. It was a good life.

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Q. Well, we appreciate your sharing your lives today.

A. I'm glad to do it. I know it's a lot more stories to Shadyside, but

[Tape ends.]

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