TMP-001
Interviewee: Hugh Dischinger, Sr.
Interviewer: Jessica Taylor
Date: June 17, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor and Asia…

A: Alsgaard.

T: Interviewing Hugh Dischinger on June 17, 2013 at 3:30 p.m. Mr. Dischinger, can you please state your full name?

D: Hugh Charles Dischinger, Sr.

T: Senior. What is your date of birth?

D: March 4, 1924.

T: Okay, and where were you born?

D: Chicago, Illinois.

T: Really?

D: Mm-hm.

T: What were your parents' names and occupations?

D: My father's name was Irvin Ernest Dischinger. My mother's name was Evelyn Martha Bender Dischinger. My dad brought the family here to Gloucester from Chicago in 1927, because he was engaged by the East Coast Utilities Company to expand the telephone and electric power system in the area.

T: Okay. What about your mother?

D: My mother was a stenographer and court note keeper for the local judges, local court.

T: In Chicago, or here?

D: No, here.

T: Here. Okay. When did they move from Chicago to Gloucester?

D: In October of 1927.

T: So right after you were born?

D: Yeah, I was three years old.

T: Okay.

D: Yeah.

T: Okay. Do you have any siblings?

D: Yes, I had three brothers and no sisters.

T: So it was a family of boys.

D: Yeah.

T: What did your brothers end up doing?

D: We're all engineers except--there are only two of us left. The two middle ones are left. My oldest brother was an electrical engineer. My next-oldest brother was a civil engineer. He's still living; he's in a retirement home in Richmond. He's two years older than I am. I'm a civil engineer, licensed both as a professional engineer and as a land surveyor. My youngest brother went to Hampden-Sydney, and he was involved with engineering, but he was not an engineer himself. He worked for a lot of engineering companies. My oldest brother never graduated from college, but he went with a construction company, and he moved, worked all over the country, literally. He was probably the smartest one of the four of us, and whenever he moved to a new location, he would find a night school--a college night school--and attend classes there. So, he had all the credits but he never put them together to get a baccalaureate degree. [Laughter] My next brother, Jim, and I both went to VMI. Both of us graduated VMI in civil

engineering. Jim worked in civil engineering with **Stone Wesley** Engineering Corporation in Florida, a long time before he retired. I had a break in the middle of my education there due to World War II. I was in my second year at VMI and they put all of us that were attending VMI in reserve. I had an option: I was in the Field Artillery ROTC there when the Army Air Corps came around, and offered us an opportunity to get into the Army Air Corps Reserve. I said, well, I think I'd rather fly than walk around in this mud, so I joined the Army Air Corp Reserve. I was among the very first to be called up from VIM to go in the Army Air Corps. I spent four years out flying airplanes. I went back to VMI after the war and finished.

T: Did you actually serve in Europe or the Asian Theater?

D: The Asian Theater. I was a fighter pilot; I flew fighters.

[BREAK IN INTERVIEW]

D: We actually lived in the Botetourt Hotel, because we came from Chicago and he had arranged for us to have a house in West Point. You could come from Chicago all the way by train down to West Point, and so we did. That's the first time we had been down there; we hadn't been down there. Dad had a house for us there in West Point, and the pulp mill was in full blast. You know what I'm talking about? The pulp mill used to have the most terrible smell from the smoke. So we moved into the house that dad had gotten for us there, and we stayed there about two or three days. Mom says, I'm not staying here. So [Laughter] we pull up stakes and we came to Gloucester. Well, Dad had not found a house for us in Gloucester, so we lived in the Botetourt Hotel. His office was right straight

across the street from that, in that brick building that is still there. I don't know what it's used for now, but that was his office. That's how we got to Gloucester, and we lived in several different places around Gloucester.

T: When you lived in the Botetourt Hotel, what did it look like?

D: Well, it's very similar to what it is now. It had a porch that was very--people liked to come up to court days in those days--they had court days once a month. They had a bunch of rockers on that front porch. People used to love to get up there and sit down on it and rock. Court day was a big day in those days, back in the [19]20s and the [19]30s. All the people from Guinea would come up and sell fish and oysters and that kind of stuff. There was a lot of buying and selling, and people just enjoyed getting together. You didn't have television, you didn't--nobody listened to the radio in those days and that kind of stuff, you know? So, it was a gathering place and people would all come on court day. When we first got here, they didn't have a wall around the court green. Later on, they put a wooden fence around it, and then that was replaced with--the present brick wall was built by the WPA, I think about 1933 or somewhere along in there.

T: From court days, do you have any specific, particular moments that you remember?

D: [Laughter] Yes. One of the places that we lived was in a building that's still there. Now, if you're familiar with the court green, you know where the law office is--the Martin Law Office? The next building up the street from there--the brick building--two-story brick building with columns in the front of it--we lived in the apartment on the second floor of that. One day--court day was very popular, as I said, and

everybody came from all around the county. The sheriff we had then was a fellow named Eugene Rhodes. I don't know if you've run into that name. The story was--and I don't know whether it's true or not--that was that he had been a Texas Ranger. He had a six-shooter, and he wore the six-shooter. I was a kid at the time, and in that building we lived in, you could overlook what was going on outside. I used to get up into that window and just watch what was going on out there. One day, there was a prisoner--and that was when the court was all in the court building inside the court green there. Court was going on, and they had some guy in there that decided he wanted to make a break for it. So, he did. He ran out of the door and he came in my direction, towards where I was sitting up there in the window. And the sheriff was right behind him. [Laughter] The sheriff tackled him right in the middle of where the street is now, as it comes around and gets ready to turn back down to come down this way. He tackled him down and took him back into the courtroom and I saw that happen. [Laughter] But, you know, we had a lot of fun. The jail was in the old jail, in the court green there. That was interesting to us as kids because we went to Botetourt School and we would walk by there every day. The prisoners in there would sometimes holler at us and ask us to go buy cigarettes for them. There was a general store--it's no longer there, but--at the far end of the Botetourt Hotel. There was a store there, and they sold cigarettes. So these prisoners there would throw a dime out through the bars, and we'd take the dime and go over to the store and buy a pack of cigarettes and come back. They'd put a string out through the bars, and we'd tie the cigarettes on and they'd pull the cigarettes up. We did that I don't

know how many times, but that was routine for us on our way to school. I went to Botetourt School, the old elementary school, and I was in the sixth grade when they built the water tank. That's when we first got a water system in the Courthouse here. I was in the sixth grade and that was up on the second floor of that building and facing out onto Main Street. Across Main Street was where they were building the tank. I was fascinated with that because that was in the days when they still used hot rivets to put the tank together. There was a guy on the ground that would heat those rivets up so they were red hot, and he would throw them up. A guy would catch them in a cup, and put them in the hole and [claps] knock them home with a riveting machine. I watched that, and that may be what got me interested into going into civil engineering. [Laughter] I don't know.

T: Wow. What is your earliest memory of Main Street?

D: Well, not many--at the very earliest, there were as many horse and buggies as there were cars, but, you know, that gradually changed. But as far as the court green itself, there's been very little change in it. The location of the buildings there are pretty much the same as they were when I grew up. Of course, this end of Main Street--this house here was built, for instance, in 1928. It was like maybe the third or fourth house that was built on this street at that time. There were not as many houses in the Courthouse area as there are now, not by a long shot. But there's not a whole lot more now.

T: When did you notice that court days started dying out?

D: Well, I guess I kind of lost track, because in the [19]30s, they were still having court day but it was beginning--I would say probably in the late [19]20s, it began

to dwindle out. Then, I left the local school system in my junior year and followed my brother, Jim, to Christchurch School. So, I was out of the community from that point. But I guess it was probably the late [19]20s when you could--things really began to change.

T: Why do you think that was?

D: Well, we--in [19]27, when we came here, we were in the middle of the Depression. By [19]29, it was beginning to get a little bit better, then in the early [19]30s, a little bit better. Not a whole lot better, but a little bit better. I guess that was what began to change things. As I say, more automobiles began to show up and things like that. We didn't put those things together in those days, but that's what was happening.

T: Who did you notice that first got the automobile? Who was first in getting a car?

D: Probably Marshall Lewis, who was the president of the bank.

T: [Laughter] Yeah.

D: Do you know him?

T: I just--when you said it was a president of a bank, I thought…

D: Yeah. Well, we had--and, you know, and the lawyers. Used to call it Lawyers' Row on that side of the court green. All of those were law offices in those days, and we used to call that Lawyers' Row. As I said, my mother worked for one of them, who was a lawyer. Well--you know Catesby Jones? Well, it was Catesby Jones's grandfather that my mother worked for. He was a lawyer, and later became a lower court judge. My mother was his secretary.

T: Wow. You said that the lawyers and the judges were the first to get cars?

D: Yeah. Dr. Tabb--Harry Tabb--his house was on the corner of Duval and Main Street up here. The financial outfit, Wells Fargo, is in that house--that's the house that he lived in. His office was behind that. The small building behind that was his office. He had to have a car because that was the days when the doctors came to you. You didn't go to the doctor's. I know that because we were living in a house in Gloucester Point at the time. I was eight years old, and I developed double pneumonia. Dr. Tabb used to visit me every single day, and sometimes more than once a day, because I was very sick. It was in February of 1932, and it was cold out in that place. They had wood stoves to heat the house, and they had a wood stove in my room--they isolated me in one room--they had a wood stove and they heated that thing up until it was cherry red, kept feeding wood into it, and piling the covers up on me. My temperature went up; the highest it got was 106, and Dr. Tabb was very concerned about that. But, it broke and that was the end of the pneumonia. As soon as that fever broke, I was over it, and I got well. Dr. Tabb travelled around the county and visited patients twenty-four hours a day.

T: What other people were likely to get a car because they needed one?

D: I really don't know. I really don't know.

T: Okay.

D: I think--of course, people that lived outside of the village in farms and houses around in the countryside and worked in town, a lot of those people had to have automobiles to get into town. But as I was saying, as late as the late [19]20s,

they still arrived in buggies. But, most of them could get a Model T or something. You could buy a car for five hundred dollars in those days, a brand new car.

T: Did most people buy brand new cars?

D: Yeah. There was a dealership--Bob Fernholt. Have you heard that name? Well, Bob Fernholt owned a garage and sales place at the corner of Duval Avenue on the other corner up the street from there. The one that's still there that has the overhang over the sidewalk? That building. That's his place, and he sold Hudsons and--what was the thing? Terraplanes. Hudsons and Terraplanes. Now, you've never heard of those before, but they were made by the same company. There was a Ford dealership. Let me see. A fellow named Donny Hunt ran the Ford dealership. There were several of them. Wallace Robinson, who lived in the house directly across from Botetourt School had the Buick and Chevrolet dealership right down here where it is now. Oh gosh, it's not here anymore; it's up there where the food place is.

T: This was all in the [19]20s and [19]30s?

D: Yeah.

T: Okay. When did your family get a car?

D: My mother bought--my mother--my father and my mother separated. Dad had to go where the work was, and there wasn't any work in the kind of engineering he was doing. He was a construction engineer, so he left and went back to Chicago. Later on--it was years later before they finally divorced--but my mother decided that she was going to keep the family here. In 1935, I think it was, she decided that she wanted to make a trip back to Illinois, where she was from, to visit

relatives and friends there. So, she bought a 1933 Chevrolet, a used car, and we all packed in and piled into that thing and drove from here to Chicago. That was the first car I'd ever been in.

T: Wow. And you held onto it for a while?

D: Yeah. [Laughter] Couldn't do much else with it. I don't remember what she got when she got rid of that one. People kept their cars for quite a while then.

T: Makes sense.

D: Yeah.

T: Do you remember your earliest memory of the gas station? The Texaco on the corner of Main and 14?

D: Yeah, well, of course, my wife came from that family, you know.

T: Oh.

D: My wife was a Brown. Her maiden name was Thelma Anne Brown, and Jack Brown who owned the **place** was her uncle. In fact, come on in the other room. I'll show you pictures of her father.

T: Okay.

[BREAK IN INTERVIEW]

D: There were two doctors in the county: Harry Tabb and Dr. Clemmons, down at Hayes Store.

T: Right.

D: They were the two main doctors. I don't think there were any other doctors practicing in the county until my brother-in-law Raymond Brown came along. He and his brother Bill practiced here. I don't remember any other doctors.

T: So the Brown family owned the gas station, but you knew it as the gas station before you met your wife, right?

D: I didn't meet--my wife was four years younger than I. People used to ask me if I dated Anne when I was at Christchurch School. I said, no, we didn't date fourteen year-old girls in those days. [Laughter] They do now, but we didn't then. I didn't know her. I knew her brothers, but I didn't know her. I didn't actually meet her until after World War II when I came back. Her brother set that up. Had me come up to supper one night, and guess what? Anne's also invited.

T: [Laughter] Oh, wonderful. So, did your family go to the gas station that Captain Jack owned?

D: Go to what?

T: Go to the gas station that Captain Jack owned?

D: I didn't understand the last part.

T: Did your family go to the gas station that Captain Jack owned? The Texaco Station?

D: Yeah, I guess so. Bill Brown, as you probably know--Bill and Raymond grew up almost across the road from Uncle Jack. We were pretty closely related and when Anne and I got married, the two families got pretty close together then.

T: Do you remember the one-armed man at the gas station? Herman Brown--or, Howard Brown?

D: I remember the one-armed man. He was a Taylor, I'm thinking of. No, I didn't know--you're talking about a Dr. Wolf, I think, aren't you?

T: No, the-

D: Is his name Wolf?

T: The man that worked at the gas station that Captain Jack employed? No?

D: Oh. Oh, yeah. Sure…Heck, what's his name? Do you remember his name?

T: Is it Howard Brown?

D: Howard Brown. Yeah. Howard. Howard was a relative of my wife's, but not a close relative.

T: Do you remember anything specific about Captain Jack or Howard Brown or the gas station? Any memories stick out to you?

D: Captain Jack was kind of high and mighty. [Laughter] I was finally invited to dinner at his house one time when Anne and I were going together. That was a high compliment. [Laughter]

T: Oh.

D: But, I don't mean by that that he was a mean man at all. He just--I don't think he had a whole lot of real close friends. After all, being out there in Ware Neck, he pretty well stayed in Ware Neck. He would come out and visit down here at Edge Hill, and as he'd get other stations around, he'd go out there and visit. He didn't stay around long.

T: Where were his other stations?

D: He had one over at Mathews Courthouse. You know when you go into Mathews Courthouse there's a--I think his station's still there. You make a right turn and go down to Main Street in Mathews Courthouse. He had that station there. I think that was the first one, over there.

T: Oh, really?

D: Mm-hm.

T: What physically looks different to you about Main Street and the gas station than when you first remember it?

D: Well, I walked it a lot. My brother and I delivered the *Richmond Times-Dispatch* and we walked. We would pick up the newspapers at the corner of Duval Avenue and Main Street. One of us would go deliver papers from there up to the Newington Church, and the other one deliver them would go from there down to Edge Hill. We walked the streets all the time, and we never got away from that. Gloucester's always been my home.

T: So you were out there every day.

D: Yeah.

T: Were most people out there every day?

D: Not that time of day. [Laughter] We would deliver papers at six o'clock in the morning. We didn't see many people then.

T: When would people start arriving?

D: I don't know. I think it's pretty much the same as it is now. Most people in Gloucester County don't work in Gloucester County. They work over across the York River, most of them, or somewhere else. It was pretty much the same then, although I don't know that many of them worked across the river, but they lived on the farms surrounding the village. So, they didn't come to the village unless they had to.

T: How often would you see friends that you had from not immediate Main Street area, but surrounding areas?

D: Okay, well, the Fields family--there were two brothers, Catesby Field, and--what was the other one's name? One of them lived--if you go out of here and you go turn up there by Botetourt School and go to the reservoir, okay? He had a farm up there, just before you get to where the reservoir is now. We used to visit over there quite often. Every day in the summertime, we'd walk over there because he had made himself a pool of water over there to feed his horses and cows, and we turned it into a swimming pool. We'd go there every summer and go swimming in that pool. Then, the other Field--daggonit, I can't think of what his first name was--I'll think of it after a while. He was on the Route 14, oh, I don't know, about a mile and a half past--the dang place has a name. Holly Hill. You know Holly Hill Farm? That's where the other Field lived. We used to visit there. One of his sons was our age, and we used to go over there and visit. By visit, I mean, we'd spend a weekend. We'd go over there and spend a weekend with them.

T: Would you get there in the car?

D: Yeah. Stephen Field: that's the one who had Holly Hill.

T: Oh, okay.

D: He had one of the first cars. So he would bring us. We'd go out there for a weekend and he'd bring us back on Monday or Sunday night or Monday, something like that. That was a real thrill. We'd get to ride in his car from out there back here to the Courthouse.

T: Wow. [Laughter] So, you're a teenager, and you have access to your mom's car. What do you do on the weekends?

D: It was kind of tough, [Laughter] but you know.

T: What did you do on Friday nights or on the weekends?

D: About the only thing--well, we had a skating rink. You know about the skating rink? That was very popular when I was a teenager. Everybody--all the kids went over there. Other than that, wasn't much else to do except go to the movies. We would go to the theater and go to the movies. One night, my brother and I were at the movies down here and Brown Fernholt was the manager of that theater. He did the whole works. You know, he had a projectionist that would go up there and run the projector for him, but sometimes he'd get sick or something so Brown would do it himself. My brother, Jim, and I were at a movie one night and we were sitting there and all of a sudden the lights went out. Well, that was nothing really unusual. That happened from time to time, a lot more than it does nowadays. So, we sat there and we sat there and we sat there and nothing happened. The projection room in the theater then was up on a platform there at the back of the hall. You had to climb a ladder to get up there. All of a sudden, Brown comes out of the projection room and he says, a hurricane has hit Woods Crossroads. He said, that's why the lights are out. He said, we're not going to get them back. So, everybody started getting out of the theater. Brown waited till everybody had got out, and my brother, Jim, and I were standing there. He said, come on. He said, let's go up there and see what's going on up there. We got in the car with him and went up to Woods Crossroads. It had knocked the building down right there at Woods Crossroads. Actually, it was a tornado. He called it a hurricane, but a tornado. The thing I remember about that was that a horse got down the well and they were trying to get the horse out of the well [Laughter]

when we got there. But it was a very localized damage. Right at that intersection was about the only place that was really damaged.

T: That's a really great story. Do you have any other ones like that about Main Street?

D: I got a million of them. [Laughter]

T: Well, tell me some of them.

D: No. [Laughter] No, but I can't think of them much anymore. See, I'm eighty-nine years old. My memory's not as good as it used to be.

T: Okay, well, here's an example. Ronnie Stubblefield--do you know who that is?

D: Yeah. I know the name, but I can't say I know him.

T: He told me about every single time he went cruising for chicks. [Laughter] Did you ever go cruising for chicks?

D: No.

T: No?

D: I don't think so.

T: No. He also said there were watering holes.

D: Yeah.

T: Was that the case in the [19]30s?

D: Yeah, I think so.

T: Can you think of any specifically?

D: No. [Laughter]

T: No?

D: No.

T: Prohibition was--do you remember any of Prohibition?

D: Yes, I remember Prohibition. My dad was a non-drinker. Dad didn't drink at all. But back in the [19]30s, at Christmastime for instance, the families in the Courthouse there would get together and they'd go from house to house to house to house on Christmas Day and visit, you know. There'd always be eggnog and sometimes just hard liquor there for plenty of people to drink. Dad, as I said, wouldn't drink. Finally, one time they convinced him. People kept saying, well, go on, go on, have a drink! Finally, they convinced him to have a drink. So, he did. Then he went to the next place and had another drink. Went to the next place, had another. Next thing I knew, they were dragging him in, laying him out on the sofa. [Laughter] He was out. But, Dad was not a drinker. I don't know that he ever drank after that.

T: Wow. [Laughter] There are a lot of really great Main Street traditions now, like the Daffodil Festival and the Halloween Parade. Do you remember anything like that?

D: I remember the school parades. They did it by class, formed by class and paraded down there. Yes, we participated in some of those.

T: Yeah? Did you have a float?

D: I can't remember that my grade sponsored a float, but a lot of them did. There were a lot of really nice floats that people spent a lot of time on, putting those things together. In fact, I think I've got movies of those things here somewhere.

T: Oh, really?

D: Yeah.

T: Wow. Wow. So where would the school parade to?

D: They'd usually start up--well, either at what was then the high school, or maybe even further up at Newington Church or somewhere up there and parade down as far as Edge Hill. Then they'd disperse from there. But they went in that direction. Nowadays, they go this way.

T: Oh, really?

D: Yeah, I don't know why that is. I guess I do know why it is. It's because of that big parking lot down there in front of Edge Hill. That's a good place for them to congregate. That wasn't there back in the [19]30s.

T: Did they have the Daffodil Festival when you were a kid?

D: My wife was involved in the Daffodil Festival. They gave her that picture there because she was chairman of it one time. I don't remember it much when I was growing up. I don't think they had it then. But the flower industry--and it was an industry in those days--a lot of people grew daffodils and sold them at market. I can see--the boxes were about this long, and about that wide, and about that deep. I've done it myself--they'd hire kids and sometimes grown-ups to pick the flowers. You'd pick them and you'd put fifteen of them in a bunch, and you'd put a rubber band around them, and then it would go into the box. I don't know how many bunches would go into a box like that. But then they'd take those boxes, and they'd take them all the way to Baltimore for sale. But, I don't know when the so-called Daffodil Festival started. I don't think that was until after World War II, but I'm not sure.

T: Okay. Do you remember anything about segregation on Main Street at all?

D: No, except that it was a fact. [Laughter] Well, when I was growing up, I mean, it was just a given. Everybody accepted it, or at least everybody--all the whites accepted it. I don't know how the blacks felt about it. Well, I can imagine how they felt about it. I think they accepted it because it was an outgrowth of the Civil War, so they were used to being segregated. So, I think it was a welcome thing to them. They were--I think a lot of the blacks that I knew were uncomfortable with it, because I think they felt like it was something being forced and not something that they had generated themselves. See what I mean?

T: Do you mean integration or segregation?

D: Now, I'm talking about when it changed from segregation to integration.

T: Oh, okay.

D: Okay?

T: Is this a conversation that you had with black friends that you knew?

D: Well, I had no black friends my age. My mother always had a black maid…a girl named Harriet Lemon. Harriet Lemon. You know the name Lemon? That was a very prominent black name, and it was a big family and very, very well-liked by everybody. Harriet Lemon was one of the maids that my mother had. Usually, the families around here--the Corr family, who lived up the--you know where Marty **Haskell** lives? Not right next to it, but the second house this side of Botetourt School--big two-story house, sits back off the road. That was owned by W.E. Corr, who had a store here. They had a black maid. I'll bet you she had been there for forty, forty-five years. They literally became part of the family back in the [19]30s. They spent--some of them had live-in quarters at the houses that they

served in. I think the Corrs had a place there for theirs. I can't think of what that woman's name is now, but anyhow. As I say, we did not as children and teenagers--we didn't associate with blacks.

T: Did you notice that they--black people came down to Main Street or to court days? Did they patronize businesses on Main Street?

D: Well, they were there, but I don't know whether they congregated as groups at all. They may have, I just didn't--if they did, I didn't notice it.

T: So they were there on court days?

D: Yeah, I'm sure they were there, but many of them were--as I say, there was a lot of buying and selling going on. A lot of them participated in that. Woody Corr's father, as I said, ran a store there. I don't know, I guess…Woody and I were the same age and grew up together. Woody was killed in World War II. He was a gunner on a B-24 that got blown up and he got killed. He was seventeen years old and he'd already been in the army a year and a half. But anyhow, Woody's father had this store on the corner there at the court green. He sold groceries, he sold clothes; this was a general store. It had everything in there. In the back room, he had all sorts of meal and stuff for the farmers around, all that kind of stuff. One day--when somebody ordered something out of the ordinary, they would have it sent to Corr's store, and then they'd go there and pick it up. And somebody ordered an upright piano. And this piano came in there and it was in a box, a box about that wide and about this tall and it was straight up for about three feet and then it had a slope up to the top. The top was about this wide, see? So Woody and I said, man. We're going to use this thing for court day. So,

we did. We took that slab off of the slanted part up here and that made a perfect counter and we sold stuff [Laughter] out of that box. We had stuff in there we would sell--sandwiches and stuff like that for on court days. We set it up outside the store. [Laughter]

T: Wow. That's wonderful. When court days ended as a social event, what would bring people down to the courthouse green, maybe in the [19]60s or [19]70s, even?

D: Well, we still liked to come to court, but this was the business area in the county. You know, they'd come here and go to the bank, and they'd come here to the insurance offices and so forth. Lawyers' offices. A lot of those were right here in the village. That's what drew them in when they had business to do.

T: Yeah. What do you see Main Street looking like in the next twenty or thirty years? What's your vision for it?

D: Not much different.

T: No? You want it to stay the same? [Laughter]

D: [Laughter] It hadn't changed in the past thirty years. I don't think it's going to change much.

T: Okay.

D: [Laughter] There isn't much you can do to it. I noticed they're talking about, you know, something about widening Main Street or something like that and they can't do it, because the buildings up there have different setbacks. So, you have a problem getting a setback that fits everything. You know, being a civil engineer, that's something that I can appreciate.

T: Yeah. [Laughter]

D: I've done a lot of design work like that, and that would be a problem. [Hugh Dischinger designed the football stadium at Christchurch School, which was named for him upon completion.]

T: Right. So the fact that Main Street can only really accommodate so much, but the county itself is growing exponentially-

D: Well, it's interesting, because I don't know if you've seen it or not but the original layout in lots of Gloucester Courthouse didn't actually develop that way. Have you ever seen that plat? Okay. Well, on that plat you'll notice that there's a Main Street, which is just like it is now. Then there's a South Street over there that's parallel to Main Street. There's a North Street over here. North Street ain't here. This part of it never developed; South Street did. That's the one that goes up behind the Presbyterian Church.

T: Wow.

D: That doesn't go all the way through. That just goes part of the way through. But that was on the original plat for Gloucester Courthouse.

T: What do you see the village of Gloucester Courthouse--how do you see it fitting into larger Gloucester County as it kind of becomes a bedroom community?

D: It's going to be in competition with Gloucester Point, I think. Gloucester Point's growing faster than Gloucester Courthouse. You're going to see increased growth along Route 17; that's always going to happen. As a matter of fact, my company wrote a report for the county back in--when was this?--about 1955 or something like that. There were two things that we recommended in that report,

and one of them was that the county develop a water reservoir, which we now have. The other thing was that they bypass Gloucester Courthouse. That's the bypass over there, exactly where we had it planned in our report. My brother-in-law Fred Brown was working, selling automobiles up here in his Buick place up here at the end of Lewis Avenue across the street over there. He jumped all over me for that. He said, man, what are you trying to do? You're going to ruin our sales! He said, you're going to make people go on a bypass instead of coming by here?" I said, Fred, how many people are driving from Maine to Florida and stop in here and buy a Buick from you? I said. [Laughter] We got in trouble for it, but that developed that way. We missed the boat on not doing it on this side of the courthouse. We should have a bypass over here. But, of course, the deterrent there is Beaverdam Swamp. You've got to cross Beaverdam Swamp.

T: Right. What was the other resistance that you met to the bypass? I imagine, because of all the Main Street businesses, it was large.

D: Yeah, well, when we made that report, the traffic count was building. Of course, it's a lot worse now than it was then, even with the bypass. That was really--our feeling was the only way to handle that would be to build a bypass to get that traffic around the village and not through it.

T: I don't really have anything else to ask for this part. Do you have anything? Okay, I'm going to stop it, unless you have anything else you want to share?

D: Nope, I'm through.

T: You sure?

[INTERRUPTION IN INTERVIEW]

T: This is Jessica Taylor with the Samuel Proctor Oral History Program and Library of Congress cooperation for the Veterans History Project at the American Folklife Center. I'm interviewing Hugh Dischinger in Gloucester Courthouse, Virginia on June 17, 2013 at 4:15 p.m. Mr. Dischinger, can you please state your rank?

D: My rank? I was a captain when I came out.

T: Okay. What was your unit and department?

D: I was in the Army Air Corps and became a flyer. Got my wings at Luke Field in Phoenix, Arizona and flew fighter aircraft. Flew just about all the types of single-engine fighter aircraft that we had, except for one. I flew a twin-engine P-38 Lightning; the rest of them were all single-engine.

T: When did you first become part of that?

D: I was a student at VMI when World War II began. I was transferred from the Field Artillery ROTC to the Army Air Corps ROTC, which then became the reserves for those two branches.

T: Did you have a specific battalion that you enlisted with?

D: Let's see. I was in the 413th fighter squadron of the 414th fighter group.

T: Okay.

D: That was one of them. Let's see. The other one—I was in the Forty-second squadron of the Fifteenth fighter group.

T: Okay.

D: At Iwo Jima.

T: Okay. So you served in the Pacific theater?

D: Yes.

T: What was your specific campaign, do you remember?

D: Well, they sent my group overseas as a P-47 group. That was the 413th fighter squadron of the 414th group. They sent us to Hawaii, and we left Seattle, Washington on New Year's Eve of 1945. Of course, being flyers, they sent us down by boat. If we had been in the Navy, they would have flown us down. We went down by ship to Hawaii, went to Honolulu, where we disembarked there. But our base was at Waikoloa Air Base, which was up the coast from Honolulu. We had been formed of a group and we expected to go into the combat area as a group. It didn't happen. We were one of five, what they call then, V.L.R.—very long range fighter groups. Those groups had been designed specifically for escort duty, escorting B-29s to Japan. They were called very long range because up to that point, places like Okinawa and Iwo Jima were not accessible for us. So, the closest to Japan was Tinian, and so we were sent to Honolulu, to the Hawaiian Islands, in anticipation of moving into the forward bases when they were taken. It just so happened that my particular group was not among the first to leave there. The other groups left ahead of us and made those occupations. So, we wanted to stay together because we flew together, we had been flying together for a number of months and so forth. We knew each other very well and how to react in different situations, so we wanted to stay together in one group. As I say, it didn't happen. They kept moving other groups ahead of us and so some of us got together and said, we want to get into a combat area. We had to volunteer to do that, so I volunteered and I was sent from the Hawaiian Islands to Iwo Jima.

T: When was this? Do you remember the date that you went to Iwo Jima from Hawaii?

D: Well, I was getting ready to say. When I landed at Iwo Jima, it was in, I think, August of 1945. The war was over in September, the next month. I never made a flight to Japan, but I was on Iwo Jima when the war ended. We stayed around there after the war ended. The way they rotated people in and out of different units, at that time they had a point system set up. You gained certain number of points for how long you'd been into the service, how long you'd been here, how long you'd been there, and so forth. So, the people that had a large number of points, they were the ones that went home first. That meant that they'd had more service than everybody else. Those of us that had fewer points, we stayed more around. They shifted us around from one base to another but kept us in the theater. So, that's what happened to me. After the war ended, they took my outfit and sent us to the Philippines. Well, we couldn't fly directly from Iwo Jima to the Philippines. That's too long a flight. You had to fly from Iwo Jima to Okinawa, and then from Okinawa down to the Philippines. I was a flight leader at the time, and I was taking off. We were making our movement to go to Okinawa, and I was the next of the last plane in our group to take off and I had a wingman on my right taking off from Iwo. I had an engine failure. So, he was right on my wing and I had to instruct him to get by me before I could take any action about my engine failure. Otherwise, if I tried to pull the wheels up, which is what you normally do in a case like that, we'd have wrecked two airplanes instead of one. So, I got him to go by me and once he got clear of me, then I could start taking action. Then I

started putting the breaks on. By that time, I got down to the end of the runway and I was going too fast. I went off the end of the runway. Plane caught fire. I had turned the switches off and I'd opened the canopy to get out of the cockpit, the whole nine yards. I got up to get up out of the cockpit and—you sat on your parachute. When I got up about like this, my parachute caught on the canopy. I hadn't opened the canopy all the way. [Laughter] So I had to sit back down in the cockpit, turn the switches back on, open the canopy farther, and then get out of the airplane. The crash crew was sitting there watching me, and they said they never saw anybody get out of an airplane so fast in their life. [Laughter] But I didn't get a scratch; ruined the airplane. Just shoved that over into the ocean. That was the end of that one. I had two accidents while I was on Iwo. That was one of them, and the other one was a mid-air collision in a P-51. The guy flew through a flight of four of us and hit three of us. Two of the five planes involved—two of the pilots bailed out. My wingman and I landed safely, but it had knocked my engine out. I didn't have any engine. We were about six thousand feet, and I was able to land the—First of all, I had to make a decision: either bail out or try to make a deadstick landing with no engine. I said, I don't think I want to get out of this airplane. [Laughter] I made a deadstick landing in a P-51. They had to replace the engine in that P-51. I flew it out later back down to Tinian. After the war ended, I flew it down there for disposal. We got down to the Philippines, and depending on who needed people in those days, I was flying either P-51 Mustangs or P-47. I was shifted back and forth between flying those two airplanes. When we went down to the Philippines, we flew P-47s down there. We

were at Clark Field, stayed there a month or six weeks and they moved us to a fighter strip down south of there. Was out in the desert, about a hundred and twenty degrees, no trees. [Laughter] It was very hot. Then, we got our first jets: the P-80s. They were brand new. We had civilians pilots bring them in to us. They brought them in by ship down to Manila. They unloaded them there and then they flew them up to our base. The civilian pilots gave us eleven hours of ground school and no flight instruction at all. So, that's what we had: eleven hours of ground school and got in and pushed the go pedal and took off. [Laughter] That's how I learned to fly jets. I was the third man in the outfit to fly them. The squadron commander checked out, and the operations officer, who was second in command in the squadron, took off. He was second man, and I was number three. And it was a big deal. Everybody got so excited about it; everybody would come down to the flight line and watch you take off and land, because jets were really something to see. So I took off on my flight and I cleared the field and by the time I leveled off, I was at twelve thousand feet. Well, I was used to flying a P-51. Normally, I'd be at about five thousand feet. With the jet, I was up at twelve thousand feet. So, the control tower called me on the radio and said, we're not sure your landing gear is all the way up, so how about flying by the tower and let us check it? Well, I knew what. They wanted me to buzz the field, is what they wanted me to do. [Laughter] So, I did. I peeled off from twelve thousand feet, and I leveled off. I went down the runway about ten feet off the runway, and when I went by the tower, I was doing 550 miles an hour. That

doesn't sound like much now, but in 1946, that was really moving. That was a real thrill. [Laughter] I got five, six flights in the P-80, and then I came home.

T: That's wonderful. And you know what? That's exactly fifteen minutes. Thank you, sir.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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