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-May 2015

TMP-037

Interviewee: Ronald and Nancy Rowe

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: July 14, 2014

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Roscoe Rowe on July 14, 2014 in Peary, Virginia.

RR: That's right.

T: Mr. Rowe, can you please state your full name?

RR: Ronald K. Rowe.

T: Okay and—

RR: Nickname's Roscoe.

T: Okay, and when were you born?

RR: November 1957.

T: Okay, do you have a specific date?

RR: November the 30th.

T: Oh! November the 30th. Okay. And where were you born?

RR: I was born in Newport News, Virginia.

T: Okay.

RR: At the Old Riverside.

T: Okay. Where did you grow up?

RR: Gwynn's Island, Virginia.

T: Okay. What are your parent's names and occupations?

RR: My father's name was John Washington Rowe, Jr. and my mother's name was Betty Ann. Betty Ann Forrest was her maiden name.

T: Okay. And what did they do?

RR: He was a waterman and then he started as a house builder.

T: Okay.

RR: That's what he ended up doing. He died young.

T: I'm sorry to hear that.

RR: That's okay. Thirty-five years old.

T: Wow. Did you have any brothers or sisters?

RR: I had four sisters — three sisters. I had a step-sister. My mother remarried and I have a step-sister, too.

T: Three sisters?

RR: So, I had three real sisters and I had a step-sister.

T: Did you grow up in the same house?

RR: Yep. We all lived in the same house my Daddy built, I think.

T: So your father built it.

RR: Yeah.

T: What made his construction style different from other people's?

RR: The construction style?

T: Yeah! 'Cause he was a carpenter?

RR: I mean, I don't really know.

T: Okay. Where did he learn from?

RR: Oh, his grandpa was a carpenter.

T: Okay, and was that person's father a carpenter too?

RR: Yep. I believe all of them were carpenters. Yep.

T: How far back can you trace your family back in Mathews?

RR: I think I've got a family tree over there that goes back from when they came over here from England.

T: Yeah?

RR: I went back to my fifteenth great-grandfather.

T: Is family history important to you?

RR: Yeah, I look it up every now and then. But I like to look at it and see some things.

T: Okay. So tell me about the land that we're on now.

RR: I bought this from a fellow down here, Mr. Lem Brooks. My wife's people, though, they were raised here. Her grandfather's house was right up there and great-grandparents house was right down this road, Captain Genes Road. That was her Great-granddaddy; Eugene Armistead was his name. [SENTENCE OMITTED] And they lived here and they owned all this land right here at one time.

T: What was her last name originally?

RR: She was a Hudgins.

T: Okay.

RR: She was a Hudgins and her grandmother's maiden name was Armistead, and she's related to Gene Armistead and all of them down here.

T: So, what does it mean to be a Rowe in Mathews?

RR: Well, I'm a Rowe, and I lived in Mathews, but my family came from Gloucester.

T: Oh, really?

R: Originally, they came from Water View and then from Fredericksburg but—

T: What's your relationship like with people in Gloucester?

RR: In Gloucester?

T: Mm-hm. Do you keep up with them?

RR: Yeah, I keep up with them. My grandmother and grandfather, and I had aunts and uncles and great-uncles. And then I had some that lived away from me, too. Some lived in Maine and a couple lived in Williamsburg. And I kept up with the old aunt now. I got one aunt left in Gloucester but that's it.

T: Mm-hm.

RR: They all passed away.

T: Growing up, what was the difference between Mathews and Gloucester?

RR: I used to go to visit my grandma some in the summertime after I got out of school. Have you ever heard that: Momma won't let you have that, better ask Grandma for it? And she would let you get away with anything. And I liked going over there, and my sister did, too. [SENTENCE OMITTED] —the one that lives next to me—we used to go there a lot. My other two sisters stayed over this way, but I liked to go over there.

T: Mm-hm. Okay, what places in Mathews do you consider important to you and your family?

RR: What places? Well, most of them were on the waterfront. I mean it's hard to believe, because there used to be so many fish docks and stuff around here. Now they're all gone. There used to be boat builders and stuff and most of them are gone.

T: Tell me about the boat builders.

RR: Do I remember them?

T: No, just tell me about them. I know you remember them.

RR: Yeah, well, they did everything—I know one thing: they built mostly with no plans and stuff. They just shaped it and built it. And I think some of the best boat builders in the world are from right around here. They've been building boats around here for years. I mean, that's what Mathews County started at: boat building.

T: So we were talking a little bit about competition between boat builders. Why would they develop competition between each other?

RR: Oh, I don't know. All of them were pretty good, you know? Most boat builders are pretty good. Some of their cracks were a little tighter than the others. [Laughter]

[Break in Recording]

T: This is Jessica Taylor resuming with Nancy Rowe. Miss Nancy, what was your maiden name?

NR: Hudgins.

T: Okay, and when were you born?

NR: October 10, 1959.

T: And where were you born?

NR: In Newport News, Virginia, Riverside Hospital.

RR: Same place.

[Laughter]

T: Okay, and what were your parent's names and occupations?

NR: My father's name is Robert Roland Hudgins. He has been a fisherman, waterman, commercial fisherman. I guess he's a craftsman in making dredges

which seems to be a lost art .My husband hangs nets. He does something that not a lot of people do. We have people coming to him from Delaware and places to have things made for the water. My mother is Janice Diggs Hudgins and she was a homemaker and she worked in the local bank.

T: And what were your earliest memories of Mathews?

NR: Very blessed to be in a community like we are, kind of isolated a little bit. You have to be coming here to get here—it's not like you go through Mathews to get somewhere. You have to come to Mathews. We have a very big sense of community.

RR: It's like a big family.

NR: Yeah, it's very faith-based. That's a very important part.

T: Okay. Oh, sorry did you want to add?

RR: No, I'm fine.

T: Okay! So what did the—and either of you can answer this—what did the house that you grew up in look like?

RR: Oh, it was like a little rancher. It was 1700 square feet, something like that. My father built it in 1954 and he had a house build in Water View and he was married before and his wife died. Then he married my mother, and I was born later on. I think we moved in when my older sister that was older than I was, was born.

NR: You're number three or four, right?

RR: Yeah, I told them I had three sisters and I had a step-sister.

T: Okay.

RR: And at one time we all lived there. At the time, that was a lot of people in a 1700 square foot house. We shared bedrooms. We had bunk beds in my bedroom.

[Laughter]

T: Did your father follow plans to build the house or did he just build it?

RR: No, he built it. It was something like the house he had in Water View. It wasn't much different; may have been a little bit bigger.

T: Okay!

RR: Yeah, just a little bit bigger.

T: Okay.

RR: That house is up. I went over and saw it not long ago.

T: With a father that's a carpenter, why did you decide to go into the water business?

RR: I always liked it. I worked with my uncle. I didn't know my daddy that much; I was seven years old when he died. And I had an uncle named Ikey Diggs. He lived down the road. He was my great uncle; he was my mother's uncle. And he used to come get me for everything, every time he wanted to do something. He kind of got me started in the water. And every time he'd want to do something — he had a heart trouble, too. I mean he had a heart attack later, he was in his fifties, and he could still do some work. He knew how to do things, but he couldn't do it. His health wouldn't let him so he'd come get me and work me to death. [Laughter] And I'd be like twelve, thirteen years old pulling all that stuff that a grown man does pull up.

T: This is a weird question, but did you do that during school hours or on weekends? Did you do that seasonally?

RR: Did it on weekends, after school. I had done it before school; Momma went to get me up one time and I had already gone. I was out in the bay. [Laughter]

T: Wow.

RR: She jumped on him, then. She wouldn't jump on me; she jumped on him, then. But he'd come by there to get me.

T: What did he teach you how to do?

RR: He was a pound fisherman. Big net: I've never did catch onto that too good. Later on, I learned more. I learned more with the people around here; that guy's father right there, he taught me right much. Her daddy taught me some stuff. You pick it up. When you help people, you pick things up.

T: How did you two meet?

RR: How did we meet? My sister.

NR: His sister.

RR: Yeah, she moved into an apartment and my sister lived there too. And I used to hang around; we all hung around together. We ended up going out on a date or something, didn't we? Went out to eat with my brother-in-law and sister. That's how it began.

T: How old were you when that happened?

NR: I was twenty-four.

T: How long did you date before getting married?

NR: How long did we date before we got married?

RR: Not long. We started dating like in March—

NR: About a year, yeah.

RR: It wasn't either— like six months. [Laughter] We got married in October. Yeah. We started dating in that spring, probably early March. First of March or something like that. But I was ready to get married.

T: Why?

RR: I don't know. I was getting old.

[Laughter]

T: So tell me about your wedding day.

NR: It was in October. It was a beautiful day—

RR: It was the hottest day I ever felt.

NR: He was very nervous.

RR: My step-father and I, they put us in a little room in their front church. We had to wait for everybody. No air conditioning.

NR: We had the wedding in a church.

RR: It was hot and I was soaked. [Laughter] We were at Gwynn's Island Baptist.

T: Fair enough. So how long were you a waterman for?

RR: I went to Fort Eustis when I was twenty-one, probably about three or four years. But I did a lot of stuff when I was down there. I worked with A.J. down there. We crabbed. We conch dredged. We crab dredged. We even gill-netted a little bit one time.

NR: He did it as a side job, while he was at Fort Eustis.

RR: And then I went clamming with a couple other boys. My neighbor next door, Dean Close from Gwynn's Island, I would clam with him. I went clamming, riding around. I did that for like pieces of summers and stuff. And Ronnie Ray got a job over at Fort Eustis and he asked me one time if I would put in for it and I did. I got hired over there and I took the job.

T: Okay.

RR: And then I came home and started doing it a little bit part-time.

T: Okay. Tell me about A.J.

RR: A.J. Hurst? Oh, he's a character. [Laughter] He's a good waterman. He done a lot of work in his life. The Lord knows he done some work. You know, he didn't have much when he grew up; everything he got, he got. Nobody handed it to him on no platter. He worked hard; he pulled for it. He started off—he told me that his uncle gave him ten old, rusty crab pots. And that's how he started. At one time he had over three hundred in the water and three hundred in the yard. When I was there, he had a lot of crab pots. He caught a lot of crabs, too. I think we caught as high as forty barrels at one time.

T: Do you want to tell me about some moments that stick out to you while you were crabbing, fishing, oystering, clamming?

RR: We'd been crabbing in some bad weather and stuff like that before. I remember one time, we were in Mobjack's Cross Channel and the sea cap over the side of the boat and fills the boat inside full of water. It went into my boots before it ran down to the bilge. And A.J. was scared. There was an the old man named Mr. Holms Burroughs. And he was a nice old man who lived down in New Point. He

said, darling, I don't know how you all stood up in the boat. [Laughter] Alton Armistead was another fellow; he was real comical—he told A.J., how in the world did you all crab today? He said, I made three attempts to turn around and get back in the creek. [Laughter] And we crabbed that whole day and caught thirty-some barrels. I'll tell you how many crabs it was. We fished the line going down with the wind on the stern and we turned around and we were going to fish back up and head into the wind. The wind's northwest and it was blowing so hard that the wind was coming back and hitting us in the face. [SENTENCE OMITTED] We couldn't fish. So we ran back up the bay and then turned around and came back down with the wind on our stern again. We went and grabbed the same line we just fished. And the onliest thing I could tell different is it didn't have any conchs in it. We caught just as many crabs in that amount of time. We just got through fishing it and there were a lot of crabs there, and they were coming with that storm, too, I guess.

T: Wow.

RR: And that's when I was working with A.J.

T: Your father's obviously a big name in that. What's your interaction been with watermen as a woman but also as the daughter of someone who's important in this industry?

NR: A lot of pride. You know, I don't want to say it's a dying art . . . not a lot of people are in the water anymore because of all the rules and but they take great pride in their heritage. They are very devoted to it. My father — I mean, he never put his family second because of it, but he worked away down in Louisiana as a

fisherman down there six months out of the year. So as soon as school was over we'd pack up and go down there. And August came, we came back home. And he came back home in October. Just, they take great pride. Great pride in what they do.

T: Does being from Mathews change how you see other places like Louisiana especially since you traveled?

NR: Yeah. Well, down in Louisiana they worked very hard and they played very hard, and I see the difference in culture. It's a lot of French brought into their culture with the way they talk and the food. [SENTENCE OMMITTED]

RR: They have people that are like family down there, too.

NR: they will treat you like their family.

RR: If they like you down there then you have a friend just like a brother. I mean, that's the way it is.

NR: The main thing I saw down there when I was down there is integration had not happened as fast as it did up here. [SECTION OMMITTED] And now I would go back to visit, but Katrina destroyed Cameron—the hurricane.

RR: No, Rita.

NR: Rita. Not Katrina, the one after that.

RR: The one in New Orleans was Katrina.

NR: I mean took it out. Where we used to live is gone.

T: Interesting. Where did you go to school?

NR: Here in Mathews

T: Were you in school? You were in school after integration, right?

NR: It happened when I was in third grade.

T: Do you have any memories—

RR: Mm-hm. I was in the fifth grade. I remember it.

T: What was that like?

NR: [Section omitted] Her name was Noreen Hudgins, she was a black lady, and I loved her just like I loved my grandma. So my parents never allowed me to use the N word. They never talked down to people. But Noreen stayed with my family mainly because her husband was away a lot on a boat and she didn't like to be by herself. So it was kind of like we helped each other.

[Section omitted]

RR: That's another thing my uncle used to do. Before they would go to Louisiana, he would get them to put his pound overboard. They would all help skin the stakes and set the nets and everything and they'd go on to Louisiana in the summer. When they'd go down there? May?

NR: April.

RR: April. They'd go down there in April.

[Section omitted]

T: I mean, the Deep South is another picture. So you mentioned something—I don't know anything about Gwynn's Island, but I'm going this week. So what's different about Gwynn's Island?

[Section omitted]

RR: Yeah. They had a little racial spat in 1919; that's what my step-father told me.

T: Did you hear what happened? Obviously, you weren't there.

RR: I heard this stuff, you know, 1916.

[Section omitted]

NR: You might hear a different story, different versions of the story if you'd bring it up.

RR: Yeah . . . I'm going by someone who was born in 1919 that was telling me about it so he doesn't remember it. He heard it from his parents.

T: I mean, I'm interested to hear what his parents told him because we'll never know what actually happened, you know?

RR: That's right. Well, my aunt owned a nursing home over there. And she had a black cook named Shirley Thomas—that was Levi's mother—and I thought just as much of her as any. If she was my aunt, it wouldn't make no difference. She cooked cookies for me. Stewart Anderson's daddy worked there. He was the cook there at one time.

[Section omitted]

RR: My daddy used to have a guy named Bozo that he nicknamed—Louis Banks—but he helped my daddy do everything. I've heard Mama mention, told my Daddy pulled his teeth out one time. He had a toothache and he pulled it out because Bozo wouldn't go to the dentist. He was fussin' about it for two days so Daddy said, come here; I'm going to take it out.

NR: Omit

RR: Kevin's grandfather was from Gwynn's Island. Kevin Godsey, the guy you talked to the other day.

T: Yeah.

RR: He went to one of his great-aunt's funeral today.

T: Oh, no.

RR: Tennie. She's ninety-three years old.

T: Oh, my goodness. What does it mean to you that the water community is aging?

RR: It's really aging. There's no more pound fishing around here. I remember when you'd go around this beach, and you had to dodge the nets all the way down the bay, there were so many of them. Now there's none. Zero. Ronald Coles Burroughs was the last pound fisherman around.

T: Do you feel like something is lost culturally when that happens?

RR: . . . Yeah. Of course.

NR: I think my father—he's got nothing but a garage full of old work boat pictures and it's like his little museum because he feels like it might get lost.

RR: He's worked a lot on those boats in there and I've been on a lot of them, too.

NR: My husband said something the other day. He hauled his boat up—that's what they do like every spring or so—to dry them out, get the barnacles off and paint them. And that's why they used to have wooden boats. And now—

RR: There's no wooden boats—

NR: Now, the art of building a big wooden boat is—like a skiff is all but gone unless you go to a workshop in Mathews or Deltaville.

RR: No, you don't have anyone to build anymore.

NR: And you can't even find the paint anymore.

RR: Mr. Edward Diggs he's kind of getting up. And Edgar Diggs up in his eighties. He's not able to do that.

NR: And how many places around here used to build boats?

RR: Well, a lot of them.

[Section omitted]

RR: Right there where Edward worked, it was his daddy, Edgar Diggs, Alton Smith, I believe Lenny Smith, Mr. Bony Diggs, Mr. Freeman Hudgins. All of them were boat builders, I mean, good boat builders. I believe they worked there at one time. That place was turning out some boats.

NR: But the wooden boat is a lost art.

RR: And then Alton Smith and Lenny built boats down there and then Edward and his daddy built boats down here. And Edward's uncles and Ned Hudgins and them, they built boats over there in the Winter Harbor. Everyone around here was a boat builder.

T: Do you get a different experience from a wooden boat than you do from a fiberglass boat?

RR: They got a whole lot of class to them, I think wooden boats do. [Laughter] Fiberglass boat's like being in a bathtub, but they're nice, now, they're nice. But I got a fiberglass skiff and when I come home, I feel like I've been in a fight with Muhammad Ali. [Laughter] That old wooden skiff, she lays right there in the water like a log, you know. And that other one's a-bouncing and a-beating and a-jumping and throwing you from one side to the other. She's all right if I get some weight in her, get her loaded down. [Laughter]

NR: You'll hear so many expressions.

T: I'm excited. And it is a big part of folklore, too, which is really exciting. So if I was going to ask you in all seriousness if you had any ghost stories or apocryphal

tales for me, songs, anything that you want to share—and that's the same for you.

NR: Oh, yeah. Everybody knows about Old House Woods. [Laughter]

RR: Old House Woods. Yeah, you've heard that before, haven't you?

T: But please tell me, because everybody has a different wild thing that happens.

RR: I always heard that the main thing was the pirates came to shore there in a storm and buried their treasure. And they never did get it. They never did find where they buried it or they came back. It was a child there that was crippled and some doctor was going to visit in the night or something, and he saw a ghost out there with no head. They were out there looking for that treasure and stuff and all that kind of thing. I didn't believe. One time I went down there: we were young children. Well, we were fourteen or fifteen. Mack was there—Mack Forrest—and he caught us coming out there. He used to kind of look out for the place. He lived across the road. And he came out there and he had a big flashlight he was shining on us. And Doug Crosswell, a boy from Gloucester, he looked: you don't look like no ghost to me. And Mack said, you're gonna be a ghost if you don't get away from here. [Laughter] I thought that was the funniest thing I saw. That was the most spookiest thing I saw.

[Section omitted]

RR: A lot of superstitious people around here. Oh my goodness.

NR: Great deal of superstition.

RR: Her uncle had thirteen steps in the house and he wouldn't step on the top one. And he wore a thirteen shoe but he'd always get a twelve.

NR: I've been putting together some things [for a book.] This has been in like the last ten years. This is about my dad. This is my great-grandfather, Captain Gene, and he used to live right down here. [Sentence omitted]

RR: Who is that?

NR: That's Henry Armistead. [Laughter]

T: What?

RR: He was tough.

NR: Yes. That was my grandmother's brother. You can see—

RR: Her father's got his ring. You can drop a fifty-cent piece through it.

NR: His hands were so callused; when he went to the doctor they couldn't pluck his—

RR: They couldn't get blood out of him. They had to get it from behind his ear.

NR: Because he never would wear gloves.

RR: That's how tough his hands were. He was strong, too.

NR: And this is a lot of what he used to tell me about the weather. Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning. Red sky in the night sailor's delight. And that's in the Bible, but he used to say when the new moon tips over—if you see like a crescent moon and it starts to tip, it'll rain. And the sun dogs in the afternoon. In the sun setting you see this little rainbow-looking thing on one side of it and in three days you'll have rain.

T: Oh, really?

NR: Oh, that's true.

RR: I thought sun dogs meant wind.

T: So do any of the rhymes have tunes to them?

RR: Rhymes?

T: Yeah, like she was talking about.

RR: I know two of them.

T: What are they?

RR: Oh—

T: Are they bad?

RR: Yeah, I think.

T: You can't tell me?

RR: No. [Laughter]

T: Ugh.

RR: No, I can't. It'd be terrible.

T: Sometimes I wonder about that. Why aren't there any female watermen?

RR: Diana Burns, a girl on the island, used to help her father, and Earl Angie's daughter used to help him.

T: Why'd they stop? Do you know?

RR: Well, Ronald Coles Burroughs's sisters—they didn't work in the water, but I can tell you what: they were nifty with a net needle. They used to hang all their daddy's nets and everything. They were fast with net needles, especially Thelma Lynn.

T: Do women ever handle the bookkeeping?

RR: Mm-hm. That's what they do.

T: Okay. Is that what your wife does?

RR: She ain't gotta handle my bookkeeping no more, the money I make. [Laughter]
I've been doing that myself.

T: Okay. Fair enough.

RR: I don't work in the water anymore. I may start back but I'm not doing it now.

T: Why not?

RR: I did that in the fall a little bit. Gill netting and stuff like that, but it's just a hobby
more or less. That's what I do.

T: Did you ever miss it when you went to Fort Eustis?

RR: Yeah, I miss it. Yeah, I do.

T: What was it like going to Fort Eustis? Was it a culture shock?

RR: Yeah, I was running a little boat over there, and I had a right good job. Yeah. It
was almost like being on the water.

T: Almost like it?

RR: Almost like it, yeah.

T: Yeah. You mentioned superstitions.

RR: Superstitions, plenty of that around here.

T: You want to tell me about 'em?

RR: Just tellin' you, like the number thirteen or blue on a boat—they won't have blue
on a boat. Anything like that. And a shovel: you can't leave the shovel up; you
gotta turn it upside down on a boat because it's bad luck to have it the other way.
What else, Nancy? Oh, a hatch cover. If you take a hatch cover off, it has to go
down like a sets because you put it upside down that's bad luck.

NR: Oh, on Gwynn's Island, they didn't want any women on the boat.

RR: Oh, yeah, on Gwynn's Island they don't even want a women on a boat.

NR: I was expecting our son one time and I went on a boat—

RR: David Allen's.

NR: David Allen's boat. And the next day he swore it was because I was on there his engine blew up.

[Laughter]

NR: Can you believe that?

T: What do your children do?

RR: My son works for [Omitted] a navy contractor. He's in the in the environmental section. They do the oil spills when they have the oil spills and stuff. They make the booms, they get all that stuff together. And Leslie, she works as a medical office manager.

T: Is there anything about school either when your children were in school or when you were in school that you can tell me about? The teachers or the building? Or anything like that?

NR: It's still there. Same. I work there. I'm a school nurse and teach.

RR: It looks a little different.

NR: Yeah, they've added on.

RR: The high school's added on. The high school looks completely different.

NR: They've got a lot more vocational programs now but everything's basically the same as when I went there. It's computers now and for our little county, we've got lots of technical stuff and a lot of—

RR: That's what she teaches at school. She teaches nursing.

NR: I teach a CNA program. So when they graduate they'll have an occupation.

RR: And she's also the school nurse.

T: That's wonderful. Have you had a lot of time dealing with parents? What is that like?

[Section omitted]

NR: They kind of tolerated it, that it was a normal thing for a man to drink.

[Section omitted]

T: What did you say about your grandma?

RR: She's talking about drinking.

NR: She was feisty.

RR: My grandpa was known to take a drink, I think. [Laughter]

NR: See how subtle they make it? No.

RR: He was from Poquoson. He ran a buy boat for **[inaudible]**, an oyster company.

[Section omitted]

RR: When he was younger, he drank. His brothers—he didn't do it when he first got married. But later on, I don't know. He started drinking . . . and he just like to carry on. He was just a character is all, and she couldn't stand that.

NR: Well, I think she wanted a father and a husband.

RR: And she was home with seven children. My mother hates drinking because of it. She remembers it.

[Section omitted]

NR: And see how they needed the men in each boat.

T: Wow, that's a lot of fish! Sorry, your grandmother was:

RR: She was tough.

NR: She had to be.

RR: She was a tough lady. She just passed away not long ago. She was ninety-five.

T: Wow.

RR: Ginna died the year before she did: she's the one who owned the nursing home. My daddy built the nursing home for Ginna. I read it in there: 1959 was when he built it. I read the thing in there.

T: Wow. That's incredible. I don't want to take up too much of your time. That's roughly all of the questions that I had of you and you answered a lot going through. But did you have anything you wanted to add, like maybe to tell people?

NR: About Mathews?

T: Sure.

NR: I think we're a gem in this society that we live in because we have such rich heritage. I mean we had the Civil War, George Washington came to the mill that I was talking about. We have an old tide mill up here and he came here to—

RR: Grind corn for the soldiers. That was in 1776.

NR: The New Point Lighthouse. We just found out recently—well, I just did because my dad and I were doing some investigation—it was built with the same stone from the quarry that the White House on the Potomac was built. It's really rich people who are rich in heritage and great pride, I think, in our families. And my husband says something that you've probably heard about: come-heres. Have you ever heard of that term? Mm-hm. He's saying, no, don't! She's heard it! And I think that you were—

RR: On Gwynn's Island, they used to call themselves come-ons because they would come on the islands, you know?

NR: And I think the reason that people use that term is because we want to keep things the way they are and we don't want—

RR: I don't have anything against anyone coming here to live.

[Section omitted]

RR: What it is, is when they come here they might want to turn it into what they came from. They left where they came from but they didn't like it, and then they'll come here and in a couple years' time they'll want to turn it around and make it like it was where they came from. I don't understand that. Another one: a whole lot of them come here and say how much they love this place and, oh, they love everything. In two years' time, they have the house for sale. So they don't love it too much.

NR: But we were all come-heres at one point. That's what I say.

T: I like that.

NR: Yeah, we were all come-heres at one time

RR: I'm sure. Like I told her, came here from England. I've got that family tree back to—I think he was the 15 great-grandfather in England, wasn't it? John Diggs was the first one who came here, and he had a brother Dudley Diggs that came to Yorktown. Was it his brother? It was another Diggs anyway. It was a John Diggs and a Dudley Diggs.

T: Great, thank you. I appreciate it.

NR: All right. Civil War in Mathews: we did not have any actual battles here, but they did have Fort Nonsense. I think you've heard about that.

RR: They had a ship that came in here named *The Wolf*. And that's how Wolf Trap got its name: it's a bar that's way off in the bay and the ship went ashore there. So they called that Wolf Trap. I heard that—

NR: Yeah. What did Pocahontas have to do with Gwynn's Island?

RR: John Smith. She saved John Smith's life, didn't she? A stingray stung him or something?

NR: Off of Gwynn's Island, we have something called Stingray Point.

RR: Captain Hugh Gwynn, an Indian girl gave him the island. That's how come it got to be Gwynn's Island. He saved her life. She was in a canoe and her canoe capsized. He went there and saved her life. She gave him the island for saving her life. But that was Pocahontas.

NR: What about the big home over there that has the ghost stories about the Civil War?

RR: You mean Mr. Sam Smith's? He shot a—

NR: No, the Gwynn's Island. The one that they interrogated people up in the attic?

RR: Oh, that was Kimball's down in Cherry Point. Yeah, I've always heard that, that they killed someone upstairs and the blood still comes on every time they have an easterly spell. I used to hear that ghost story when we were real young. Then over here at Sam Smith's in Beechland, I always heard that—

NR: They came—

RR: A Union soldier stole a ham out of the smokehouse and they shot him for doing it, and they hung him—

NR: They dragged—

RR: No—they shot him and killed him. They hung him up at Foster but he was already dead. They drug him up the road behind a wagon and they hung him in Foster, Virginia.

NR: And it's a home down here that has a cannon ball inside of it. And going down New Point where Miss Lee used to live. She's got a cannonball on the wall. That was just—

RR: I don't know much about the Civil War. I know it's a whole lot of Civil War graves around here. There's a couple right back here. There's a cemetery back here on the creek.

NR: We have Captain Sally Tompkins, we have her home here

RR: She was a nurse.

NR: She helped the soldiers. I know Woodstock up here at Port Haywood—it's like a big white fence. You can't see the plantation but they used to have slave quarters across the road from it. But my grandfather used to be caretaker down there and they've got like places that you can hide in it, like false walls and stuff in the cellars so if the soldiers would come and want—I mean they'd come and just take over and take all the food and the sugar and the hams and everything they could find for their troops. And the family would hide, kind of like on *Gone with the Wind*, and a lot of that happened around here. Lot of large plantations here,

especially on the North River I think. That was in Civil War times. Lot of rich history.

T: Did you ever hear anything about Indians?

NR: Oh, yeah

RR: I've caught a lot of stuff clamming: Arrowheads.

T: We should talk about this. I want to know about that.

RR: Okay.

NR: You caught a mortar.

RR: Mm-hm, corn grinder. I gave that to David Von, what they used to mash corn. But you don't want to hear about that; she's worried about the Civil War now.

NR: Oh, no, I was telling her about the Indians. The *National Geographic* people came to Port Haywood across from where my aunt used to live—what's that little plantation that they used to call—

[Section omitted]

NR: Well, all around that shore they found and dug a reservation. And I think the landowners wouldn't let them popularize it like for school children, but I do remember when they found it and the National Geographic Society came and did a few things with it. School children did come down there for a while.

[Section omitted]

RR: She ought to go talk to Bobby Croxten. He can make arrowheads look original.

NR: Well, we find them. You can find arrowheads.

RR: Oh, yeah, you can find them around the shore. But I used to catch them. There's a place right off of here. I'm going to say it's off of Wolf Trap about two miles, and

it was right straight off of Winter Harbor, a little bit more up here. And it was a place off there. And it came up like fourteen feet of water and there was an island there at one time, you could tell. I caught arrowheads. I gave them all to Shirley Ann.

NR: But that mortar—didn't he take it to Jamestown, the pestle?

RR: It wasn't a mortar; it was just a thing for mashing corn.

NR: You could tell. It's just a piece of rock like this.

RR: I caught that, and then about two weeks later, I caught the piece they put the corn in. It's a round stone that was cut out. You know, you put the corn in there and then you mash it with this thing. I found tomahawk heads. I found pipes.

NR: Oh, lots of pipes

T: Oh that's cool.

RR: I don't have anything left, I don't believe. Kevin's got some shark teeth—

[End of interview]

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