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-May 2015

TMP-033

Interviewee: John Bateman

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

July 13, 2014

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing John Bateman on July 13, 2014 at 12:10 P.M.
in Port Haywood, Virginia. Mr. Bateman, can you please state your full name?

JB: John William Bateman.

T: Okay, and when were you born?

JB: May the thirty-first, 1919.

T: Okay. What were your parents' names and occupations?

JB: My father was in the insurance business. That was Percy A. Bateman. My
mother was Maude Callis Bateman.

T: Okay. Callis. Is that a name from around here?

JB: Yes, her grandfather was born here. She was born in Middlesex.

T: Okay, and where were you born?

JB: Baltimore.

T: Baltimore. So where did you grow up?

JB: In Baltimore.

T: In Baltimore.

JB: Went to school there.

T: Okay. So how long did you live in Baltimore for?

JB: Well, until I left for the navy, which was in 1941.

T: So you're a World War II vet.

JB: Yes.

T: Okay. Did you want to talk about that a little bit?

JB: Well, I went in the navy as a pilot at Corpus Christi, Texas. And then from there I went to Hawaii, was there for several months till I got in a P.B.Y. squadron which was transferred down to the South Pacific. Was in the South Pacific for about eighteen months, and returned to California. That's where I met Pat.

T: Did you see any action while you were in the South Pacific? Obvious question.

JB: Well, we were a patrol squadron. We didn't actually get into combat, but we were looking for the enemy pilots, airplane. Let's see. What else did we do? Air and sea rescue. We had a couple of bombing flights, but I didn't see any of the enemy.

T: Anything stick out about your air and sea rescue missions?

JB: No, actually. It was only about two or three of those that I had anything to do with. I can't think of specifics right now. But nothing that would stand out.

T: Okay, that's fine. I'm guessing that your experience as a pilot in the war influenced your career after.

JB: Well, yeah, after I finished, the war was over. I applied for employment with Pan-American Airways. Didn't work out on the first attempt there, so when we went to Baltimore and lived there for a while, I went and worked for the Glenn L. Martin Company, aircraft manufacturers. I was a draftsman-engineer. I eventually got a letter from Pan-Am that they would employ me. So I went down to Miami, Florida, and that's where I started flying with Pan-Am.

T: Wow. Where in Florida?

JB: Miami. Our flights were mostly to South America. That was where their routes went.

T: Do you remember where you were or what it was like when you learned that the war was over?

JB: Pretty happy about it, I guess.

T: Where were you?

JB: Well, in Alameda, California. Naval Air Station.

T: Mm-hm. What was the celebration like?

JB: Honestly, I don't think we had a celebration.

PB: Can I talk?

T: Sure.

PB: Well, I was working in Oakland, and I had to go back to Alameda because that's where we were living. I couldn't get on a bus to go back because they were so crowded from people celebrating and there wasn't any buses. So I had to walk, which was a long walk. He was mad [Laughter] because I was so long getting—there was no telephone service like you have today. So, he didn't know until I got back. I don't know if I walked all the way home or whether I walked just to Alameda. There was this big tube that you had to go from Oakland in through this tube, and then into Alameda. It was a long walk. So, I mean, there was a lot of celebration going on.

T: That's wonderful. So, where are you from specifically?

PB: California.

T: You're from California. So how did you two meet?

JB: Well, there's a hotel, the Leamington Hotel in Oakland. And they put on dances and we could go on Saturdays. And she was a hostess at the dance, and that's how we met.

PB: In fact, a little thing: it was August the 28th, 194 . . .

JB: Four.

PB: Four. And we bought this house and signed the papers for it August the 28th, 1980. I thought it was kind of interesting, that, 'cause two dates—

T: That's really nice.

PB: This is the happiest place that we've ever been, I think, is right here in Mathews. Love it.

T: That's wonderful. That's wonderful. Did you get married in California?

PB: Mm-hm.

JB: Yes.

T: Yeah? What was your wedding like? I know weddings were different during the wartime period.

PB: What was it like? I don't know. I made my own wedding dress.

T: You did?

PB: Yes, and the reception was at my mother and father's home. And we just had it with family and some people from the navy, and neighbors. That was it. I mean, it wasn't a big, big, big thing.

T: What did you make your own wedding dress out of?

PB: White satin, cost eighteen dollars. And my mother was furious because I spent so much money.

[Laughter]

PB: But you have to realize, in those days, I worked at the Wells-Fargo Bank and I made sixty-five dollars a month.

T: Wow. Yeah.

PB: But then it cost—well, gasoline was fourteen cents a gallon, and to go from Oakland to San Francisco on a train, it was twenty-one cents. Or going from where I lived in Oakland into work in Oakland, it was seven cents. Prices have just gone up since those days.

T: Yeah, wow. So where did you settle after getting married and after leaving the navy?

JB: Well, we first lived in Baltimore, then we settled down in Miami for . . . I don't know, several years. Can't be specific on the dates. Then I was transferred from there to the same branch of Pan-Am. They had a base in Miami, they had one in San Francisco, and then in New York. Those bases, you could move from one to the other depending on where they needed you. So I was transferred to New York flying the same routes I was flying from Miami but we'd fly from Miami to Puerto Rico to New York and back to Miami. Well, the company thought it was more efficient to be based in New York by New York-Puerto Rico, which is what I did for a number of years. We lived in New York for most of the time. That's where we raised our family.

T: What was it like moving to New York from—I mean, you've only lived in big cities your entire lives, it seems like.

JB: Well, in New York 922 Levittown on Long Island; it wasn't a big city. I guess you'd call it big compared to Mathews. But it wasn't really a big city. Levittown—you ever heard of Levittown? Well, that's where we lived.

T: What was that like? Because that was a new concept at the time?

PB: Well, it was interesting because . . . I didn't drive and he would drive to the airport, so there was no transportation for me. And actually, there wasn't really any transportation like we have today going into Levittown. But there was a man who had a big van and it was a grocery store. And he would come through there once or twice a week and you would go out and buy your groceries, whatever you needed from him. Then you had milk delivery, which they would deliver your milk on your porch every day. I don't know. It was interesting. The children were little and they had played with the neighbors' children. They were not in school there, so that was easy.

JB: Rent was fifty dollars a month . . .

T: Sounds nice now.

[Laughter]

JB: Yeah, you could buy the house for about four thousand dollars. If you can believe it, the same house—well, actually, the houses have been remodeled over the years, and the house that we lived in, you would never recognize it. It was just a small . . .

PB: Two bedroom.

JB: Two bedroom, living room, kitchen.

PB: But it did have a washer and dryer. It had a Bendix washer, which was great, because otherwise you had to go to the laundromat or something to wash clothes. That was great, 'cause I had little children.

T: Was Levittown a good place to raise kids?

PB: Oh, yes. Yes. I don't know what it's like today; I mean, everything has changed today. But yeah, it was very nice. Everybody was friendly.

T: Mm-hm. What was it like raising children during the Cold War?

PB: That was, when was that? I think we were living in New York during the era, and I mean, it was all right. We never had any problems with our children in school or other children.

JB: I thought it was fairly normal. I mean, it wasn't a whole lot of difference between when I grew up and when our kids were growing up. They had their friends, 'cept when I was growing up, there were more kids around to play with. We had enough to have baseball teams and football teams, things like that, where are kids, the sports they played were part of the school activity, not make-up games that they played on sandlots that they did when I grew up. So that part was different.

T: Do you see that as kind of a loss between generations or something that—

JB: No, our kids turned out all right. I don't think—they didn't—

T: [Laughter] Yeah. Okay. I wanted to ask you some questions specifically about Mathews, if that's okay. It's for the historical society.

PB: We belong and he was the president at one time.

T: Of the historical society?

JB: Yes.

T: Oh, wow! No wonder you were on the list. So your family—the Callis's, right?—were from Mathews?

JB: Yeah, well, my mother's grandfather was born here. He was a native of Mathews. But he eventually moved to Middlesex County, and that's where my mother and her sister were born, in Middlesex.

T: Why did he move to Middlesex, do you know?

JB: Well, they bought a farm there. They had a plantation, seven hundred-acre farm. And they opened—I don't know if you've heard of—there's Waterview, and there's a little, not a town but a post office named Seamus. That's up the road. You pass by the entrance to the road that goes to Samos. That was the post office that my—it'd be my great-grandfather started. And it had a store and it was right at the end of their lane that came from their house. My grandfather was born there, and that's where the Callis's in Middlesex came from. But our connection to Mathews is through his father, my great-grandfather. So that's where our association with Mathews ended, when he moved away from here.

T: Okay. Did you know your great-grandfather or your grandfather?

JB: Grandfather I knew. My great-grandfather was long gone when I came along.

T: When was your grandfather born?

JB: That's kind of hard to figure.

PB: He wrote a history on his life and there's a book in the library in Mathews on him. I don't know what it's called.

T: Okay. I'll look.

PB: But all that information's in there. It's probably hard to remember all that now.

T: I understand.

JB: I have a book upstairs of my genealogy.

T: Oh, okay. Okay.

JB: And that has all that information in it.

PB: Want me to get it?

T: Oh, no, don't. I just wanted to get a sense of his context, but we can figure it out.

So what was he like as a person?

JB: Who?

T: Your grandfather.

JB: Well, I didn't see much of him. See, he lived in Virginia; we lived in Baltimore.

And when he was getting near the end of age—he was really sick most of the time—he visited us, stayed for about two or three weeks. Was hard to handle, so my aunt, my mother's sister, took care of him at her house. We lived not too far apart, probably five or six miles between our houses. She took care of him as long as she could, and then went back to Virginia and that's where he died.

T: Mm-hm. By hard to handle, do you mean in like the old codger way?

JB: Yeah, that sort of thing. He was set in his ways, yeah.

T: Can you help me understand what that means?

JB: Well, he wanted to do something, he wanted to do it. If it didn't suit my mother, then they would have an argument about it. So that was the kind of association.

T: Okay. What did he do for a living?

JB: He was a farmer.

T: He was a farmer? What did he farm?

JB: Corn or whatever.

T: Okay, and he did that in Mathews as well?

JB: No, no. Nothing to do with Mathews. That was in Middlesex. That was the part of the estate that was left.

T: Did he buy that estate in Middlesex?

JB: No, it was left to him by his father. My great-grandfather owned the seven hundred acres, and when he died, he divided the property up into four. He had four children, and each one of the children got some of the property. My grandfather got the house and I don't know how many acres . . . it was probably eighty or so acres of ground, where the other children got part of that.

T: Okay. So your great-grandfather lived in Mathews, right?

JB: Came from Mathews. He was born here, and when he grew up, was old enough to move, he moved to Middlesex and bought an estate there with seven hundred acres.

T: Okay, and he was a farmer, too.

JB: Yes.

T: Okay.

JB: That and ran the post office.

T: He ran the post office. What were you told about your great-grandfather?

JB: Not too much.

T: No?

JB: No. I don't have too much history of what he did. All's I know that my mother and her sister—after he died and left the property, my grandfather . . . what did he do? He eventually sold that property and he moved to . . . what's the town where they have the oyster festival? Urbanna.

T: Urbanna, okay.

JB: Moved to Urbanna and had bought a house there. That's when my grandmother died; she was forty years old when she died of tuberculosis. So my grandfather was not able to take care of these two girls, so my grandmother had a family—the James family—and Captain Charles James was a merchant mariner captain, steamship. And he lived in Baltimore. So he took the girls to Baltimore to live where he lived so they could be educated there. He didn't think much of these schools in Virginia in those days. So my mother and her sister—my Aunt May—lived with their uncle in Baltimore.

T: Do you know why they didn't think that much of Virginia schools?

JB: I don't know; I guess they thought it was too small and not . . . thought Baltimore was the better place, had better schools. It's like today: you either like the neighborhood, you like the school system, or you don't.

T: Fair enough. Were you ever, as a child or growing up, told anything about Mathews or the Callis family that your parents or grandparents wanted you to know?

JB: I guess about the only thing I know that I was told was by my mother, who was interested in the family. She was the genealogist of the family. We're related to the Billups family, and we're related to Williams family, part of this Williams Wharf

business. They own this property all through here. The house across the road was the main house of the Williams family that was living here. I used to visit that when I was a child. My mother would come down here to visit her cousins, and stay a week or whatever. So, that's my relationship for Mathews. Just so happens that we moved in this house that's right across the street is where I visited as a child.

PB: And his relatives from there thought he was a little devil, because he was running up and down the stairs in the house.

[Laughter]

T: Well, can you tell me a little bit about when you used to come visit?

JB: Well, I was more or less six or seven; there's not much you remember. I would go out and play by myself in the yard. The families just would get together to talk about what's going on in their lives. I wasn't part of any of that. What does a kid six years old care about any of that sort of stuff? So, it wasn't even like I had people to play with here. So . . . nothing much I could say about my life. On a visit here, nothing stands out.

T: Okay. How did it look different than it does now? Williams Wharf?

JB: It's hard to say, because I don't remember that much about it. I don't remember the house being here.

PB: It wasn't.

JB: The house that was here burned down eventually. This is the new house that was built in the [19]30s. So when I was visiting, I wouldn't pay any attention to

the neighborhood. You know, I wouldn't look at a house and say, I'm going to remember that. I don't think anybody does that, not at that age.

T: No, that's true. That's true. I mean, could you talk maybe a little bit about how you've seen Mathews—anything about it—change over time? Either since you visited or since you moved here, even?

JB: Actually, I don't remember Mathews as a town when I was that young. After I got my wings from the navy, I went up back home from Corpus Christi. I went to Baltimore and I had two weeks off. And so when I got home, my mother and father and I came down to Middlesex County, because that's where she had active relatives, not in Mathews. You didn't have anybody we actually would visit here in Mathews. But there was a number of families in Middlesex that they wanted to see. They wanted to show me off, too, in my uniform.

T: [Laughter] Were you impressive?

JB: No, I don't think so. Not particularly.

T: [Laughter] Okay. Okay.

JB: Just an ensign is all I was.

T: I'm sure that they were excited to see you.

JB: Yeah, well, my father didn't like flying. My mother wasn't crazy about it. So, they weren't happy that I was a pilot, actually.

T: Sorry to hear that. Did they get over it?

JB: Not much they could do.

T: [Laughter] Fair enough.

JB: When I retired, my mother said that she was really thankful for that. She was glad I retired.

T: That's wonderful.

JB: But she always liked to address her letters to me with "Captain."

T: I like that.

JB: She was proud of that but she didn't like the idea that I was flying.

PB: Didn't they fly one time from Europe?

JB: Yeah, they flew from New York to Europe.

PB: They were scared to death. I remember his father getting on the airplane. He didn't want to get on.

JB: It was a white-knuckle ride for him.

PB: He was hanging back.

[Laughter]

JB: Yeah.

PB: Can I add something? His mother and father owned Hick's Wharf during World War II, right across the river there.

JB: Yeah.

PB: That little white house that's behind all the trees? Well, that's—

JB: You see the boathouse, the white house to the right of that boathouse over there, my mother and father owned that.

PB: And his mother was in the antique business in Gloucester during World War II and then after. When you drive in to Gloucester from here, and you get in, there was this old gas station here and there was a laundromat, and there was this real

estate building here. Well, they built that and that was an antique place. They lived upstairs, and I remember when she sold that, in the [19]50s sometime I think. Was it [19]60s?

JB: Yes.

PB: It was in the early [19]60s, and then she retired from the antique business.

JB: They moved out of the—

PB: They moved to Richmond.

JB: My father wasn't well enough to keep up the antique business, so they sold that building there in Gloucester and moved to Richmond. He was in Richmond in an apartment there when my father died.

PB: We used to come down and visit with them, and I know we stayed over at the antique place there. And then of course, we were over here when it was Hick's Wharf.

T: What do you remember about the building over at Hick's Wharf? Is it the same one?

PB: Mm-hm.

T: How old is it, do you know?

PB: Well, that was an old farmhouse. In fact, when we came down here right after World War II to visit, there was no electricity at all there. It was candlelight—yeah, they had one indoor bathroom. That was all. Just the one bathroom. They had that put in because—

JB: Actually, my mother was instrumental in getting electricity put in there.

T: Oh, really?

JB: Yeah.

T: Why did she decide to do that?

JB: Well, they wanted electricity; they didn't want oil lamps.

T: I understand that.

JB: Yeah.

T: Do you remember anything about the interior that strikes you now?

PB: About what?

T: The interior of the house on Hick's Wharf?

PB: That house over there? Oh, I just remember—

JB: They had fireplaces—

PB: You had a fireplace in every room.

JB: Every room had a fireplace. That was the only way you could heat the place.

There was no central heating.

PB: And I remember the kitchen. His older brother and his wife were back there. This is right after World War II, and we came. We didn't have any children, and we were on our way up to New York. And I had never been to New York, and so I wanted to iron press all my clothes so I would look nice. There was no electricity, so they had to start the fire on the stove and they put the old flat iron on that. That's how I pressed my clothes.

T: Wow.

PB: My sister-in-law made . . . there, as I say, it was just you cooked on that stove.

You had the firing going, and they had an oven and she made brownies. I

couldn't believe that you could make brownies on a stove like that. So it was quite an experience for somebody who'd lived in the city.

T: Well, I was gonna ask you that because you're from California. What was it like coming here and seeing where your husband's ancestral home is?

PB: I probably didn't think that much of it. I mean, I was interested in going to New York City. [Laughter] I was, what? Twenty-one or twenty-two and I wasn't that interested in things. But I do remember later when we had, I think, one of the children and we came in, his mother wanted to shop. There was A&P in Mathews years and years ago where the Food Lion is. We came in to shop at that A&P, and then we parked where what was Foster's Department Store—I don't know where. Where they put that big thing on the side of the building now. Well, that building. We parked right there and she went over to Mr. Sibley's store, because Mr. Sibley was also a relative of hers. I mean, those are things that I just remember when we'd come down here. I know when we first bought this house in 1980, we had the windows and they had the iron weights in the windows. You had cords on these to lift them up and down. And we had to go to Mr. Sibley's store to buy the cord. That was the only place you could get it. So, those are the things I remember about early Mathews.

T: That's perfect. That's exactly—

PB: Well, and then after, too, we first moved here which was 1980, I forget—Mr. Moughon didn't own that store; I think it was Klein owned that hardware store. Wednesday afternoon, they always closed the store, took the afternoon off.

T: Any reason, or just that was their—

PB: That was the thing they did during World War II, I think. I think the navy bases—

JB: The military had a holiday on most Wednesdays.

PB: Yeah, Wednesday afternoon.

T: So they closed it, too.

PB: Mm-hm. Yeah.

T: Hm. This is perfect. Are there any other anecdotes that you can help with me when it comes to Mathews Courthouse or Williams Wharf, anywhere else in Mathews? Just experiences that stick out in your mind?

JB: Well, some of the things that have changed—when we first came down here, the oystermen would be down here in their boats with tongs getting oysters. You could almost walk from one boat to the other to get across the river. There were just so many boats getting oysters. We could go out with a bushel basket; I could go walk along the shore and pick up oysters, take a bushel on up to New York. When we first got this house, it really needed remodeling. We would come down and spend a week or two working on the house and then go back to New York. We had friends in New York and we'd take oysters back to them. You could pick them up. Now you can see that there's no oystering, there's no business down here like that. That's a big change that I've noticed.

T: How do you feel about it?

JB: It's sort of sad, actually. It wasn't all just oystermen getting oysters. It's also the disease that killed the oysters. Just too bad that happened. I understand that they're coming back now.

T: Maybe. I mean, even in the last thirty years, where you sort of have incorporated Mathews Courthouse more into your lives, how has that changed in the last thirty years, or the landscape changed in the last thirty years?

JB: I wouldn't say the landscape has changed much. Our place has changed because we had two trees taken down: one maple tree and one oak tree here. So, when you'd look out there was a big tree right here by where the bench is out there. Big oak tree. That rotted in the middle, became dangerous to be up, and then we had so many branches die and had them trimmed that it looked like the devil. Just to see it, it wasn't a nice-looking tree anymore, and the center of it was rotted out. So those were cut down. Then we had another big elm tree that was out in the front, huge, probably four feet in diameter. That blew over in a storm. We have photos of that, of the tree over. That had to be cut up. So that part of the landscape has changed around here, which isn't too bad because the leaves from these trees which go into the swimming pool—and that wasn't good. So that's one of the changes.

PB: Well, as far as talking about the town of Mathews, a lot of different stores have closed. Like, there was Golden Brooks; she hadn't sold clothing and things—I mean, she's gone. She died. There just seem to be so many different people that are dying and we're the only old ones left from here on out. But I don't think it has changed that much in there. The Chevrolet place left. They're building some new stores there and fixing that over. Offhand, I just can't—of course, the bookstore is now the visitor's center, which is very nice.

JB: I think the biggest change is that more people that we knew have died.

Population, in a sense, has changed that way.

PB: Well, Catherine Brooks had a fabric store where you could buy things. I don't think there's a place today that I can buy—I sew, and I make doll clothes and sell it for Miller Village Center. I don't think there's a place in Mathews where I can buy needles today, or thread. I have to go to Gloucester. When we first moved here, there was a five and dime where—that little store that they've taken between the library and the bank, that was a five and dime. And then, as I say, Catherine Brooks had a store across the street from that, which was fabrics. Of course, I'm interested in those things, and I don't know as far as clothing. I don't really think you have a clothing store here anymore. Foster's was a clothing store, and then there was Catherine Brooks. I don't know any others. I mean, for a lot of things you still have to go down to Gloucester.

T: Mm-hm. I mean, you've seen Gloucester develop into a leviathan, and Mathews has not. What has that been like? Do you want it to be a Gloucester?

PB: I like it as it is. I like it no stoplights at all. Of course, there are some times when you can't get out of the parking lot from Food Lion. [Laughter] But I like it the way it is, I really do. It's quiet, it's peaceful.

T: You mentioned earlier this is the happiest place you've ever been.

PB: Mm, I think so.

T: Why is that?

PB: Because it's quiet. There's not a lot going on, you know. I guess when we lived in New York, we lived in a small town, too, but we were not involved. Like here we

have been involved in the historical society and the women's club and the gardening club and these different things so that we're more involved with these things. I think that has a lot to do with it.

T: Okay. I wanted to ask you about your time with the historical society. Why did you decide to get involved with that?

JB: Well, I'm interested in that sort of thing, in history of the county. Also, I have a lot of relatives that I'm descended from, not that we know any of them now but I'm related to the families. So that was part of it, enjoying the society. The first book they put out, *Tombstones*, when it was published we set up a mailing system to sell the book outside the county. We were pretty successful in doing that. I was asked to get on the board of directors at one time, which I accepted. I forget who was the president at the time—Bill Tompkins, I think he was the president. But he got ill and couldn't take the job anymore, and so I was asked if I would—oh, actually, I was vice-president under him. So when he left because of illness, I became president, inherited the job. Then when the time came for reelection, I didn't want to do that. I had enough of it. So they had another person come in; it was a lady. I won't mention her name, but—

T: Okay.

JB: She was hard to get along with.

T: Okay. So—

JB: So she quit. She wouldn't take the job unless I was vice-president, and there were a lot disturbances that went on. The society wasn't in very good shape,

actually. The disputes that went on with her, she quit, and I became president again. I've been a reluctant president, twice.

T: [Laughter] Okay. Like a George Washington of sorts.

JB: Mm-hm.

T: While you were president, what was the role of the historical society in the larger Mathews community?

JB: Actually, outside of publishing the books, we didn't have as much activity as we have now. It's actually a better society. There was one time when the society was—there was thoughts of it being closed down and not being in existence. I forget the lady that I talked into becoming president . . . I forget her name.

T: Okay, that's fine.

JB: But anyways, she took over and that was about the end of my association with the offices of the society. We still belong, but don't have anything to do with the running of it.

T: Okay. So why is family history important to you?

JB: . . . I like to know where I came from. I like to know how my ancestors were. So, family history is more or less just genealogy. Not many people know who their great-grandfather was, or even beyond that.

T: It's true. What kind of people do you imagine that they were, the ones you didn't know?

JB: Well in some cases, because of my research into their lives to find out who they were, they were pretty good—were pretty successful. On my father's side of the family, they go back to the Revolutionary War. Every single one of them was a

captain, and there's a doctor—my grandmother's father was a doctor. That was the Johnston family. So I'm interested in that sort of thing. In other words, they were just successful people. I don't remember any burglars or criminals in the genealogy.

T: That's good, that's good. So what's unique about Mathews' history? What's unique about Mathews that you can't find anywhere else?

JB: What can I find in Mathews that I can't find anywhere else? That's a hard question to answer, 'cause I don't know that there's anything specific. I suppose if I found another small town somewhere, I could live in it and probably learn about it. Mathews is interesting to me because I have roots here, even though they go way back. But there isn't anything specific about Mathews that I couldn't live without.

T: Okay.

JB: Yeah.

T: Did you want to add to that at all?

PB: Just peace and quiet, friendly people. As I say, it's just a delightful place to live.

T: Says the city girl.

PB: Well, I'm not considered just a city girl. I don't consider myself a real—if I lived in New York City or something like that, I would think I was a city girl.

T: Okay, I like that. So are there any anecdotes, maybe from your earlier time here that you'd like to share?

PB: I don't know of any.

T: Are holidays here special or are there any traditions or even ghost stories and folk tales that you could share?

PB: Your mother had a ghost story, didn't she?

JB: Well, the ghost story that I have didn't occur here. It involved a person from here.

PB: It was Hick's Wharf, wasn't it?

JB: It occurred to my mother and father. They lived in Baltimore, and my oldest brother, he's ten years older than I. He was around three or four years old and the Barnum & Bailey Circus was in town in Baltimore. They lived in Baltimore in the northwest section. And they took him to the circus and they got back home around ten o'clock. They went into the house, locked the doors as they always did, and they put my brother to bed. Then they went to their bedroom, and my mother had a brooch that a cousin had given her. She was taking it off of her dress when it broke in half, which disturbed her a little bit. Had to have that repaired. Well after that happened, they were in their bedroom, they were getting ready for bed, and heard something sounded like somebody coming up the stairs, second floor. They thought a burglar was in the house, so they closed the bedroom door and locked it. Then they heard the steps stop by their door, and their bathroom was right next to their bedroom. They heard what they thought was the light switch going on. Heard it click. So they had a neighbor that lived not far from them. My father got on the telephone and called him and said, I think there maybe's a burglar in the house. You see a light in the bathroom? He said, no, he didn't. So they hung up the phone. And he heard the steps come out of the bathroom, stop by their door, and then they went down the stairs. That was

the last they heard of it. My father thought, well, he was gonna check. He had a straight razor. He got a hold of that; that was his weapon. So he went out the bedroom door, down the stairs, checked all the doors, windows. Everything was locked. Nobody could've come in or gone out. So they went to bed, having problems getting to sleep for a while. Around nine o'clock in the morning, the doorbell rang, and there was Western Union with a telegram. It said that this cousin that had given her the brooch had died that evening around ten o'clock.

T: Wow. That's a good one. That's a good one! And it is Mathews-related. That's really interesting!

JB: The cousin was from Mathews.

T: Yeah, wow! That is cool. That was really cool 'cause it's not bounded by the county lines. That was really neat. You said you had one about Hick's Wharf?

PB: No, no. No, I thought it was at Hick's Wharf, but it was Baltimore.

JB: No.

T: Wow.

JB: Yeah, that was a long time ago. That was when my oldest brother was around three years old, four years old.

T: Wow. So you heard it from your parents, then?

JB: Yeah, my father. It wasn't just my mother heard it; he heard it, too.

T: Oh, I meant like your father told you the story 'cause you weren't alive then, right?

JB: No, it came from my mother. She's the one that told the story.

T: Okay.

JB: Yeah, I always remember that.

T: And you can tell a ghost story, too! [Laughter] I think my last question—feel free to tell me anything you want to tell me—you represent sort of this generation of people that have seen a lot of things in Mathews, whether you've lived here or not. Is there anything that you would want future Mathews generations to know about your generation and what you experienced here? Any advice that you could give them?

JB: I don't have any advice to give . . . I just live here. I don't have any philosophy about how people should behave or do anything. Not gonna go around the county and preach.

T: That's good. [Laughter]

JB: I don't know. There's nothing else I could say about that.

T: Okay.

PB: Just study and just watch what you're doing. Keep your life clean.

T: [Laughter] Fair enough. Is there anything you would want people in Mathews to know about you or your family?

JB: That's really hard to say. I don't know. I've had a lot of different experiences that I'm party to. I don't know if anybody's interested in it. People I've known in my lifetime—Lowell Thomas. Have you ever heard of Lowell Thomas?

T: Mm-mm.

JB: Name isn't familiar to you at all.

T: No, I'm sorry.

JB: Well, he was in World War I, he was a war correspondent. After the war, he had a radio show that was every evening. It was Lowell Thomas and he would talk about the news, like Tom Brokaw and people like that. Well, one of his jobs was in World War I, he went to Saudi Arabia and met T.E. Lawrence. You've heard of him, I guess, Lawrence of Arabia. Well, Lowell Thomas traveled with T.E. Lawrence on some of his escapades and wrote about it. And he wrote a book in 1923 about Lawrence of Arabia, and that's how you get to know Lawrence of Arabia, through Lowell Thomas' action with him. I have a copy of his book upstairs, printed in 1923. Lowell Thomas sent it me. How did I know Lowell Thomas? Well, have you ever heard of a movie called *Cinerama*? Okay.

[Laughter]

T: Sorry.

JB: You need a little education.

T: I guess so. I guess so. [Laughter]

JB: Well, a movie was made called *Cinerama*. Lowell Thomas was the head of this movie, was the producer. He had a company set up to find the ancient Seven Wonders of the World. To do that, he hired Pan-Am, leased an airplane from Pan-Am to take the camera crew to all these places that they thought the Seven Wonders of the World were located. And I was a co-pilot on that flight. It lasted for about—how many months?

PB: About six, I think.

JB: About six months. Then we flew all over Africa and Europe. Lowell Thomas wrote a book on it, and I kept sort of a diary of it. I wrote that up. I have those upstairs.

So Lowell Thomas was on the flight on some of the legs that we went. We went to—one of the places was Bahrain. That's an island off of Saudi Arabia, and then we went in there and met the King of Saudi Arabia. He gave me this watch; that's from Saudi Arabia. Everybody got a watch, if they wanted one. They had pocket watches and wrist watches. The representative of the king came into the hotel and dumped a bag of watches on the table, said, take your pick. Must've been twenty or thirty watches that the crew of the airplane were offered, and I picked this one.

T: Wow.

JB: We had lunch with this king. We had a script girl on the flight who was the daughter of the director of the movie. She couldn't eat with us; she had to eat with the harem. That was interesting part of it. That's how I got to know Lowell Thomas.

T: Wow.

JB: When they finished the movie, we got an invitation to go and see the preview before it was shown to the public. That was in New York in one of the theaters where they—it's a special camera. They took these pictures—there were three cameras, took pictures in three dimensions: one, two, and three, to give a wide screen, which is interesting. The director's daughter who was the script girl, her name Gloria Tetzlaff, she married a maintenance guy of the cameras since we traveled together for so long an amount of time. But anyway, that's how I got to know Lowell. His son was the governor of Alaska at one time.

T: That's random. What did the king look like?

JB: Well, he looked like an Arab . . . He was a heavysset gentleman. In my books upstairs, I have the book I wrote, *Around the World*. He was depicted in *Life Magazine*, and there's a good photograph of him in that. That's the only way I could describe him other than a Middle Eastern look.

T: Okay. Wow.

JB: So, I have more. There are other stories about my Pan-American experience—more than I have about Mathews, actually.

T: Yeah! Tell me whatever you want to tell me.

JB: I don't know if you've ever heard of Cardinal Mindszenty. He was a prisoner of the Nazis during World War II. When he was released, he took a flight from Europe to the United States on Pan-Am. He was on one plane, and on our plane we had Robert Kennedy, J.F.K.'s brother, on the flight. The two airplanes were coming into New York together at the same time. Of course, after we landed and the planes were parked, there's a whole crowd of reporters and they all went to see Mindszenty to interview him. Then they heard Robert Kennedy was on the other plane, so they were running back and forth between the two planes to try to get both stories, which I thought was kind of interesting and funny.

T: What year was that?

JB: I can't remember exactly. It was about the time that—it was before Robert Kennedy was going to be—he was still the lieutenant . . .

PB: Attorney General?

JB: Attorney General, yeah. He was Attorney General, which was kind of interesting, too. They were supposed to fly tourist class as an official rather than first class.

Well, as soon as he got on the airplane he decided he wanted get on the first class section. So he contacted the stewardess and said that some kid in the airplane was making too much noise and he had some paperwork to do. He wanted to know if he couldn't get in the first class section to get some peace and quiet. I was co-pilot then. The captain said okay. You let him do that. I thought that was—I don't know if I had been captain that I'd . . . [Laughter] Oh, can't think of it. There's other stories. Whatever. Can't think of anything else that I could stand telling. There were a number of airplanes that I was a pilot of, or co-pilot, that had people who were well-known passengers. But none that the name comes to mind right now.

T: Okay, that's fine. Did you have anything you wanted to add, ma'am?

PB: No.

T: Do you feel good with me shutting it off?

JB: Yeah, no, not much more I could tell you.

T: Okay. Thank you.

[End of interview]

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