

Conversation with 68 year old white male and 45 year old white male, Ewell, Maryland (part 2 of 2) (Transcription)

resume M30 A(1)

Now I noticed that over in Rhodes Point...now I haven't been...when you come across the little bridge not the bridge where the water treatment plant is...but that other bridge...when you come across the little bridge, I've only been to the left..I've never been to the right. But I noticed that the houses are

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W: This is the Thererfer though..this ain't called the thererfer..

E: Big Thererfer Channel goes all the way to (?) But, uh, it was dug out last spring..clean it out..bout ever four or five years it has to be cleaned..

B: Ok, now who does that?

E: The Army engineers.

B: I see...so they come in here and do that

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E: Stay a month...

B: I've heard a lot of people complain about them .. the Army Corps of Engineers..

E: So far they've been good for us...you know, on that part. We get a problem..they don't let it ride too long. (?) fix, see if that channel fills in the oil tanker can't get in then you can't get no oil. And he gives kindly a priority.

W: See, used to not be no channel out this way. You had to come all the way through the straits...all along there then up the thererfer like you come on the boat. If you took a chance..used to be an openin up there but you took a chance. If you hit the tide up you could in, and if you hit the tide down, you couldn't...and you'd have to go all the way around..called Cagey Straits..and then come on down the Sound.

B: So what you're talking about now..let me get my bearings here. You're talking about toward the Bay..

W: Toward the Bay, yeah. And that, see the government finally dug that out there and buoyed it off and made a channel for the...and saved people a lot of time..if you had to go across the Bay, going all the way out here, all up the Sound and through the straits, why all you got to do ..be out in the Bay in twenty minutes, now. But uh, T. Arland G.....?'s one that got that, a Congressman.

B: Who...

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W: His name was <unintelligible text> and my uncle, the one, he's dead, he's ..him and <unintelligible text>, the one that owned that boat, there, him and <Le?>...another feller owned a Bay boat, they got after him and he seen it that...and he got this channel through here..and his name was T. Allen Goldsborough (?), Congressman.

B: Saved a lot...has there al...now to get from Rhodes Point to Tylerton, you don't have to go out in the Bay, right?

E: No. You just go through a little drain like..

B: A little gut, they call it a gut, right? Through the marsh. Oh..

(Tell <unintelligible text> to show you when you go out tomorrow mornin in the mornin where you cut through to go into Tylerton.)

E: Who you come with, <unintelligible text>

W: She's been to Tylerton. Well, you know that...how you go down there..

W: Yeah, she's been to ...

B: No...I went on the Captain Jason..and we went back out toward the Sound and down..but you don't go that way to go from Rhodes Point.

W: No.

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E: No you come through another place, called, it's called Sheer Bay Gut.

B: Oh, I read, I've read..or seen it on a map or somethin.

(You've done a lot of studying about here haven't you?)

B: Well, I read and read and read whatever I can get my hands on, but, you know really, there's not ..too much..

E: How come you picked Smith Island?

B: Well, it's sorta interesting...bout two years ago or two and a half years ago, I was on vacation, and a friend of mine and I just by whim went over to Tangier on the Stephen Thomas, but it was before the great big one, it was the smaller tour boat. And we wandered around and ended up staying the night over there. And I enjoyed it and we left the next morning bright and early and later...a year later was when I started my doctoral courses at Georgetown, and that year was when we went on another vacation and I said I don't want to go to Tangier this time, let's go to Smith. You know, we were driving up...I love the Delmarva Penninsula..I love it that whole Penninsula...so we were coming back up it and we came to Smith. And we didn't spend the night but we wandered around and I fell in love. This place is beautiful and I really did think so and so, I ended up talkin to a couple of people down by the unloadin dock, or where people get off.....a Mister Tyler..a young man and I don't remember his firsst name..he was a younger man oh, maybe thirty, and he had his little skiff topside down and he was workin..doin some bottom work. And he even let me record him, but it was outside and it wasn't very good. And then I talked to Glenn and I loved the way people talked here. So when I had to decide about what to write my paper on I said Smith Island English. So here I am, back. This is only my second time.

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It's been really interesting. Tell me about the weather here...do you think the weather has changed much in your lifetime?

W: Yeah, I do, I really do. I remember well (?) when I was first comin up..in april you could go in your stockin feet and bare feet, anything like that. But you can....never has been anything like that in the last few years.. No sir. In the spring of the year seems like, no matter what kind of winter you have, why it winds up..it's a long winter just the same.

B: Yeah, even if it's a mild...

W: Yeah, like this winter was a mild.. but it was a long one just the same. It was cold and wet. And it certainly ain't like it used to be.

B: Have the winters changes? Did the winters used to be worse do you think?

W: Well some is and some ain't. It's like in cycles. Huh?

B: We were talkin about that today.

W: Now, I remember way before I was married, we had them bad winters..snow all ..as high as fences..but you don't have the snow like you did anymore..we haven't had snow.. all we've had one or two good snows but used to, you had plenty of snow, all the time. But we haven't had that. But we've had rain instead. Now this spring we had all rain..

B: Yeah. and in the summertime...

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W: Then this summer everything's a-dyin.

B: Does the rain affect the oyster business? At all?

E: If you don't have much drain, you have poor oysters. They don't get fat.

B: Why?

E: I don't know. It takes so much fresh water for them. If you have a real dry summer, in the fall you have poor oysters. Takes them a while...

W: It helps one way then it's good in another..

E: But when you have it dry like that usually you have a big spat, see, you know, a lot of baby oysters..when the water's salty. Fresher water you get....

B: Oh, that's right, Fred Guy was tellin me about seein oh, now, I don't think I can explain it...a...spat? that's a lot of little baby ones ...

W: Yeah, that's right...

B: He said he'd been seein a lot of them lately...It that because it's dry?

E: Usually happens...it happens better when it's dry.

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B: I wonder why?

E: I don't know.

B: How do you learn....Now, you've got to go out on your boat...or were going out on your boat every day, dright? How do you learn to read the weather? What kinds of

signs do you....?

E: I read a barometer a lot..

B: And what does that tell you? I mean I know it rises and falls, but what's that mean?

E: When it goes down to stay, you can look but it's gonna <unintelligible text>. When it goes up you gonna have east winds from the east. When it's down it's norwestern.

W: When you see all them goats on that island come on this side, you gonna have...

E: You can tell over time it's gonna rain. It's a load of goats on that island across ...

B: Oh, there are goats?

W: Yeah...yeah...

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E: They don't come on this side until it's gonna rain. If they come like today, you look in a day or two or two you're gonna have a blow or rain or snow or something...

B: Why?

E: I don't know but you ain't got to get the weather map, you can look at them.. They come out there. They cry..they cry just like a baby...come on this side. You don't never see em when the weather's pretty like this...just when it's gonna get bad.

B: Do you think it's cause the bad weather's comin from that side and they're trying...seein protection...

E: I guess so..but they'll move to this side. They know it ahead of time too. They don't come when it's <unintelligible text> they come....

(They don't swim across, just down to the shore)

W: No, just to shore.

E: And they don't come until a day or two before it happens.

B: Oh, that's...that far ahead.

E: Yeah..You can look at them and tell.

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B: Oh, that's...that's fascinating...How do they know that far ahead?

E: I don't know, but you can ask anybody on here and if you stay long enough you'll see it.
s W: Yes Sirree..

B: And they say too that as far as a week ahead of time, that the crabs will anticipate, is that right?

E: Easter or something, crabs and stuff'll drop right off when the wind comes through (?).
Fish, everything, all over the Bay it (?)

B: It's like they know it before..

E: Before it, yeah.

B: Hm, they're smart, aren't they? How bout the birds? Can you tell about the birds, anything?

E: Not much...

(I can tell you in the wintertime, with me, I kinda mark the starlings, when they start whoopin, great big flocks of em, there's always a change in weather.

B: Whatever, it's a change in some direction or the other. Now, You have martins here on the island, right? When do they leave? Do they...

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(Anytime, now.)

B: Oh, is that right?

(That's when the mosquitos will come.)

Oh...I carry my spray with me everywhere.

(All we need is three or four rains, now, and the martins to leave.)

And then the mosquitos...

(Then you'll need two cans of spray..but,. one in each hand.)

E: Where I was last night, we had heavy rains, from bout o'clock yesterday..it was heavy for half hour or forty five minutes like a flood...we had four hours rain

though, two till bout six..over on the Virginia side.

B: Oh, oh...none of it came over here.

(No, it sure didn't)

W: No, no..

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E: Thunder and lightning, blowed trees down and everything up there.

B: So, have you ever had, either of you now, have either of you ever had experiences on the water that were particularly frightening?

E: Me, I've done it all..I've sunk, I've been on boats been afire.

B: Tell me about it. Tell me, really.

E: One time I worked on one of those ssailboats, skipjack, and we were right up by the Bay Bridge, up at Annapolis, and me and my brother-in-law was on there, we were reefin(?) sails, you know, it started breezin up and we dropped the sail down. When we dropped the sail, it went across the stovepipe to the ...we hoisted that back up and the smoke got to boilin out there, I said well that stove, we'll look like one of them ships goin up the Bay. We looked down there...we were afire.

B: The sail or the boat?

E: The boat was afire. And we had all of our clothes. We were up there to work then. You didn't come home but ever other week. And uh, we went back there and this old man, he was nearly a hundred..he was sixty five year old when he hadd this boat built..now he dredge with her (?)

(ninety seven)

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Ninety seven, now, but he drudged her till way in his seventies. And he looked down there and he said "I hope Christ me kill me, we're afire.....and all the fire extinguishers was behind the fire..and (>>>?) it was rainin and blowin. It wudn't no boats nowheres around us...and we were a light(?) blaze. We got bailing water. We finally got it out. We had to jump down there and throw part of our bed things overboard. And there we were up the Bay and had to stay aboard two weeks with no more clothes..no nothin..

B: Oh my.

E: And then one time, we sunk, we..

B: In your boat...

E: No, it was with somebody else. The ice had cut a buoy down. And the Coast Gaurd, instead of puttin a buoy right by the old one, they put the new buoy inside of the old one. And we steered for the new one you went right over top of the old one. We ripped that twenty seven foot bottom...down we went. Coast Gaurd paid for it.

B: I guess, I guess.

E: You sue the government, you have to get your Congressman to get a bill through, you know you can't sue the government unless you get a Congressman to put a bill through the Congress to give y ou the privilege to sue the government.

B: Is that right? No, I didn't know it.

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E: But, you can get it done. It got paid for but it was a time.

B: What Congressman was that?

E: I don't know...what Congressman was that.

B: How long did it take?

E: Took two to three years to get it..But finally got it.

(Tell her your experience in a snow blizzard)

W: Huh....

B: What happened?

W: I was on my up the Bay with a load of oysters. a-carryin em to a feller..feller to Rock Hall and I got up here almost to Barn Island and it started snowin on me, breezin up. And first thing you know the wind got so hard on me, I decided to turn around, and I was goin to Patuxent. Make a harbor, you know. And, so, when I went to turn her my rudder broke..there I was in the middle of the Bay with no rudder.. in a snow blizzard. Fifty...registered fifty five mile. So I had to rig me a jib. I took some blankets..Had no sails on em then...and I rigged...