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TMP-032

Interviewee: Kevin Godsey

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: July 11, 2014

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Kevin Godsey in Onemo, Virginia on July 11, 2014 at 3:10 P.M. Mr. Godsey, can you please state your full name?

G: I'm Kevin Godsey.

T: And when were you born?

G: March 9, 1972.

T: Where were you born?

G: In Hampton, but from Mathews right here.

T: And what were your parents' names and occupations?

G: Gloria Godsey and Jimmy Godsey; he was a commercial waterman.

T: And your mother was a homemaker?

G: Yes, ma'am.

T: Do you have any brothers or sisters?

G: One brother, Jamie.

T: Okay. What does he do?

G: Works at NASA.

T: NASA? Okay, and as for you? What is your occupation?

G: Commercial waterman.

T: And how did you get involved in that?

G: Father done it. Both grandfathers done it. All the great-grandfathers done it, so, just decided to do it, too.

T: Is that how far back it goes, to your great-grandparents?

G: Probably before that, I'm not sure.

T: Well, we can start way back there then. What do you know about your great-grandparents?

G: My great-great-great was on the property here about a quarter of a mile that way and all this was the one plantation. And my great-grandfather married a Yankee and he wasn't too happy about it, so he made them build the house which was right over there which was on the far corner of the property to try to get her away far as he could from him [Laughter].

T: [Laughter]. What year was that, do you know?

G: 'Round late 1800's.

T: What do you know about them as people? Any stories passed down?

G: Just commercial waterman and that's about most I remember.

T: What do you fish specifically?

G: Mainly crab, but some fish also.

T: Do you know anything about the way your great-grandparents crabbed or fished or the boats they had, anything like that?

G: Yup! Know all the boats and stuff. They run a lot of freight more than fishin.' Run watermelons to Baltimore, crabs to Baltimore, so from Carolina to Baltimore.

T: From Carolina?

G: Uh-huh. They went to Carolina and got watermelons a lot and run to Baltimore.

T: Where in Carolina did they get watermelons?

G: I'm not sure.

T: Just there?

G: Uh-huh.

T: Did they ever tell you anything about Baltimore?

G: No, not really.

T: No? Okay. So you know the boats then?

G: Uh-huh.

T: Can you walk me through the boats?

G: The *Wanda*, the *Beryl Marie*, the ***Delvin Cay***, and I'm not sure.

T: Okay, what's the difference between those three?

G: All of 'em are deck boats. They actually got big 'ol freight boats. They got bigger as the years went by.

T: Uh-huh. Were they all made locally?

G: Mathews, Gloucester, I believe one of them was Deltaville.

T: Deltaville?

G: Uh-huh.

T: Do you know who made them? Or like the Diggsses maybe?

G: Bony Diggs and a group built the *Beryl Marie* down here. The ***Delvin Cay*** was Francis Smith **McGee**. And the *Wanda* was a Price, I believe, in Deltaville.

T: Okay, do you happen to know a lot about those boat builders? Did you parents or grandparents build relationships with them?

G: Not that I know of.

T: What does it mean to have a boat from a specific person?

G: This area always had a big name for boats and bein' a little bit stronger and built out of heavier stuff.

T: Was it a local pride thing?

G: Uh-huh.

T: Great, okay. So you talked a little about your great-grandparents. Were your grandparents part of your life?

G: Somewhat. I knew three of 'em and two of 'em died when I was probably 'bout eight, and the other one died when I was 'bout eighteen.

T: So they were part of your upbringing. Two men, I'm assuming, were alive?

G: One.

T: One man was alive?

G: Uh-huh.

T: And he was a waterman?

G: Uh-huh.

T: What did he teach you or talk to you about?

G: He actually probably died when I was 'bout seven or eight, so.

T: Do you remember anything specific about him?

G: Not a lot, no.

T: What about your two grandmas?

G: She died within a month of him so I don't remember her a lot. The other one died when I was 'bout eighteen and she lived right over here, so I seen her a lot when I was growin' up.

T: Were y'all close?

G: Um-hm. Made a lot of homemade rolls. [Laughter]

T: Homemade rolls? [Laughter] Okay! I appreciate that. Did they ever tell you stories about Mathews, in general?

G: No, not really.

T: No?

G: Unh-uh.

T: Hmm, interesting. Did they ever teach you any kind of, like, songs or even your parents, any like specific things you would want to know going onto the water?

G: Just probably grow up workin' with my father and more or less watchin' and learnin' as much as bein' told.

T: So that's his teaching style.

G: Um-hm, yeah.

T: So when you were growing up and learning it what was - did you have trouble with anything in particular? Anything challenging to you?

G: Not really, just tagged along. Probably started goin' on the boat when I was 'bout six, seven, eight years old. Just grew up in it, learnin' and watchin'.

T: When did you consider yourself independent from your father?

G: I probably crabbed some on my own when I was about thirteen or fourteen.

T: And that was kind of the moment for you?

G: Somewhat. Then after I graduated I went pretty much totally on my own in the summertime. And we worked together in the winter.

T: Did you graduate from Mathews High School?

G: Um-hm.

T: What was that like for you, Mathews High School?

G: Easy, country, school. [Laughter]

T: Did you try really hard at school? Or were you kinda . . .

G: Just went through the motions [Laughter].

T: Okay [Laughter] probably haven't thought about high school in a while huh?

G: No, I kinda went through the motions.

T: Do you have children now?

G: Nope.

T: Okay, you don't, okay. Was there anything special about Mathews High School that you wouldn't see at any other high school?

G: Friend of mine told me a four or five months ago—neither one of us had never paid attention—but another kid from another school come here and told him he couldn't believe there was a cow pasture across from the school. And we grew up never paid any attention to it. [Laughter]

T: [Laughter] It's hard when you're from a place to judge it, right?

G: Yeah.

T: Well, that's a good question then. So, how does being from Mathews help you judge other places?

G: Just growin' up here didn't know any different, just—

[Interruption in interview]

T: So, you went to elementary school and middle school here too, right?

G: Um-hm. Yup.

T: Which ones?

G: Lee Jackson, then intermediate school was Thomas Hunter, and then the high school.

T: What do you, I know this is, like, a long time ago, but what do you remember about elementary school and middle school?

G: Not a lot. [Laughter] Must not have been very impressive [Laughter].

T: So nothing about teachers, or recess?

G: No, no

T: School bus?

G: No, no.

T: Okay, so I'll switch back to the other track then. So how is Mathews different from Gloucester?

G: Just smaller and easier goin,' I'd say.

T: Really?

G: Um-hm.

T: Okay, do you have a relationship with Gloucester waterman?

G: I know a few.

T: Yeah? What is that like?

G: We just talk back and forth and see what's goin' on in Gloucester, what's goin' on here, and keep up with prices, and stuff like that.

T: Are the prices different there?

G: Sometimes, it can be.

T: Higher or lower?

G: Sometimes it can be higher over there 'cause there's more competition. More buyin' competition.

T: Oh, okay. So are you more likely to go over there to sell things?

G: I actually sell most of mine in Richmond.

T: Richmond, okay. So you drive up there?

G: Um-hm, yup.

T: Maybe it would be best if you walk me through a day of what you do.

G: Get up about 3:30, leave here in about ten minutes, get in the boat about a quarter to four, crab till around 11:00, 11:30, carry some crabs to Gwynn's Island which is a pickin' house, and then come home. And Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday, I go to Richmond to carry crabs to seven different stores up there. The other afternoons, just work on gear and get stuff ready for the next day.

T: Are they the same places in Richmond that your parents and grandparents—?

G: No, just me.

T: Just you?

G: Um-hm.

T: Where did your parents take crabs and fish?

G: They sold pretty much everything local.

T: Locally, okay.

G: Um-hm.

T: And why did you decided not to do that?

G: Just more money. Skip the middleman and go straight to the stores.

T: Gotcha, gotcha. So when you talk to other waterman or people in Gloucester, where do you do that at?

G: On the phone.

T: On the phone, it's all on the phone?

G: Yeah.

T: I noticed the Wawa is pretty active with Guineamen.

G: [Laughter] Is that right?

T: And I was like, what's going on, guys? But I don't want to—you know. So that's good to know. So why did you chose crab over fish?

G: I still fish too, but crab's pretty steady all summer. Fish can be up and down, just pretty steady all summer. I fish when we have a run of fish, when fish come through, spot come through in September, October, then rockfish in February.

T: How did that change your work pattern?

G: Actually, the crab market kinda slows up in September and October after Labor Day, so it's kinda good to jump into somethin' else, too.

T: Okay, absolutely. And you kind of know when that's gonna happen?

G: Yeah, after Labor Day it kinda starts—the crab market slows up.

T: Okay, interesting. So this is a really broad question, so take your time with it: how has the market and the practice changed between your grandparents' generation and yours?

G: They didn't fish a lot of pots. Well, actually in the [19]40s is when they first started gettin' pots. And they didn't have hardly any regulations. Back then they had a lot of other things to do, too, beside stick to crabbing: they'd go oysterin'—which oysterin' in the last few years has started comin' back some, which is a good thing. They might set seventy-five, eighty pots then and we'll set three to four hundred or more today, and if it's a rig with three or four people they might set twelve hundred pots today. And that's changed a lot.

T: Wow. What about the actual practice of it?

G: The crab pot we use today is pretty much identical to the one they developed in the [19]40s. Well, [19]30s, I believe.

T: Okay, [19]30s. Was that the one your grandparents used then?

G: Uh-huh. And they use a lot of trotline also besides pots.

T: All right. How 'bout the economy? I know that it's, for waterman, the height was like in the [19]60s and [19]70s and then it went back down? I've heard that.

G: They had a lot of oysters—it's different things. Some people made a lot of money on croakers in the [19]40s, then in the [19]50s the croakers disappeared and they lost all that money keep tryin' catch 'em. Oysterin' had become huge in the [19]50s and they all died in the [19]60s. Crabbin', was probably a lot of crabs in the [19]70s through the [19]80s and catch is kinda fallin' off, but the market price has gone up kinda to take care of the amount that we catch. So it's kinda equaled out on that.

T: Okay, does that mean you have to be versatile in the way that you, for example, buy equipment, or does it—'cause it goes decade by decade, that you have to –

G: Not really, I've been usin' the same amount of pots for twenty-five years now doin' the same thing over and over. The catch has been on the decline for probably twenty years now; it's a gradual decline it seems. But the price has been increasin' so it equals out to the same thing, far as amount of money, from what I've seen.

T: So how does the decrease in catch but increase in the profit affect your life?

G: Well, it's easier. Catchin' a few and gettin' a big price is easier than catchin' a lot and gettin' a small price. It's less work handlin' a whole lot less product.

T: So there's room for a commercial waterman in today's economy?

G: Yeah!

T: So the last guy I just talked to said that there are no waterman left in Mathews County.

G: Very few.

T: Very few?

G: I'm forty-two and I'm probably the youngest.

T: Oh, my God.

G: It's a few young ones, but I'm 'bout the youngest.

T: How do you feel about that?

G: If the regulations don't totally take it over and if somebody's willing to do that amount of work in the future, it may be a real good job. But it all depends on the regulations and the water quality, what will happen.

T: How many would you say that there are?

G: In Virginia, it's probably around two thousand license, and there's probably twelve or fifteen hundred of them who are active and that's just a guess.

T: How many in Mathews?

G: In Mathews . . . there's probably thirty active ones, maybe. Maybe. But out of the thirty, if it is thirty, out of the thirty probably fifteen to eighteen are retired people, kinda doin' it as a hobby.

T: To what do you attribute that decline?

G: There's a lot easier jobs to make more money [Laughter].

T: So you feel like your job is hard.

G: It's a lot of hours and a lot of work and some frustrations, but I do it 'cause that's what I really wanna do.

T: Tell me what a frustration is.

G: Right now, we're fightin' crab pots that we cannot keep clean. The water quality, the grass on 'em just grows overnight and we're continuously pressure washin' and tryin' to keep pots clean. That's a big frustration right now. And twenty years ago, we didn't have any trouble with dirty crab pots at all.

T: That's a really interesting frustration that speaks to, like the larger Chesapeake Bay issues of pollution. Does that affect your life?

G: Yeah, I'm sure that's what's causin' the growth of dirtiness on the pots.

T: This may be a touchy question, but does that affect your political beliefs at all?

G: Yeah, see, all you hear is clean the bay clean the bay and it's steady gettin' worse and worse and worse. I just see it as money makin' scheme to clean the bay as a scare tactic to get donations from people to raise money and steal money rather than actually do somethin' about it.

T: So what's the solution?

G: I have no idea. So many people move to the coast that, see, I don't know how you turn that back.

T: So you're talking about come-heres, like retirees and...?

G: Well yeah, but if you look at the whole country everybody moves to all the coast
[Laughter].

T: It's true, it's true. Well, how do you feel about—specifically in Mathews there's a
lot of retired people living here?

G: Yeah, Mathews is the oldest average age in the state I believe by far.

T: That would drive me nuts [Laughter].

G: [Laughter]

T: Well how do you feel about it?

G: It don't bother me. That's fine [Laughter].

T: All right, okay. I mean, it's obviously probably more market for you.

G: Well, I mostly deal out of Mathews, so a little product here but not a lot.

T: So, I know it's a hard job. Why do you stay in it?

G: I don't know anything else [Laughter]. Just born and raised and that's all I really
ever wanted to do. As a kid we played with crab pots just dreamin' about growin'
up and doin' it.

T: Let me try somethin' else. So you crab alone, right?

G: Um-hm, yup.

T: When you're out there alone for six, seven hours, not a lot of Americans do that.
They all work together in, like, giant social environments. So what do you think
about that isolation and what do you think about while you're doing it?

G: Tryin' to get done so I can get home [Laughter].

T: Okay. [Laughter]

G: No, it's peace and quiet and beautiful in this area, so.

T: Yeah, are there any special places in Mathews that you enjoy more than others?

G: Layin' on the sofa [Laughter].

T: [Laughter] Okay, thanks, guy! [Laughter].

G: [Laughter]

T: All right, I meant outside this house? [Laughter].

G: Out in the boat crabbin' I guess, 'bout it.

T: Do you have any special spots that you go to in the boat? Boat is mobile, I'm assuming.

G: Right here in the back yard, in Winter Harbor, in the bay right out here.

T: So you're on the water right there, huh?

G: Yeah, not too far, right through the woods here.

T: Okay. What are the places in Mathews that you know really well that you could navigate?

G: Pretty much all of Mathews.

T: All of Mathews?

G: Um-hm.

T: Are there places that—do you ever go out recreationally?

G: I used to go hook and line fishin' just very rare. I haven't been in three or four years I guess.

T: When you went hook and line fishing, where'd you go?

G: Right in here, Winter Harbor.

T: Are there other fisherman or people that crabbed that use Winter Harbor?

G: No, just me.

T: Just you?

G: Um-hm.

T: So do waterman have their own territories in that—

G: Pretty much, yeah. Most people just have different areas they've always crabbed and that's where they stay at mostly.

T: And your dad and your grandpa used the same area?

G: Um-hm. Worked out of the same river.

T: But, now that there are less waterman, do those territories change a little bit?

G: The only difference we see, we see a few more people come down this way from up north, where they're seein' a whole lot less crabs and we're still seein' a few more here. So a lot more people move down this way now and crab.

T: Do they physically move to Mathews?

G: No—a couple have. But most of 'em drive down.

T: How are they received by people here?

G: Fine.

T: It's fine?

G: Um-hm.

T: This may be a weird question, but what makes Winter Harbor different from any other place?

G: Winter Harbor is very shallow, so that's one reason I probably don't see many people, because you really gotta know where you're goin' to navigate it.

T: Anything else about it that you can describe to us?

G: It has a lot of marsh channels that go through the marshes. A lot of people have explained it like the Everglades or something.' It's a little bit different for this area, to have those ditches goin' off through the marshes.

T: Huh, do you know why that is?

G: Not really, other than Garden Creek, which is another area right over here, that used to drain into Winter Harbor and go out 'cause Garden Creek's channel kept gettin' closed in the bay. The WPA dug a canal from it to Winter Harbor back in the [19]30s, and I'm sure that affected the ditches goin' through the marshes to flow water out of Garden Creek.

T: Interesting, okay. Wow, you really know the history of the actual water really well. How is that—I mean, beyond Winter Harbor, how is that changed over the coast of Mathews?

G: Winter Harbor's changed a lot because the beach washed into it, and that made a big change in the water direction going to and from Garden Creek and made it a whole lot closer, and that changed a lot.

T: What about the rest of Mathews?

G: As?

T: I mean, you mentioned pollution obviously, but how has the waterways—I saw in the paper today that they have condemned waterways, or more of them in Mathews now.

G: Yeah, yeah. I think Winter Harbor, mainly the only place that's condemned is right in front of a marina and I think they have to condemn an area that's that close to a marina.

T: Do you use that marina?

G: No, maybe a few times a year when the tide is extremely low and I can't get from the dock that I tie up at.

T: So which boat is your boat right now, or do you have multiples?

G: I have two but I use a twenty-foot **probateir** skiff right now. I had big boats, but I downsized to skiff. A whole lot more economical. A lot of people have gotten away from the bigger boats and gone to skiffs. A lot cheaper to operate.

T: Why is that?

G: With the big boat, you could easily burn thirty, forty gallons of fuel a day and I could burn four or five gallons a day in a skiff.

T: Wow. Do they have names?

G: Not the skiffs, no.

T: Not the skiffs?

G: Unh-uh.

T: Okay, this is stupid, but why is that? They're too small?

G: I guess. Most everybody's never really named skiffs. They just name the bigger boats.

T: What was the name of the last big boat you had?

G: *Longshot.*

T: *Longshot?*

G: Um-hm.

T: What happened to *Longshot*?

G: Sold it to somebody in Cape Charles.

T: Can you describe to me what it looked like?

G: It was a thirty-six foot fiberglass boat built from Glass Marine which was over near Guinea.

T: Anything particular about it that you can remember?

G: It was a big boat; thirty-six foot. It was wide and deep. And **it got so** I just used it for rockfishin' and the government has cut us back every year for about fifteen years. Didn't justify keepin' it anymore.

T: So the two skiffs that you use, how did you choose those?

G: Just needed a smaller skiff that didn't draw a lot of water for Winter Harbor to get in and out. Really couldn't go much bigger and draw too much water, and that kinda suited my needs.

T: I mean, this is like the fourth time you've mentioned regulation so I'm gonna ask you about it. What regulations and how have they affected your life?

G: They put a lot of regulations on us that really don't make any sense. Lot a regulation they put on us, they don't enforce. And if you abide by the regulation it kinda hurts you and you see so many other people that don't abide by it and really don't get forced to abide by it and a lot of the federal stuff is bein' passed down to us now which really hurts.

T: Can you tell me which ones—I really don't know anything about this. So which ones are those?

G: The federal government controls rockfish and now they're gettin' ready to take over the croaker and spot and eel, which I do a little bit of all three. And kinda scared; don't know what they're goin' to do to it.

T: What do they usually—what's the history of federal regulation with you?

G: With the rockfish, I started catching rockfish with tags about fifteen, eighteen years ago, and I'm probably allowed about a fourth now of the catch that I was then. Every now and then, they'll give you a little bit back then the next time they'll take more. They gave us about fifteen percent this year and goin' take about thirty percent away next year.

T: Wow. So when did regulations start affecting your work?

G: Probably 'bout fifteen years ago, was when they started just continuously passin' **'em.**

T: What was the motive behind that as you see it?

G: Crabs have been gettin' scarcer and scarcer and scarcer. They just keep passin' regulations and regulations and nothin' really seems to make any changes, far as the amount of crabs we have.

T: [Laughter]

G: And it's just kinda frustrating to see that [Laughter]. When they keep passin' stuff and passin' stuff and nothin' really changes.

T: Yeah, yeah that is really sad. Do you attribute that to people that disobey the law?

G: Naw, not really. Unh-uh.

T: So who's in charge of enforcing it and why don't they enforce it?

G: The marine police from V.M.R.C. enforce it. But we hardly ever see one. I'm not sure. [Laughter]

T: [Laughter] Have you ever had any interaction with them at all?

G: Once. It wasn't as far as bad; got it straight easy.

T: Do you feel comfortable talking about it?

G: Yeah, yeah.

T: What happened?

G: We were fishing rock nets and the last net we fished—we went on a twenty-foot skiff and had about three thousand pound of fish and the last net we fished had a lot of grass which released a lot of water in the boat. And the rockfish are alive and you would have these tags you have to put through the mouth and through the gills and hook it on each fish. We finished the last net; we run about a quarter mile to get the water out of the boat to tag the fish. And after we got the water out the boat, we cut the engine off, was driftin', taggin' the fish. The marine police come along and wrote us a ticket, confiscated the fish, sold the fish, give the state about three thousand dollars of our money because we didn't tag the fish at the net. The law said, place of capture, and we went to court the judge agreed, place of capture is a very large area; it didn't mean at the net, so of course they threw it out of court.

T: Wow, but your fish are still gone.

G: We got paid for 'em. The state paid us.

T: So is three thousand dollars an exceptional catch or is that—

G: Rock fish we might catch six, seven, eight thousand a day. But it's a very short-lived time. We have caught our quota in two or three days before, and be done for the year on it.

T: Wow. Is that what you look to be doing so that you can kind of adjust the hours you have to work after?

G: Usually, I **don't** do it in February and really don't have anything else goin' on.

T: So, it's about a dollar a pound basically for rockfish.

G: We got last year as high is \$4.50 and probably as cheap as \$2.75.

T: Wow, oh my gosh, that's amazing. Does that compare to crabbing?

G: It's a small percentage of what I make per year, but it's a whole lot more money in a short period of time.

T: That's what I was thinkin'. So does that allow you to, like, economically save up money over a period of time or a period of years?

G: Rockfishin' is nice in the spring 'cause you're gettin' ready to spend a lot of money on gear to go crabbin' so comes in handy that time of year.

T: It's very seasonal, I'm noticing. Do you enjoy that kind of work where is changes every few months?

G: Yeah, I **after a** while I get tired of what I'm doin' and ready for somethin' else.

T: Are you fixin' to get tired of that and move on to somethin' else?

G: In the same occupation just different **pranks**.

T: So what're you thinking?

G: Well, in September I'll start eelin' and fishin,' too. It's the same stuff, just get tired of crabbin' and just change things up a little bit.

T: I thought you meant you were career changing.

G: No, no, no, no, no.

T: Okay, so this is it right here?

G: Plannin' on it.

T: Okay, that's really great. So your grandfather passed it down to your father who passed it down to you. Do you have people that you plan to pass it on down to?

G: No, not really.

T: So you're it?

G: Probably so.

T: For your family.

G: Probably so.

T: So what're some fond memories you have of fishing or crabbing with your dad?

G: Well, back in crab dredging in the late [19]80s early [19]90s, just kept the limit was twenty-five barrel which was seventy-five baskets and sometimes we'd catch that in a couple hours. It was kinda neat to get to see that many crabs that fast.

T: [Laughter] That's pretty cool. Do you have any specific moments that stick out to you when you think weird things that happened or, like, good learning moments, that kinda thing?

G: I was caught in some bad weather a couple of times.

T: Oh really? What happened?

G: Probably about seventy-five mile an hour winds in the storm, washin' windows out of **pilot** houses and the boats that was around us and stuff.

T: Wow. How'd you guys make it through?

G: Fine.

T: Well, how did you do it?

G: We were just in a bigger boat, lucky that day. [Laughter].

T: [Laughter] Fair enough. It also seems to me that a lot of luck is involved sometimes.

G: Yeah, yeah.

T: How do you feel about that?

G: I try not to say I'm superstitious, but I guess I am a little bit.

T: How are you superstitious?

G: I really don't care to have any blue on the boat.

T: Blue on the boat?

G: Not gonna start anything new on Friday [Laughter].

T: [Laughter]. Well, tell me all the superstitions. That is super interesting.

G: Well, I wouldn't say I'm superstitious, but I'm definitely not gonna start anything new on a Friday.

T: New on a Friday?

G: Yup.

T: Did you say blue?

G: I really don't want anything blue on the boat.

T: What is that about?

G: I have no idea. It's just always been the case.

T: Is that your dad's thing too?

G: Just been hearin' about it my whole life, everything.

T: Interesting.

G: There's a lot of older people who are even extremely more superstitious 'bout that. No black lunchboxes on the boat [Laughter].

T: Well, tell me about that. What do old people do that you don't do?

G: I really don't carry any lunch so I didn't have to worry about the black lunchbox so [Laughter] like I say I'm definitely not gonna start anything on Friday. [Laughter]

T: [Laughter] Okay. Do they do things differently than you do, the older guys?

G: What, today or back then?

T: Either.

G: Not really.

T: No?

G: Nope.

T: Do they believe things that you don't believe?

G: No, not really. They kinda pass down their knowledge so you kinda go along and believe what they have learned.

T: Anything else on that avenue?

G: No.

T: Okay. What's your relationship like with the older guys?

G: Fine. I talk to 'em several times a day, most of 'em around here.

T: Yeah? On the phone? That kind of thing?

G: Um-hm.

T: Do you ever see each other physically?

G: Oh yeah, yeah.

T: Like on the water, or?

G: Um-hm.

T: Do you, like, go say hi, or do you—

G: Talk on the phone, or something couple times a mornin' to some of 'em.

T: So are the kind of territories enforced between watermen? Like if you decided to go into your friend's—?

G: No, not really. It's kinda weird how different people are just in different areas and it kinda works out.

T: So it just happened that way?

G: Yeah, it just happens that way. It's kinda weird.

T: That is weird. I wonder why that is.

G: [Laughter] I don't know but it is kinda weird how different people just have different areas they've always crabbed. In the springtime when we have our run—we call it run: a group of females come through here—it's more everybody's in the same area. But startin' into May, first of June everybody kinda goes to the place they gonna be for the summer.

T: So in spring everybody's—

G: Kind of all together.

T: Is that like a social thing? I mean, you don't do it for social purposes, but do you end up seeing people more?

G: Yeah, everybody comes in one area to crab in the springtime.

T: Okay, okay interesting. So your family's been on this land for a really long time, right?

G: Somewhere between 'round three hundred years right here.

T: Three hundred years right here?

G: Um-hm.

T: The last name Godsey?

G: It was Hudgins before Godsey.

T: Hudgins, okay.

G: Of course.

T: I was like, oh.

G: [Laughter]

T: So about three hundred years of this—

G: This is family land we're on right here.

T: What does it mean to be a land owner in Mathews or even Onemo?

G: Taxes keep goin' up, might not wanna be [Laughter].

T: Well, does land have value to you?

G: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

T: What kind of value?

G: Need more of it for more peace and quiet [Laughter].

T: Okay [Laughter]. What does it mean to be a Hudgins?

G: Not a lot 'cause I've always been Godsey. Not really thought about the Hudgins part that much.

T: Are there a lot of Godseys around here?

G: No, not at all.

T: Not at all?

G: Unh-uh.

T: Why is there not a lot of Godseys?

G: It was thirteen of my grandparents; my grandfather had twelve siblings, so thirteen, but most of them were girls. And the other few boys moved away to different areas, so I'm probably the last Godsey in this area from that family.

T: Wow. Do you feel okay about that?

G: Yeah, yeah.

T: So this land, how have you seen it change over time?

G: Some may say the water level's risin', but to me it seems the land is sinking instead of the water level rising. Which is kinda crazy sounding, but it doesn't take any storm at all anymore and everything's covered with water down here. And just in my time, when I was a kid, very rare we ever saw water come on the land from tide here.

T: Wow. I mean, what do you think about that?

G: If it continued to do it a hundred years from now, it wouldn't be inhabitable right here. Not even a hundred years, maybe fifty.

T: Considering how much you care about this land, how do you feel about that?

G: It's kinda sad that it's gonna turn into that. But again, I have no idea how you reverse somethin' like that.

T: It's true, I mean, you see it as inevitable.

G: Um-hm, yeah.

T: Well, how about the buildings around in Onemo? I'm saying that right, right?

G: Um-hm, yeah. They needed one more post office, so they called it One Mo and they started pronouncin' it Onemo.

T: Really? [Laughter]

G: Um-hm, yeah [Laughter].

T: That's interesting.

G: Yup, that's where it comes from.

T: What's different about Onemo that's different than in other places in Mathews?

G: Not a lot. I mean, it's changed tremendously, 'cause when I was a kid you went anywhere you wanted to at any time on anybody's land 'cause you knew everybody. And now it's a lot of strangers I have no idea who they are, which is probably fine, but when I was a kid I just knew everybody. Pretty much done went wherever you wanted to anytime you wanted to go there.

T: So when you were a kid you did a lot of exploring?

G: Yeah, stayed in the woods, stayed in the yard, stayed everywhere outta the house.

T: What was that like?

G: Fun. Had to beg us to come in the house for dinnertime [Laughter]. Eat real quick and go back out.

T: How much of this land is Onemo? What percentage of this is?

G: What do you mean?

T: I'm tryin' to say this right. So Onemo, what percentage of Onemo is this land? Is this like a large amount of the P.O. district?

G: Not really. The original plantation was a tremendous amount of **[inaudible]**, but not anymore.

T: Just curious, how do you know that your family's been around for three hundred years?

G: Through research, and—

T: Oh, you do research?

G: I guess the tombstone down there is probably, I think it's in 1800s. Just through research online.

T: So genealogy's important to you?

G: Um-hm, yeah.

T: Do you find that it usually jives pretty well with what your parents and grandparents told you about your family?

G: Um-hm.

T: What did your parents and grandparents tell you about your family that maybe you wouldn't have heard online?

G: The only thing different that I really found through them was through the family Bible about—which probably leads back to when the Yankee was put on the corner, because my grandfather's brother was killed at Gettysburg and I never knew that until I read it in the family's Bible, which I'm sure was part of the hatred towards the Yankee the reason they were built out here. [Laughter]

T: That's insane.

G: [Laughter]

T: Wow, wow. Did you ever find anything that goes back to the Revolution or before or anything like that?

G: Yeah, some, but I haven't researched it a lot, myself yet.

T: Why is it important to you?

G: It was in Edwards, I believe, off Gwynn's Island, was kin to me was in the Revolutionary War.

T: Oh yeah, Gwynn's Island was a major battle right?

G: Um-hm.

T: So why is it important to you to research your family?

G: I've just always loved history as a kid; you can see some of the stuff in here. You can see the oyster cans up there from years gone by. They sit on top of the—I didn't know if you'd seen them, on top of the cabinets in there. See all the oyster cans?

T: Oh, wow!

G: They're all oyster cans from different oyster houses back in . . . some of 'em are a hundred years old, all of 'em are at least thirty years old probably.

T: Where'd you get 'em from?

G: Just started collecting them about twenty years ago. Just bought 'em different places.

T: That's cool. Do you have any heirlooms and things like that from your parents and grandparents?

G: Some stuff, yeah.

T: Yeah, like what?

G: Got a lot of ol' paperwork and stuff from the boats, keeping logs on the boats and just artifacts they've caught over the years.

T: Okay, that's great, that's great. And they catch artifacts?

G: Yeah, like a little soapstone Madonna, if you see it over there.

T: What? That was in the river?

G: That was in the bay. My dad caught it probably in the [19]50s.

T: That is weird.

G: Oh it is. It's . . . amazing the condition and stuff, the blue in the eyes.

T: What?

G: Um-hm.

T: And you can see where it was under water.

G: Yeah, yeah.

T: Wow, that's really incredible. Is that what from the projectile points are from?

G: Another guy actually gave those to me that had picked them up in this area years and years ago.

T: What's the most interesting thing you've ever found in the water?

G: Probably don't even have it down here. Caught a deadeye. I don't know if you know what a deadeye is? A deadeye is a wooden block that was used on **breaking up of** old schooners and stuff like that. Caught one of them. Caught this 'ol—forgot the name—some type of prehistoric **whale**.

T: What? Oh, my gosh. And you just pulled that up? [Laughter].

G: In the Potomac River, I caught this hatchet.

T: Oh, my gosh.

G: There's a lot of stuff in here. [Laughter].

T: Wow, we should talk about this later. I used to do Native American history.

G: By the time we switch the –

T: Yeah, totally! That's out of control. Why do you keep this stuff?

G: I just love old history stuff like that.

T: Yeah? It's really cool that you get to physically hold the objects that you come up with and they're yours now.

G: Um-hm, um-hm.

T: That's really interesting. What're you going to do with 'em? Just keep 'em?

G: Just keep 'em and let 'em collect dust I guess. [Laughter]

T: [Laughter] Fair enough fair enough. I did wanna ask if you had heard any folk tales from the old guys or things like that, maybe about the flood in [19]33 or anything really. The Guineamen have some crazy ones.

G: Back to my great-grandfather, he was losing his mind at the time of the flood, and when the water started comin' in the house he tol' my grandfather to pay him up; he could not keep a man on a sinkin' ship [Laughter].

T: Oh, my god. That is so dark [Laughter]. That's a great one. That's a great one. Do you have any other ones like that that you could share? How was World War II, Vietnam, Cold War?

G: No, not really. Most my ancestors . . . at the time, I guess it was my great uncle, he was drafted with the family boat. They drafted the boat and the uncle to be in

the war. And send 'em off the Carolina coast with the family boat to patrol from German submarines.

T: In a boat that's made for fishing?

G: Um-hm, the family boat. Yeah, they drafted the boat and him.

T: Wow. What did that do to the family?

G: Kinda shut down their fishing for a while. [Laughter]

T: One might think [Laughter].

G: Send him in the ocean off of Carolina with a pistol to look for submarines.

T: Wow, that's incredible. This is a longshot, but were you ever told any ghost stories about Mathews anything about the fires, things like that as a kid?

G: Just hear about Old House Woods. I don't know if you've heard of an Old House Woods.

T: I have heard about Old House Woods, but please tell me your version of Old House Woods.

G: Just hear about this schooner comin' over there at the edge of dark and droppin' the chain in the woods and they climb down the chain to go check on their treasure or bury more treasure in the woods.

T: Interesting.

G: And they'd come steal peoples' horses right outta their lot and ride 'em up and down the road at night.

- T: [Laughter] I haven't heard that one actually. So who told you those stories?
- G: It was kinda just common knowledge. You hear people talkin' about it. There really wasn't anybody that just sat down and told me. You just hear people talkin' about it growin' up.
- T: Anything else like that that's just common knowledge that you might be assuming I know or something like that?
- G: No, not really.
- T: Are there any other anecdotes you want to share about your family, or being a waterman?
- G: One thing I like about Winter Harbor that's kinda sad to me: it's so many little points and guts and ditches all have names, and I'm probably one of the last one that will know those names. And when I die all those names will be gone. And I guess it's foolishness, but it's kinda sad to me that all those places were named for some reason and they will soon be forgotten.
- T: Please tell me all the names.
- G: You've got Tom Peg's Channel, **Marybeck** Channel, Shelly Bank Hole, Oyster Prone Gut, Toothache Point, Baytree Point, Devil's Woodyard, Jim Joe's Landin,' it just goes on and on and on.
- T: Do you know any of the stories behind any?
- G: Toothache Point: my whole life it was a point and it had like a little hold behind it and you kinda thought maybe it was a cavity. The reason they call it toothache:

well, about five years ago I got a tape of a lady that interviewed a man that died, he was probably in his nineties and died in mid [19]80s. They interviewed him and asked him about the last Indians that lived in this area that he remembered hearin' about. And he said that his grandmother told him, the last group of Indians lived on Toothache Point in the creek. And she asked him why was it named Toothache Point and he said because there was a lot of toothache trees, according to the Indians, that grew on that point. And that's how it got the name Toothache Point.

T: Any other places that you can—

G: And actually I went to that point duck huntin' about two years ago and found about seven arrowheads right on that point right there.

T: Really? Wow, that's amazing. Do you know any of the other stories behind the names or any other names you want to share?

G: Tom Peg's Channel supposedly was a man named Tom Peggy that dug that channel to get more water flowin' over his oyster beds. Devil's Woodyard supposedly somebody saw a devil splitin' wood in that area one day and named it Devil's Woodyard [Laughter].

T: That's real cool. [Laughter]

G: Shelly Bank Hole: there's a lot of shells on the shore there. Supposedly that's where the Indians shucked oysters and threw the shells there, is where it got the name Shelly Bank. **All mouth of the** harbor is just a ditch now and supposedly that was the original entrance to the creek. Everywhere has a name in here.

T: Is there anything else you want to—I mean this is loaded obviously, but is there anything else you want to share that might not get passed down that you want on the record?

G: No, not really, that's probably about it.

T: I can conclude if you're good with that.

G: Yup, that's fine.

[End of interview]

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