



SHENTON, Howard

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Interview of Howard Shenton
West Shadyside Road
Shady Side, Maryland
Interviewer: Jennie LeFevre

HS: Yeah. Now, am I supposed to start talking?

JL: Yes, I would like for you to talk about the Princess and any other sea stories you could tell us.

HS: Well the uh, the boat Princess, this interview is about the boat Princess, that was owned by Captain Bernard Hallock. Captain Bernard Hallock was a pound net fisherman here in Shady Side. And I would say that Captain Bernard was probably, maybe what you might say, a genuine, a genuine waterman, in that, I think that he made his living entirely out of Chesapeake Bay. He was a year round, you know, a lot of these watermen worked the season, they oystered in the oyster season or they crabbed in the crabbing season, but Captain Bernard was a year round waterman. Now the Princess was built in 1904 by Captain Perry Rogers, here, right here in Parrish Creek at Shady Side. And uh, she was what we call a dead rise boat and when they say dead rise, they mean that she has a V bottom. She's a frame boat and has a "V" bottom, that's where you get the name. Dead rise is derived from and ... uh ... she was approximately 40 feet, or maybe 41 or 42 feet long and the reason that they built the boats that length was because of the length of the seas that uh usually run in Chesapeake Bay. Out in Chesapeake Bay you uh, you usually ... the seas run in series of three and they ... I'm talking about when the wind is probably blowing say 15 knots or more ... and the three seas; the first sea is smaller than the other two, they build up consecutively and the third sea is ah higher or, higher or you would say- bigger than the other two, so they usually built these boats 40 feet in length to so that they would ride these three seas more comfortably and have a little bit more stability. The Princess, as far as I know, was the first boat that was built with what I call a tuck stern.

Now this stern, instead of being blunt or as they say today a box stern, which would be ... that it would be straight up and down ... uh, it had a slight what you would say- a slight- well it was at a slight angle and then it also had the dead rise. In other words it came down to "V" from the sides, from the side of the boat. It came down to a "V" down to the middle of the stern and ... uh ... so instead of having a box or a square stern you had this sort of like a blunt bow so that ... the reason for that was that you could anchor

the boat when you were tonging oysters; you could anchor boat stern to and it gave you ... the boat would lay better that way and you didn't have to worry about the spray so much hitting the stern. Of course, if it was real rough you would get some spray, but it was uh much better than having that blunt bow or blunt stern with the wave action hitting it and so the boat would not only ride it better, when I say ride better you wouldn't get ... she would take- go into the sea better, but also it was more stable and that the boat didn't bounce around, she didn't shear, as they called it and uh, so- I think that from this beginning, most in fact all of the boats that were built for oystering had this type of stern and ... uh ... which was really peculiar to the Shady Side area.

Of course, if you go around the Bay, you will find that a certain type boat has taken in this area and it's been adopted and the watermen in that area seem to, to follow and keep using that type boat. And here in West River we had this dead rise type boat and another feature of the Princess, that was peculiar to the, especially to the Eastern shore boats, was that she had wide ... what we call washboards. Now, wide washboards are simply the decking of the boat that run from the bow to the stern and the... uh but ... didn't cover the complete hull. It just ran down each side and of course it covered the hull and the bow and the stern and this was to give you a good wide solid footing while you're standing up tonging oysters.

JL: OK.

HS: OK. Oh is it plugged in?

JL: Yeah, oh yeah.

HS: The microphone is ...

JL: It's going ... go ahead.

HS: Oh is it? Now, I became familiar with the Princess in the year 1947 when I went to work for the State as a marine policeman and at that time the Princess was used probably exclusively for pound net fishing. And uh Captain Bernard was fishing at uh ... then ... fishing about 10 to 12 pound nets and he covered the area from, I would say from Cedarhurst up to Tolly's Point, up as far as the mouth of the Severn River. And uh, he had two boats that, he had another boat that he used in conjunction with the Princess and that was an open, I call it bateau, it was a big bateau, that uh was named the Liz and uh, uh Liz and the Princess, of course, were used to fish these pound nets.

And uh, the the I had a, on the patrol boat with me and I guess it was around 1949 or 50 and I had a boy that was from western Maryland as a mate and every time that we used to go along side the Princess while they were out there fishing the pound nets, this boy would get sick. (Laughter) He really got sick from the odor, I think, of the dead eels and all that had crawled down in the bilge of the Princess and was creating a terrible odor. But of course the fellows that worked on the boat, they were accustomed to it and it didn't bother them and it didn't bother me, but the ... this mate of mine used to get sick every time we went along side the Princess.

But, another good feature of the Princess, which really, I would say would put her above most of that type boat that was built after, after she was built, is that when she was loaded, and of course I saw her loaded many times with herring and shad that, when Captain Bernard would fish those nets in the spring of the year and ... uh ... is that she didn't, she didn't load down at the head, she loaded on- on an even keel. And uh, most of these uh uh, tonging boats, if you put a heavy load in them would load at the head, and when I say head, I guess the real nautical term for head as far as the navy is concerned, you know a head on a boat is a bathroom, but in this instance we use the term head as the bow of the boat and so ... but the Princess wouldn't load at the bow, she would really ride the water nice and if you'd see her going up the river here with uh, I've seen her with those washboards almost awash, loaded with herring and shad and that old bow was sticking up there just as, you know, real proud like. She really road the water very

nicely. But I ... uh ... now that's about all I can- I can say about the design and the use of the Princess, I don't know what else I could say about her.

JL: Do you know who it was named? I mean it was called the Princess, but what was it named for? Do you know ... or

HS: The only inkling that I have is that the Princess was built the same year that Amy, that Amy Rogers Leatherbury was born. Now Amy Rogers Leatherbury is Captain Perry Rogers' daughter and she married Luther Leatherbury and I don't know whether Captain Perry named, sort of ah nickname Amy "Princess" or what and then of course named the boat Princess. But as far as I know she was always named, this boat was always named Princess.

JL: And once had Princess on the side of it.

HS: Yeah, she had Princess on ...

JL: Did it also have numbers ... or ...

HS: Oh yeah, she was registered with the Coast Guard. Back when she was built, you had to register your boats with the Coast Guard, she had a Coast Guard Number.

JL: And how many years would you say he used that boat?

HS: Good golly, I don't, I would say that uh, Captain Bernard used it up 'till, now Bruce Cornwall could give you that information because he inherited the boat from Captain Bernard. That's Captain Bernard's grandson, but I would say up until ... good golly ... '68 or '70, 'til 1968 or '70. Now she was rebuilt I think, I know of at least twice and maybe three times.

JL: Would you know who rebuilt her?

HS: Well the last time that she was rebuilt, Robbie Atwell, Robert Atwell rebuilt her and he not only rebuilt her he rebuilt several other boats around this area and uh, but I know that the Princess was rebuilt at least twice and probably three times.

JL: Would there be anyone around here that would have a small model of the Princess?

HS: No

JL: You know a little carved model of her.

HS: I doubt very much that they would, there's a lot of pictures of her, around in the Rogers family, they have, I'm sure that they have quite a few pictures of her. I do recall another, a couple incidents involving the Princess, is ... that they used to bring their fish in, up at Woodfield's and they would unload their catch and it would take them quite some time to do that 'cause, as I say back in those days, they would, they would catch tons of herring and they would catch ... I've seen them land three thousand pound of roe shad in one day and maybe 2500 or 3000 pound of buck shad. This was back in the late '50's and early '60's and of course today, you don't see any of that, they don't see, you don't see any shad or herring landed in the ... at least not at West River. I don't know about other parts of the bay, but what I started to say, when they would unload, after they would unload the catch, they would gas the boat up at Woodfield's. That's where they ...

One of the crewmen, I had seen him do it many, many times, would, as soon as they would unload the catch, he'd light a cigarette, and then he'd go and grab the gas hose and go down to the Princess and her gas tank was right inside of the entrance way to the aft cabin and he'd stick that, stick the gas nozzle in, of course, in the gas tank, and fill her up. And as I say, I have seen him do it many, many times. But one day he did it and evidently a spark ignited that gasoline and blew him overboard and of course it created a little bit of fire, which they put out, it didn't, so it didn't really do any damage to the Princess, but it really didn't injure the crewman so much, it singed his hair and just gave him a slight burn, but he was very

fortunate that it did blow him overboard and I think that ... because he got in the water and it put the fire out right away.

Then another incident involving the Princess, I left the West River in the patrol boat one nasty, rainy morning, the wind was blowing northeast, blowing a gale and none of the oystermen were out and, uh, so I thought that while I was cruising around I would slip on into Annapolis and fuel up. At that time there weren't very many places around here, in the off season where you could buy a hundred gallons of gasoline or a hundred and fifty gallons of gasoline and I carried three hundred gallons of gas on the patrol boat, so I was uh, went into Annapolis to fuel up and uh, as I was proceeding up the Bay, I saw Captain Bernard was down on ... off the mouth of West River fishing one of his nets. And so I, but any, I kept on in Annapolis and when I came out of Annapolis, I happened to look over at the mouth of Fishing Creek which is right there just above Thomas Point Lighthouse. I saw the scow that Captain Bernard used to tow with the Princess to fish the nets. They'd get down in this scow after they got to the net. And they'd go around and slack the corner lines up and close the muzzle and then fish the net over to the Princess. And then I saw the scow there, but I didn't see the Princess and I said something must be wrong. So, I really was holding out in the middle of the Bay because of the wind being northeast. It's pretty rough there at times, where it shoals up, and ... uh ... but anyhow, I headed over towards Fishing Creek and I told the mate; I said, "now stick your head around the side of the cabin there and ask Captain Bernard if there's anything wrong". Here was the Captain Bernard and 3 or 4 members of the crew standing in this scow but no power boats, no Princess and no Liz. So the mate stuck his head around and he said, "Captain Bernard, is there anything wrong?" Captain Bernard said, "You're damn right there's something wrong!" Well what had happened was that they went to fish one of the nets there off Thomas Point and they got down in the scow to go around and slack the corners up in the net. Of course leaving the Princess, and uh, theyuh, the boat hook broke and they went adrift. So they drifted up there and they caught a hold this other pound net that Captain Bernard had up the Bay there. And so the Princess was laying down there to this other pound net and with nobody aboard.

Well the Coast uh the uh, the lighthouse tender on the Thomas Point light, he had called for help, but he had to call Baltimore, and that was the closest place where they had a boat and of course they were going to send a boat from Baltimore, but then, of course, he saw me go there and uh, to Captain Bernard and the crew. So I picked two of the crew members up and took them out to the Princess and put them aboard so they could continue ... and it was very rough that day. I mean the seas were, I would say, four or five ... maybe four or five feet high. It was really bad. And another thing I would like to say is that Captain Bernard and his crew went out there and fished those pound nets in some awful bad weather. I mean, I, it's, I mean, you know it was almost unbelievable that he could go out there and fish those nets ...

JL: About how many crew would he have?

HS: He would have at least three ... uh ... three, most of the time, I would say, there would be from four, counting him it would be, probably be, six men in the crew.

JL: And were these men from Shady Side or ...

HS: Shady Side and Galesville.

JL: Would you remember what the gentlemen's names were?

HS: Well, they had, uh they had nicknames. They had "Baby Jack" and "Black Jack" uh let's see, Baby Jack and Boo Jack, that's right, they had Baby Jack and Boo Jack and, I'm trying to think of some of the other names that they had, all these fellows had nicknames ...

JL: Well, what were their real names? I mean ...

HS: Well, Baby Jack is ... uh ... He's a Fountain, I'm trying to think of his first name but he's a Fountain from down Churchton. And Boo Jack was a ..., let's see wasn't a Matthews ..., I'd have to think about it

Jennie. [Editor's Note: Holland] I have to think about the names because I know them by nicknames more than I do their real names, see? And Boo Jack was uh ... It kind of escapes me now the family names.

JL: That's ok ... but that would be interesting to know that they were fellows. I guess that they worked in Shady Side all the ones that helped him.

HS: And ... uh ... Captain Bernard also had a man working for him, Zachariah, now that's a ..., I believe that's a Biblical name, but ... uh ... they called him Zach, so (laughter) ... now I don't know what else I can tell you, Jennie.

JL: Could you tell me what Captain Bernard looked like?

HS: Captain Bernard was ... uh ... I would say probably about 5 foot 8 or 9 and a real husky fellow and And uh. . .he had powerful arms, shoulders, and hands. You know, being a waterman ... I guess pulling and hauling on nets all of his life and his hands were huge and ... uh ... he uh, he was a ___ man. In later years he was rather stout, he had gotten kind of stout, but he certainly did put a beautiful pound net out in the Bay and when I say beautiful, I mean that the stakes were in line, straight you know, and he kept, he maintained it, he maintained the nets in very fine condition, kept them lighted and so forth.

JL: That's what I was going to ask you, whether he mended the nets himself.

HS: Oh yeah ... well they would take the nets up, they had to take these nets up after, they set them in the spring and after the spring fishing was over, they would take and exchange the net. They'd take the old net off and put a clean net on and when they brought the old nets in they would take them up on shore and ... uh ... clean them and mend them. Now they did a lot of mending also while the net, like say for example, a boat ran into the net while it was set out in the bay, they would ... uh ... have to mend, patch the holes it created. And uh, I've gone out in the Bay and seen where somebody probably had engine trouble, got caught in a storm and had engine trouble and drifted into one of Captain Bernard's nets. The anchor would be on one side the net and the boat would be on the other side of the net and Captain Bernard went there to fish it and he would be anything but happy when he saw an incident like that. Because he knew the boat or the anchor one had gone through his net and of course that meant that they had to repair it.

JL: Could you tell me exactly where he lived down here in Shady Side?

HS: Captain Bernard lived ... uh ... on the road down towards Idlewilde ... uh ... I believe that his place has a name, I believe it's in the history of Shady Side, Shady Side history. He was. . .uh. . .of the Parrish family on his mother's side. And, of course, I think that the Parrish family had received ... , which of course Parrish Creek was named after, and ... uh ... Captain Bernard's family had, I believe, had received an original grant from the King of England or from Lord Calvert, whoever it was, and uh, when they settled here.

JL: When he talked about the Princess, did he talk about her with affection or did he scold her sometimes if she didn't do just what he wanted or didn't he say too much about the boat.

HS: No, no I don't think that um, I think he was very proud of her, I think that because she was a, a, very nice boat. I say for the utility that he wanted to use the boat for, she's was ideal for it and ... I uh ... I think that he was very proud of her.

JL: Did he ever tell anybody what gave him the inspiration to build her? You don't know, or ...

HS: No, I don't know whether it was Captain Bernard's. I really believe that Perry Rogers, was the man that designed her and I think that maybe I should have mentioned this before, now I understand, from the boat builders around in this area that the Princess was one of the first boats that was built with precut lumber. Now when I say precut lumber, most of the boats that were built they would ... they would uh ...

I guess they would have to do a lot of planning and ... uh ... they'd have to use the adz and all to cut the boards down to whatever they wanted and ... uh, it was, they had to do a lot of manual work on the material in order to build the boat. But I think that Captain Perry Rogers designed this boat so that he could buy the lumber right from the lumber company and uh, or even the saw mill and ... uh ... that it would he didn't have to ... uh ... shape it or do anything like that. He would, just like you would ... build a house, almost.

JL: And what type of wood was she made from?

HS: Well back in those days, the keel mostly was oak and, I guess the keel was oak all the time, and the, usually the bottom was cypress and the sides were fir. And, of course, the keel and the sides would be uh would be full length boards, in other words the keel, what ever the length of the boat was, the keel would be full length and the sides of the boat would be the full length, in other words ... they were going to build a 42 foot boat, the sides would probably be 46 or 48 feet long allowing for the curvature of the hull, see?

JL: And you said he took very good care of his nets so I'm sure he also took very good care of the Princess.

HS: Oh yeah.

JL: Brought her up and cleaned her and ...

HS: Oh yeah ...

JL: Paint her and put her back. How often did he used to do that?

HS: At least once a year. At least once a year she would ... he would, he had to, he had to take care of those and keep those boats in tip top shape and ... uh ... not only the hulls of the boat, but also the engines, I mean when I knew the Princess she had a ... uh ... 6-cylinder Chrysler marine engine in her and I think that prior to that she had had a double cylinder, I don't know whether it was a Palmer, but anyhow a slow turning type of engine. And the Liz had a 2-cylinder Palmer engine in her when I knew her. Those one and two cylinder engines were very hard on the boat, because of vibration. They had, you had a lot of motion from the action of the engine and where as the four and six and eight cylinder engine were much smoother ... and didn't vibrate or shake the boat to pieces.

JL: Is the Liz still in existence?

HS: No, I think the Liz has uh, fallen to pieces, cause I think they just pulled her up on shore and I don't know what year, but maybe 15 and more years ago and I think, she's fallen to pieces.

JL: Is there anything else you could tell us about the Princess? Maybe some stories that maybe Captain Bernard told you about her.

HS: No, I really can't think of any about the Princess ... uh ... I could tell you maybe a few, another story about Captain Bernard ...

JL: I'd love to hear it, oh, I'd love to hear it.

HS: Yeah, we ... uh ... we used fish the rock fish with shrimp and chum, we used to chum with grass shrimp and ...

JL: Was that also, but, there weren't shrimp in the Bay, must of got them

HS: No, these small grass shrimp that you see around the shore, and so my brother-in-law and I, we would get out, get up real early in the morning right about first light and we had a little seine that we used to haul. So we would go down around the shore where we thought the shrimp might be and of course you'd get overboard and wade around to catch these shrimp and you'd tow a live box with you to keep the shrimp alive. Then after you got in, before you went fishing, you'd sort of ice them down a little bit. So we were, we would, be hauling the seine around Captain Bernard's shore there. And as I'd said, it would

be even before sunrise and ... uh ... uh ... a couple times I said, Captain Bernard came to the door and would yell out come on up and have some breakfast! So we'd slip up and would have a cup of coffee, you know, and with him. And we'd sit down and he would be by himself there, I guess he had gotten up and cooked his own breakfast. And you'd look in the middle of the table and he would have about 5 pounds of sausage cooked up there and maybe a dozen eggs. So you'd have to sit down and you'd eat some breakfast with him, but I often wondered to myself if we hadn't come along, I wondered who was going to eat all that breakfast?

JL: It's possible that he was a hearty eater himself.

HS: It's possible that ... may have eaten all that, but I'm sure if he did, he didn't take any lunch with him when he went out into the Bay. But he really had a huge breakfast there.

JL: But he would get up and make it all for you ... he'd have it made.

HS: He'd like to have some company. I'm sure he'd like to just have some company come in and eat with him, you know. That's the kind of fellow he was, he was just very friendly and he liked to talk to you and see what, find out what was going on and ... uh ...,very enjoyable fellow.

JL: Did he ever say anything about the prices of the different things that as he sold them, whether he thought whether it was good or it was bad ... or ...

HS: No uh un, I never, well, I never discussed any of that with him, but I know he caught a lot of fish and of course, I understand that during World War II, that Captain Bernard caught an awful lot of trout. We call them sea trout, a lot of people call them weakfish and I believe that the reason that they had so many of that type of fish, maybe hardhead, too, was due to the fact that the trawlers couldn't operate out in the ocean due to the submarine scare during World War II, and uh, which made that many more fish to come in to the Chesapeake Bay. But I understand that he really caught a lot of trout during World War II, and of course the fish were needed, to ... for food, you know.

That's about all, Jennie, that's about all I can tell you about the Princess, I don't know of anything else. I do know that even after, after, he would take the pound nets up in the late fall, maybe one or a couple of the crewmen ... uh ... who really didn't have anything to do. Some of the other crew would be mending nets and so forth, they would evidently hire the Princess from Captain Bernard and then use her to tong oysters in for maybe just a short period of time, maybe for three or four weeks or a month or something like that. So she was used for; she was used for what she was originally designed for.

JL: OK. I was going to ask you whether she was used for something else.

HS: So they did, in the off season of the pound net fishing, they'd use her for tonging. I can't think of anything else, though.

JL: Well can you tell us ... we'll stop it on this side and we'll turn it over.

(End of Side 1 of Tape)

JL: Now, Howard, I would like if you would tell us some stories about when you were working on the Bay yourself, some experiences or

HS: (Interposes) Is that George, hey baby!

Good golly, Jennie, I wouldn't know where to start.

JL: Would you tell us what year you started ...

HS: Yeah, I started working for the Marine Police in September 1947 and I went aboard the patrol boat

as a mate and really as a cook. Cook and mate, and because when, I say “cook” because at that time we used to spend quite a bit of time aboard the patrol boat. I mean we didn’t come home, come in every night like they do now. We stayed out there for two or three nights and as much as a week at a time . And, of course, I ... uh ... the boats that we had back in 1947 were, were ... the one that I was on was built in 1917 and ... uh ... the name of the boat was Somerset, and she did about 7 1/2 knots at full speed, which meant, of course, she was built during the sail boat time, primarily that was the main method of propulsion was sail, and you didn’t need too much speed.

JL: I didn’t ask you if you were born down here?

HS: Down where?

JL: On Shady Side.

HS: No, I was born in Baltimore. My folks are from Dorchester County over on the Eastern Shore and I’ve been here in Shady Side since I was 10 years old.

JL: I see.

HS: And I was really raised by the Hartge’s, Hartge, Captain Charley Hartge’s family down here on West River shore.

JL: Oh, I didn’t know that.

HS: Yeah. So I started out in ‘47 and then I ... uh ... finally worked my way up to become captain of the patrol boat and I worked the area primarily from, from Tolly’s Point to uh, down towards Herring Bay. Which meant both sides of the Bay, that included the Eastern shore. And ... uh ... after we got faster patrol boats, I was assigned one of the new patrol boats that was built in 1949. The State built four of these boats, supposedly real fast patrol boats that were real modern, and they uh: the Anne Arundel, the Dorchester, the St. Mary’s and the Culvert or Calvert and ... uh ... I was assigned to the Anne Arundel. And at that time.. uh ... the governor was ... uh ... uh ... darn, I’m trying to think of the governor’s name now ... let’s see, we go back, Tawes, who was the governor in 1949?

JL: Agnew?

HS: No, it was before Agnew.

Other Person: This was before McKeldin, oh ... um ... good Lord.

HS: It’s funny how your mind works ...

JL: Well, well, it doesn’t matter ...

HS: Yeah, but it was the same guy that was ... uh ... was responsible for putting the Bay Bridge over.

[Editor’s Note: The Governor was Preston Lane.]

JL: OK. (Laughter) That’s all right.

HS: _____ cut it off.

JL: OK, I’m sorry. Would you like to tell me about some of the light houses that were on the bay that are no longer there, that you recall.

HS: Well, there’s only a few of them that are no longer there, even though that most of the light houses are still there, but there uh ... there’s no personnel aboard them, they are all been placed on automatic. But, most of those old light houses are still in place. I know that the Hooper’s Straight Lighthouse is the one that’s over at the St. Michael’s Marine Museum and the Drum Point lighthouse is the one that’s down at the Calvert County Maritime, uh, Marine Museum. I never been aboard the Hooper’s Straight light, but I used to spend quite a bit of time, not quite a bit of time ... I used to go aboard the Thomas Point lighthouse quite a bit when I was on the patrol boat, if it was calm or it was moderate ... uh ... sometimes I’d go aboard and have a cup of coffee with the lighthouse keeper. There was always, at that

time, there was always, two men on the light, on Thomas Point Light, they had three people on there they had a three man crew and of course one guy was always on leave. And uh but the light house keeper ... uh ... the head man at Thomas Point light was a civil service employee of the government.

JL: So their families didn't live there with them at all.

HS: No, I think they did in some instances in, at some places they may have, but not here on Thomas Point Light and the other two members of the crew were Coast Guard personnel ... but, uh ... the old lighthouse keeper (Inserted by the Editor: was Earl Harrison) as we called him, was a civil service employee.

JL: Well, you were thinking earlier that you had been given a special boat and you were starting to tell me about this boat.

HS: Yeah, and I was trying to think of the governor's name at that time and I still can't ... I still can't ... uh ... think of his name, but anyhow, this ... so I was assigned this new patrol boat, the Anne Arundel, and she was equipped with two Packard engines and she would do maybe 20 ... 20 knots. She was supposed to do 25 but I think that 20 would about let her out and she was a very nice patrol boat. Had a lot of mahogany wood on in and a lot of varnish, bright work to keep up and ... uh ... kind of fancy so ... uh ... uh ... I was also assigned quite a few times to follow the governor's yacht, to take the governor ashore and to ... uh ... to even take him fishing sometimes.

JL: And beside you, were there other crew members on the boat that you were assigned to?

HS: Oh yeah, I always had a mate, there was always just one personnel, one extra personnel. And uh, so then also after getting this new patrol boat that meant that I was sent around the Bay to different trouble spots because she was fairly fast for that time, and uh, if they had trouble with illegal dredging or operations were going on where speed was used. Why then they would send one of these four boats to the area, see if they couldn't calm the situation a little bit, so I was sent in the Potomac River. In fact, I was sent quite a few places around the Bay in that way I got to know the Bay and ... uh ... I rather enjoyed it. Tell the truth, I really did enjoy the work, especially the boating part of it.

JL: Were there ever any fighting or feuds about "this is my fishing ground or so forth?"

HS: Only in the Potomac River did you really have a problem of that nature. You had a so-called, you had so called friction between the Marylander's and the Virginia people. And so I always said that the Potomac River really was a "no-mans land" and the reason that I had named it that was that the the Virginia people, the Virginia waterman, he felt that if he didn't go out there and steal and take what was there that the Maryland man were going to get it and the Maryland man thought the same thing. That if he didn't get it then the Virginia person was going to get it. So they really didn't have any respect for it, and when I said respect I meant that as far as the conservation was concerned. They just went there and they took all they could take and get away with and ... uh ... they really weren't so interested in conserving the resource. Whereas; I do believe that in the county waters or their own home waters, these people are more apt to consider and think about the conservation. And because it feels like ... it felt like it belonged to them, that's the way I looked at it.

JL: Well, the men that worked on the Bay did they feel as if they really had to protect the Bay and watch after it and take good care of it?

HS: I think that a very small percentage of them. I think that probably, maybe 10 or 12 percent, I don't think it was any more than that. I think that most of the watermen really went out there to get what he could get and ... uh ... take what he could take and I don't think that uh he really was interested in conservation. It's sort of a ... I always said, it's sort of a pirate instinct and here again the watermen felt like that, they do feel like -- "if I don't get it somebody else will, see?" And then again, they also think that God put the resource there for them to harvest and ... uh ... God's going to take care of it, they, uh, don't so that relieves them of the responsibility.

JL: Could you tell me how many years you worked on the water then? You know, that you ...

HS: Well, I actually worked on the water I guess about, in my career, I really was assigned to a boat for about 12 years, 10 or 12 years. Then I worked in an automobile for quite some time on the western shore and in conjunction with the patrol boats and then the rest of the time I spent in the office. But I had quite a career, I liked it, I really liked the boating of all the things that I did during the time I was, were working with the State, I think being on the patrol boat was the most enjoyable.

JL: Could you tell me, maybe, of um ... maybe a storm that came up on the Bay and maybe something that might of happened, that might be something unusual that you could tell us about.

HS: Well, I uh I was; in 1954, when we had the hurricane Hazel. I was working Eastern bay. The State, that year, was trying a new system of transplanting the seed oysters and ... uh ... this is uh ... this is the oyster propagation program that was carried on by the State. They would put oyster shells, which they got from the shucking houses, into areas where they were most likely to get a high spat count. I say that I'm talking about oyster spat and uh, this uh. they had this bar over Mill Hill, in Eastern bay where the State had planted shells. They were going to move the spat or the, that had caught on the shells out in the bay or out in the rivers to the growing, so called growing bars, in the Fall of the year. Now these were spat that had caught during the summer, and move them in the Fall instead of waiting until the following spring after oyster season, which was what they usually did. So this was a new experiment, so we were over in Eastern bay moving the seed and on October the 15th, Hurricane Hazel came along. This was 1954 and I had I think it was 20 - 23 dredge boats that were working on Mill Hill and catching these seed oysters. And then they would, after they'd load, they would run them to where ever they were to be planted and um ... so this was on a Friday morning, that the storm ... I figured the wind had been increasing and I knew that we were going to have bad weather and I was trying to get a hold of some of the "powers to be" in the office to see if I couldn't close the operation down because it was looking so bad, the weather was looking so bad. Friday's a pretty hard time, it's a bad time to try to get a hold of the "wheels", you know, they take that long weekend. They find some way, some reason to get away from the office, you know, and a fellow said it's an "early release."

But anyhow, I couldn't get ahold of anybody and the wind kept picking up. So I, along about 2:00, I closed the operation down myself. And some of the dredgers, especially the ones that were working there in the big power boats, they ... uh ... they asked me what they were going to do with the oysters that they had because they didn't have a load to take to the growing area. I told them I didn't care what they did with them, I thought the best thing to do was to go looking for a harbor and so I came on across the Bay that afternoon, I would say ... it was after 2:00 and ... uh ... it was really rough. It was really bad and after I got in, I got in Parrish Creek here and tied the boat up and really came on home, then I heard about the "Marvel" sinking. Now the "Marvel" was an old, what we called a what, was known as a ram. She was an old three mast boat that was built to haul lumber and fertilizer and stuff up and down the Bay. This "Marvel" was being operated as, I guess you'd say, an excursion boat, uh ... or ... anyhow, she would take parties on board at Annapolis and they'd go out and stay for a week. They'd sail all around the Bay and this particular week they had ... uh ... gone, I think they had gone to Cambridge and gone to different places on the Bay. They were headed back because they were due in Annapolis Saturday morning to either to unload and then probably take on the next load Sunday and she would uh, had been anchored down off of Deale, off of Herring Bay when the storm really struck in. She was right there on the lower (leaward?) shore and I don't know exactly what happened, but anyhow, I believe that what happened was that she had taken on some water and she was "shearing" on her anchor chain and I think that she probably got a little bit broad side or side to it, to the sea I'm talking about, and uh, I think with water in the hold. She tripped and she capsized.

Now I believe that all the people on her or aboard her did have life preservers on, but the people that were on deck survived because they uh, even though they got in the water, the wind carried them right ashore

there at in Herring Bay or up at Fairhaven. But I think there were 14 people who were down inside the cabin when she capsized and, of course, I guess they couldn't get out after she went over. They couldn't find a companionway to get out and 14 people drowned. So they called me to ... uh ... to see if I couldn't go down there and do something, but it was no use for me to go but, the wind was blowing then about 98 or 100 miles an hour and even if, See I would have had to have gone to the Eastern shore with the wind from the east. I would have had to "beat over" to the Eastern shore in the motor boat. And then sort of scut on down towards Herring Bay. But after I got there, you couldn't ... you can't do anything in 98 mile an hour wind.

JL: I don't imagine you could.

HS: So 14 people lost their lives that day.

JL: Well, what is one of the funniest things you've ever seen happen on the Bay?

HS: Oh, I don't know, uh, (laughter)

JL: You're laughing, it must of been something.

HS: I don't know ... I do know that we had an officer who had a slight impediment in his speech and he was checking oysters over in, I believe it was in the Miles River. And it so happened that this particular boat that was checking these oysters, that one of the crew on there, the Captain of the boat also had a slight impediment of speech. They got to talking to one another and I think each one thought the other was imitating the other. They both got angry ...

JL: That's funny.

HS: It was quite a ... it was quite a confrontation.

JL: But they both finally decided that they really ...

HS: Well, I think they finally got it settled but they, after they realized that they weren't trying to imitate one another and that it was ... uh ... you know, was just one of those handicaps ...

JL: That's funny ... Now I'm going to ask you a question and I know everybody that lives around here has an answer. Why do you think the Bay has gotten the way it is now?

HS: Well, I look at the Bay of course as far, more as a, as a source of natural resources, I'm talking about the oysters and the fish and clams and so forth. And, I don't think that there's any question that pollution has played a part in the downfall, if you want to call it that, of the bay.

JL: And where do you think the pollution has come from?

HS: Well, I think it's primarily industrial, it's industrial pollution and then of course I think it's also from ... uh, well, what would you call it ... uh ... bacteria, I guess you'd say it was bacteria. But as far as resources are concerned, I believe that the Bay has been over-fished and the reason I say that is because man ... uh ... especially the American man is a pretty efficient fellow. And ... uh ... the more he works at something, the more, he, he realizes, he tries to do it as easy and most, as efficient as possible. Then you look at the progress that has been made in the so-called technical end of it and then when I'm talking about technical, I'm talking about the boats and the boats and their equipment. Especially the ... uh ... the boats are larger, they have ... uh ... they're faster, they can go out in the Bay and they can stay there and ... uh ... in stormy or rough weather. There is the ... uh ... watermen back when I was a kid if the weather was halfway bad, you know, they wouldn't go out. But today, the weather hardly ever stops them unless it is a hurricane.

Then the method of harvesting, ... uh the ... everybody talks about the dredge boats being the only working crew, uh working boat, I wouldn't say crew, but working boat outfit that uses sail and of course the reason they use sail is because it's inefficient. And then when the wind ... you don't have much wind, they can't work or they don't catch as many oysters and ... uh now they allow them to dredge with power

two days a week. And ... uh ... even though they put a limit on the catch, to me the limit doesn't mean too much, because they probably can't catch any more than what the limit. They couldn't catch any more than what the limit prescribes and ... uh ... so ... uh ... you ... uh ... their just operating more efficiently.

Now as far as the fish are concerned, the uh ... they start with the nets, back when I was a kid they had cotton gill nets, I'm just thinking about gill net fishermen now ... and uh ... believe me the gill net fishermen land an awful lot of fish. Used to land an awful lot of fish, particularly the rock fish and ... uh ... especially in the winter months when the drift netters get out here in the Bay and operate in weather that's really not fit for anybody to go out there in the Bay. But that's when they catch, when it's cold and rough and all, that's when they catch, the drift netters catch the fish. And so they started out with the cotton nets, gill nets, and after the cotton, the cotton and the cotton nets would get a little bit wet and they'd swell up and they wouldn't catch as well, they wouldn't catch the fish as well. Then you got the so-called linen gill net, which was a finer, a finer thread and ... uh ... this was better than the cotton net as far as catching fish was concerned. Then, of course, you got the nylon net, which is more and much more efficient and now they have the monofilament net which is outlawed in Maryland except over in ... uh ... Sinepuxent Bay, I believe over on the ocean side in Worcester County, I believe it's legal to use the monofilament net. Now it is legal to use a monofilament net in Virginia.

JL: Now what is it about that ... that makes it illegal to use?

HS: You can use the monofilament net even in the summer time when the crabs are around, the crabs can't hurt it. Now crabs, of course, if you catch a fish in there, if the fish stays there any length of time, the crabs going to get on the fish and disfigure him or tear him up a little bit, so his market value or quality wouldn't be as good, but uh, then, in addition to the net you have, as far as the fish are concerned, you have the depth finder which helps to locate the fish and when I think of ... I mentioned talking about the Princess, about the shad and herring that was landed here, up here at Woodfield's, I had been down at Solomons in January, mostly in January and seen the drift netters come in and these drift netters, of course they could go all over the Bay, they could go from ... as long as they stayed out in State waters, they could go anywhere and fish. And um ... see them come in with those boats loaded with rock fish, where the fish, of course are dormant. These drift netters would spot them with their depth finders and ... uh ... put the nets overboard and really, really load it up. I mean it's a fabulous catches.

And then another thing, as far as the ... being over fished is concerned, I can't exactly remember the year, but I think it was round about 1968. When the so-called residency requirement was eliminated from the seafood industry, or from our laws in the State of Maryland, now the residency requirements pertained to the waters of Maryland as the county waters of Maryland. See the waters out here in the tidewater were divided into State waters, which really was the Bay waters. And county waters, which were the tributary waters, and ... uh ... of course the charts defined these waters. Which really meant that anybody in the State of Maryland could go anywhere in the State waters and fish, crab or oyster, but only those residents of the county in which the county waters lied could go and uh fish in those county waters. And so you say, well that sounds good, but that's not bad. I mean, it gives everybody in the State of Maryland the right to go fishing or do what they want to do, as far as the seafood business is concerned, but, what happens is, in these county waters. If they, say if they, have a nice, they've got plenty of clams or they have plenty of oysters to be harvested, so everybody in the State of Maryland goes in there and harvests them and they kill it, they overfish it, they really kill it. And it, so your resources is practically depleted and ... uh ... that's really what's wrong with, doing away with this so-called residency requirements, and uh, which really boils down to being over-fished.

Now the crabs, of course, they move up and down the bay and ... uh ... it doesn't seem to affect them too much because they, they, of course, the crab potters catch most of your crabs.

JL: Now Captain Proctor told me he thought the reason it was polluted was when they opened up the Delaware Bay. He said, let all the nasty blue fish into the Bay. That was his opinion.

HS: Yeah, well, everybody has their opinion and I..they get the idea the blue fish chase the rock fish around and so they run all the rock fish away. And I don't, I don't think that's true 'cause I have caught blue fish and rock fish together out here trolling and uh, I won't, I really don't believe that that has anything to do with it. Now I've heard a lot of talk about the uh ... about opening the canal up. They used to have locks in the canal.

JL: That's what he uh...

HS: And of course, they let the water flow through there now, but, I don't know as to the salinity, as far as the salinity is concerned, how the salinity in the head waters of the Chesapeake Bay differ from the salinity of the waters of Delaware Bay or Delaware River wherever the canal empties into over in Delaware, I don't know as it differs so much that it would really affect the marine life.

JL: What would be your idea of how to actually clean up the Bay?

HS: Ump, it would be a gigantic task.

JL: What would people have to do?

HS: Well, the ... uh ... of course you'd just have to, I don't know what you would do with waste. I don't know, I'm talking about industrial waste. I don't know. They're trying to overcome the sewerage waste by with the treatment plants. I don't know is how effective that is, it, sometimes, you know, the treatment is worse than the disease and but, it uh, I'm talking about probably the chemicals that they use. I don't know just what they do, whether they use, they may not even use any chemicals, but I'm sure that they must use some in these treatment plants. But then the industrial people, you just have to find another way of getting rid of their waste and their acids and all these other chemicals that are coming out in ... that they're dumping into the Bay. To me, the water out here off of West River doesn't look like it did 20 years ago, I mean it doesn't sparkle like it used to, it's sort of dead like, it just doesn't have the, have the pep, that it used to have, but I really don't ... It's a tough proposition, I don't know to clean the Bay up. I mean to get it back and of course as the fellow says, you know, if you really want the Chesapeake Bay back where it was 25 or 30 or 50 or 100 years ago, then everybody that lives on Chesapeake Bay ought to move to Chicago. So that probably, so, so, so the real problem is that we got too many people and too much activity going on in Chesapeake Bay.

JL: Maybe so, maybe so. Howard we thank you ...

HS: Is that enough?

JL: Howard, thank you very much, that was very nice of you, we really enjoyed it, thank you again.

HS: OK Jennie.