

TMP-004

Interviewee: William Weaver

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: June 15, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor and William Weaver-

W: Bill Weaver.

T: Bill? Okay. Bill Weaver, on June 15, 2013 at around 3:15 p.m. Before I ask him the general questions, Bill Weaver had something on his mind about the gas station.

W: [Laughter] Okay. I was going to say what I remember as much as anything was that I grew up on a farm that was about six miles out of town. Among other services that this service station provided was to sell fuel oil and gasoline, and oil and grease products to farmers. My father used to buy his products here. Actually, they delivered them to the farm. We didn't actually come in and pick them up; you just made a telephone call. Captain Jack Brown was the owner, and he would deliver fuel oil and also diesel fuel and gasoline and all the grease products. He had the whole line of products, so we did purchase them here. When my father retired and then passed away, we ended up with a Texaco gas tank from here that was actually- because they would set up a tank in the ground for you- several tanks in the ground if you had several different types of fuel. As I recall, they delivered the tank and you dug the hole, but at least you had the tanks. When my father went out of business, he ended up with a couple of Texaco gas pumps, which at the time were just expendable. Now, I think they probably have some value to them. My daughter, who lives now in Newport, Rhode Island, has one in her backyard that she hauled up there from the farm. It's heavy, as I recall [Laughter], because I helped move it. It's a Texaco gas tank

that- a gas pump; it wasn't a tank, it was a pump- that originated here at this service station.

T: Where's the other one?

W: I don't know. I don't really know at all where it is. They may have come to pick it up. It seems like to me that at the time Captain Jack Brown had passed away- and I'm not sure who was running the station. It may have been his daughter and son-in-law, who was Andy, Senior- not Andy, Junior, but Andy, Senior. But it seems like to me that they just said it didn't have any value. Keep them.

[Laughter] So, that's what happens. Things don't have value, and then if they become old enough, they have value again. But anyway, a little interesting sidebar.

T: So who delivered the fuel and grease to you?

W: It was delivered by a person driving a Texaco gas truck. They drove up on the farm, and it had several, you know, tanks in it. These would just be straight trucks. Today, you see the fuel trucks and tractor trailers and even longer, but these were just straight, six-wheel trucks. They would just drive up and fill your tanks up.

T: Wow.

W: They actually put in as much as you ordered, and then you usually had, you know, some oil for- in the tractors and the other equipment, and grease. So they just kind of just threw that on the side of the truck, and that was delivered as well.

T: Okay.

W: It was all Texaco products and Haviland was the oil brand for Texaco- Haviland Motor Oil and Haviland Greases. They were, I guess, also sold by Texaco, because that was the oil and grease brand, was Haviland.

T: So Captain Jack would- you would order them through Captain Jack?

W: Yeah, you would order here. I don't think you'd necessarily talk to him personally, but you called the station and placed the order, and they would deliver whatever you ordered.

T: Wow.

W: Yep. That was fairly common, I guess. I can't imagine that my father was the only one that had that service. There were at least another one or two oil distributors in the county that did the same thing.

T: Do you remember which ones they are?

W: Yes, I think I can tell you. One of them was Phillips, who now still exists as Phillips Energy. Matter of fact, they bought out the fleet of trucks that used to be owned by Andy, Junior. They, I think, are the over-the-road transporters of the fuel into the station- into the depot down at the low end of the county. It's called Phillips Energy. That was L.P. Phillips, was I guess the grandfather of the current people.

T: Wow.

W: He had an oil business. I'm trying to think. I think his was Mobil- Mobil, which is now Mobil...

T: Exxon.

W: Exxon-Mobil, right.

T: Yeah.

W: Okay. Then the other one was Herschel Shackleford. Herschel Shackleford. He was Amoco, and he had a similar service. Their big movers were fuel oil. That's what they used to deliver to- you know, most homes were heated by fuel oil, which is not true anymore, but that's the way it was fifty years ago.

T: Yeah.

W: So that was their big mover, was fuel oil. This service station, obviously, sold gas, but I'd be willing to bet that was a relatively small part of the overall business, because fuel oil was a big portion. We used to buy fuel oil from here as well to heat the house. Yes, it was- and it was certainly a key location right here at the corner of south Main Street and Route 14.

T: If you had to describe what Captain Jack had that the others didn't have, that kept him in business-

W: Well, he certainly dealt with service; there's no question about that. He was the one and only in the village, I believe. The others were south of town. He was recognized in the community as being a public servant- not that the others weren't particularly, because I think they were. I think they were friendly competitors, and there was enough business for all three of them. I have no idea what percentage of the overall business he had, but I would have to think that he had his fair share.

T: Right.

W: The oil that he- at least some of it- and you've probably been told this, and Andy, Junior can fill you in in great detail, but a lot of it came in by barge and came in

down at Ware Neck. They had a station down- not a station, but a depot- right along the river. I think the tanks may still be there, but maybe not. But, it was down in Ware Neck and they'd come in and they'd truck it up here, you see. I'm sure that a lot of it was trucked directly from down there out to the different locations. It didn't necessarily come through this station at all. I mean, billed through this station but the fuel probably originated in Ware Neck and was delivered from Ware Neck.

T: Right.

W: Well, it makes sense. The two bays that we're sitting in- and, as I recall, some of the older pictures- now, I don't remember that far back- but it was one bay and then they added the second bay.

T: Right.

W: These were service bays for vehicles, and I can remember when I was in college, I brought my car into one of these two bays to have the oil changed. I remember coming in specifically for that purpose. Typically on the farm, when I lived on the farm, we did all that on the farm. We didn't really bring them into town to have them serviced. We'd just service them right on the spot, and change filters and oil. In those days, you had to lubricate them, which is- today, it's a thing of the past. You don't have to lube them anymore, but you used to have a lube bay and an oil bay. This service station had that.

T: Okay. I have a bunch of follow-up-

W: Go ahead.

T: -questions to ask you. Okay.

W: Go.

T: What did you mean when you said Andy- or, Captain Jack- was a public servant?

W: Well, the one thing that I noticed as a kid growing up, is anytime there was a publication- and they used to sell a lot of ads- he always had an ad in the publication. You know, I mean it would be J.C. Brown Oil Company with maybe a picture. There were always businesses in the community that you could count on to support the community. One, of course, as you might imagine, was the Bank of Gloucester [Laughter] which is now the SunTrust. But, they always had a big ad. J.C. Brown seemed to always have a big ad in any program. I think they did more of that in those days than they do now, because you used to sell ads in everything. I played football in high school. Well, they had programs, you know, and they would have- they'd sell ads in the programs. He would have an ad in the program, and it would say Texaco products, a full line of Texaco products, or whatever, J.C. Brown. I'm not sure that he didn't use a Ware Neck address, but I may be wrong. You could probably look that up and see. I'm not sure he used a Gloucester address. It doesn't make any difference; the station was here, that's for sure.

T: Yeah. So I've got to ask you some ugly questions.

W: Do. Do. How old am I?

T: That's exactly right. [Laughter]

W: Nothing ugly about that.

T: What's your date of birth?

W: Six, twenty-nine, 1940. I'll be seventy-three in two weeks.

T: So you went to school with Ronnie Stubblefield?

W: He was younger, but I remember him.

T: Okay.

W: We rode the same bus.

T: Okay.

W: Yeah, he lived just right down the road.

T: Okay.

W: He's probably about five years younger than I am, I'm not sure.

T: Guess two.

W: Two? Only two?

T: Yeah. [Laughter]

W: Well, anyway, I remember him. Yep. Ronnie Stubblefield.

T: So it's about the same time.

W: Yep, about the same time. Yep.

T: Okay, so then you were- then you were in college about 1960, 1959?

W: [19]58 to [19]62.

T: [19]58 to [19]62.

W: Then I went back to grad school. So I was in school for several times.

T: Okay so, Class of [19]57?

W: Class of [19]58.

T: Class of [19]58

W: Class of [19]58.

T: Okay.

W: Gloucester High School. Our class was the first one to go all the way through the consolidated high school-

T: Wow.

W: -which became a middle school. Then two years ago a tornado took it out. Are you from Gloucester? No, but you're familiar with the-

EB: Yeah, yeah.

W: -the tornado-

EB: Yeah, yeah, right here.

W: -right here on the road. I have a brick from Gloucester High School slash Page Middle School. [Laughter] There's nothing there now; they've completely scraped off the site and they're building a replacement across the road.

T: Okay.

W: But our class was the first one that went all the way through. Before that, there were two- two high schools in the county.

T: Okay.

W: Boutetourt and Achilles. They've consolidated into Gloucester.

T: Got it. Now that I understand your timeline a little bit better, did you have a car in high school?

W: Did I have a car? I didn't have a car. The family had a car-

T: Okay.

W: -that I could use when somebody else didn't need to use it.

T: Okay.

W: I was the elder of two siblings, and so I had first dibs as far as siblings were concerned.

T: Okay.

W: My junior and senior year, I drove a lot, simply because we had athletic- you know- football, basketball practices. So, I did drive.

T: See, that's what I was going to ask you, because-

W: We didn't have horse and buggies. Now, I'm not quite that old.

T: No, no, no, no, no. [Laughter] So the family car- I've been asking everybody, if you're a football player on a Friday night, where do you go? And then they say, I'm not a football player. Now, you're a football player.

W: So what'd you do on Friday night?

T: Yeah.

W: You went and played football, in the fall.

T: Yeah?

W: In the fall.

T: And then what?

W: You mean winter and spring?

T: Yeah.

W: Okay. Well, winter and spring- typically, in Gloucester- and you're from Mathews.

EB: No, no. I'm from Cleveland, Ohio.

W: Oh.

EB: I work for Dave and Thane and love them and come back every year.

W: Oh, I see.

EB: Now I'm going to school in Williamsburg, so.

W: Oh, so you went to- you went to William and Mary?

EB: Yeah.

W: Oh, okay. The high school- now, this was- this was pre-1964. So the schools were segregated; they were not integrated. In high school, we- every Friday night, they would- not every- I'd say almost every Friday night, there was a sock hop of some sort. The high school tended to be the social center of the county.

T: Okay.

W: Because Gloucester was not like it is now. The bridge was down there, going across to Yorktown, but the river was thought of as barrier. Newport News was not where Newport News is now. Newport News was down where the shipyard is. So, Newport News was a long ways away. We used to go to Williamsburg occasionally, go to the theater over there. The movie theater, which is still there- was it Kimball, or something, I think?

EB: Kimball Theater? Yeah.

W: I'm not sure where- was it called that then? I'm not- same location, because I remember going there in high school. We were pretty much self-contained. There was a sock hop, usually at the high school in the gym on Friday night. A lot of times, there would be one after the football game or the basketball game if you had a basketball game. But yep, that was the center of social activity.

T: Okay. If you have your family's car for the night-

W: Yep.

T: -or for the weekend-

W: Well, it would just be the night, because I'd be living at home, so I'd be going back.

T: Oh, that's right. Okay.

W: Yep. We'd go out on dates, you know, movies. Typically, you didn't go out to eat, because you didn't have any money. There weren't that many restaurants in Gloucester.

T: Okay.

W: I just- I don't ever remember going out to eat as a family.

T: Well, where do you go on a date then?

W: Movies.

T: Movies.

W: Go to the movies. You go to the sock hop at the high school.

T: Okay.

W: That would kind of be it. Yep.

T: That would be it.

W: Yep.

T: Okay. What would bring you to Main Street as a high schooler or-

W: The main street was Main Street at that point. The businesses were active. Not that they're not now particularly, but commerce was Main Street. It started here and went basically to the court circle. You had several grocery stores- a couple of grocery stores- A & P, Colonial Stores. You had a couple of large furniture stores, drug stores- a couple drug stores, and other just kind of general

merchandise. Western Auto, and those types of stores. They were all between here and the court circle.

T: Okay.

W: The buildings are basically still there. There were a couple pool halls- things that high school kids weren't supposed to go to because they sold beer. [Laughter] So we weren't supposed to be in there.

T: Were you in there?

W: No. I've- I basically didn't. It just wasn't- no.

T: No.

W: We couldn't buy beer, so what would you go in there for?

T: That's true.

W: Right across the road was Southern States, and it's still there. It was in this little brick building that's really kind of cute. That was Southern States, that all back behind that one there. This area over here that's a shopping center now was just an open field, and that's where the carnival used to come in the summertime.

T: Wow.

W: The carnival would set up. It had Ferris Wheels and all that. It was in this- and it was nothing in that field at all. It was just grass.

T: Wait, you're the first person to talk about a carnival.

W: Yep.

T: So, where did they come from-

W: I have no idea. They were on a circuit.

T: Yeah.

W: Just like they're always on a circuit. They'd be sponsored by the American Legion or the Lions Club or some local entity would sponsor them, and they'd come in here for maybe a four-day weekend, usually just a four-day weekend.

T: In the summer months?

W: Summer months, right.

T: Okay.

W: Oh, yeah. They've had carnivals and stuff in Gloucester for a hundred and fifty years.

T: Okay.

W: I'm chair of the county's Civil War Commemoration Committee.

T: Right.

W: The last muster, which happened in 1860, talks about the circus coming to town, and they had Bengal tigers and an elephant. This was 1860.

T: Wow.

W: So, I mean, they've been coming for a long time.

T: Yeah.

W: But this would have been a- just a typical carnival with- it would not have had girly shows and all that. It would have been more just rides.

T: Yeah.

W: Probably no real animals, I don't think. You know, you threw bottles, balls at bottles and all these things. All the little booths around.

T: Right.

W: And then you had- always have a Ferris Wheel, and a Whip of some sort.

[Laughter] It would have been just a typical three-day carnival that would have gone here, and next weekend would have been somewhere else, you know?

T: Yeah.

W: Load it on trucks and took it off.

T: Absolutely.

W: Yep. So that used to be right over here in that open lot. They had it other places, too, but that's where I remember when I was wrong coming through-

T: Yeah.

W: -was- it would have been right over there where they're renovating it for the umpteenth time. [Laughter]

T: Where did your parents go when they went on errands?

W: They came here. Well, not here to the store, but to the village.

T: Right.

W: Because that's where all commerce in the county would've taken place. The country stores were much more active, too. There were a couple of those that were in between where we- we lived out on a place called Clay Bank, which is- I live on the water now, but we lived on a farm. It was about six miles out. There were a couple country stores that had lots of stuff of all descriptions, you know: shoes, work clothes, groceries. Not a lot of produce, but canned goods. Some of them had meats and the like. We had two what we call supermarkets in Gloucester. One was A & P, which I think still exists- not here, but other places-

EB: It's alive, yeah.

W: At that time, I think it was the largest supermarket chain in the US. It was the Great Atlantic Pacific Tea Company. It was what A & P stood for. The other one was Colonial Stores. I don't know they still exist-

EB: Don't think so.

W: They had a full range of groceries produce. They were set up like a modern grocery store, other than they weren't real big. But the country stores- basically, you went in and gave the owner a list, and everything was behind the counter. He'd fill your order while you were sitting there next to the stove talking to the locals, and he'd fill your order. Here, they- you know, this was modern. You'd go in and do your own shopping. And small department stores, and the like: it was all right in this area. Now, when we went big-time shopping, we'd go to Richmond. Not Newport News, not Williamsburg, but Richmond.

T: What's in Richmond that you can't get anywhere else?

W: Well, to start with, Newport News wasn't real close, and the bridge came in fairly soon thereafter, so you had a ferry to deal with. It was just quicker. In Richmond, the stores are right downtown, you had right around the Capitol, whereas everything now is out towards Charlottesville, so it's not close. But in those days, they had Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers. They were the two classic stores in Virginia-

T: Wow.

W: -that you could buy anything at. I mean, anything being in the line of clothes and that sort of thing. That's where the women would go to shop: the Miller & Rhoads

and Thalhimers in Richmond. That was kind of- that was the location. Not Newport News, particularly.

T: Yeah.

W: Which is now- it's Newport News.

T: Yeah.

W: You hardly ever go to Richmond anymore, because Richmond has moved out to the west end of town, and Newport News has moved this way. Newport News is almost in Williamsburg. So, it's moved this way quite a bit.

T: I mean, this is before your time, of course. What- how did these stores compete once people got cars and could suddenly get to Richmond?

W: Well, you didn't go to Richmond to buy everything.

T: Yeah.

W: Because Richmond was an all-day trip.

T: Right.

W: Whereas, you could come back here, because my family was certainly in the village every week shopping. You bought your groceries here. You bought certain other goods that- dry goods of different- furniture. I mean, I don't remember buying furniture other than right here in town. Not that you bought a lot, but you know, you had to buy some things. I'd say that the family would go to Richmond maybe three or four times a year, and they'd come out here every week. So it's kind of that way.

T: Okay.

W: But also, Sears and Roebuck and Montgomery Ward catalogs. It's amazing how much stuff we used- now, we've gone back to ordering out of catalogs online.

T: Yeah.

W: But in those days, I can remember just sitting and waiting for the catalog to come. [Laughter] My mother would. The catalogs were, you know, huge. You could basically order anything. You could order a pony [Laughter] or whatever, you know. It is amazing what you could order out of a Sears and Roebuck catalog. My uncle lived with us right after World War II. He had a disability, and lived with us for several years. I can remember him just waiting for the wishbook. He called it the wishbook: the wishbook is coming! I gotta go look through- He just looked. He'd look at the catalog like you'd look at *Life Magazine* or something. He'd just look at all the pictures and dream about all the things, from hardware to clothes to sporting goods and all. Catalogs were a big thing.

T: Okay. So, there's a couple of ways we can classify all the things in a Sears and Roebuck catalog.

W: Right.

T: What's the list of things you could reasonably hope to get?

W: Well, clothes, clothing items. You could always send them back if they didn't fit or whatever.

T: Right.

W: Clothing items. I guess things like curtains and shades and household goods, pots and pans-

T: Yeah.

W: -you know, all those sorts of things.

T: Yeah.

W: I think the thing that the catalog offered that you couldn't have here in town was variety, because you could get almost anything: all the different sizes and so forth. So, my mother seemed like she kept a list of things she needed, and then she'd work up an order. She had this- you've seen them, I'm sure- the order sheets. You know, you filled them out. You had the catalog numbers and you had the price and everything.

[INTERRUPTION IN INTERVIEW]

W: Then, you know, two or three times a year, she'd pack up an order for Sears and Roebuck. Also, Montgomery Ward was the other one. They were the two big ones. Sears was probably larger, but Monkey Ward was probably as good. She'd compare one with the other and look at the prices. Sometimes they'd be the same items, you know, that would be in both catalogs.

T: What's the list of cool stuff that you could never hope to buy?

W: [Laughter] I guess maybe a pony and a go-kart. [Laughter] But you could- I don't know. I never was a type of person that had a lot of want-lists. I grew up on a farm, and I worked on the farm. Then when I went off to college, that was kind of the end of it, I guess, although I'd come back in the summer times and work some, because I went to Virginia Tech. I wasn't close enough to come home on weekends at all. It was a way of life, and relatively simple, to be perfectly honest. It was not exactly what kids expect today, but I don't think I was deprived in any way.

T: No.

W: I enjoyed it, and I enjoyed working on the farm. Some people—I know some of my friends—and a lot of them, I'd say of my friends, more of them were non-farm than there were farm. There wasn't that many farms in Gloucester. I can remember kind of being envious of some of the people who lived here in town, because they could basically walk home and get a snack. I'd walk home and I had, quote, chores to do. Chores- a lot of them were of my own making, because I had projects that I was working on. I had a cow that I milked, and she waited for me every night [Laughter] to be milked. I had chickens; I had pigs that were mine. This was in high school. If I didn't feed them, they didn't get fed, because nobody took care of them unless I took care of them. We used to cook with wood, so I was responsible for splitting and getting wood in. I often wondered when I went to college, who got the wood in because I never saw my father get any wood in at all. [Laughter] He was out doing his thing, so that was my job. Then, cutting grass, taking care of the garden, those sort of things. It was a lot of things that we did and you just grew up doing them. People in town didn't do any of those things, and I thought, that must be nice just to go home and lay back.

T: Yeah.

W: Of course, you didn't watch television. Well, maybe Howdy Doody was on, I don't know. [Laughter] But, there wasn't much on television to watch.

T: That's true.

W: It was a little bit different life in town. You could go down to the drug store, get a pine float or something, I guess.

T: Nice. So, in urban environments, you have a lot more room for enterprise and variety. Do you feel like something's maybe lost with the urbanization of Gloucester?

W: Well, I'm not sure that it's necessarily the urbanization of Gloucester. I think it's just life in general everywhere is quite different than it was, you know, fifty or sixty years ago- sixty years ago, I guess, now...I've got grandkids, and I watch what they go through, and I'm not sure that being deprived is the right way to put it. I think I was blessed in many ways that I didn't have some of the temptations they have to deal with. I'm sure that the same thing is true here in Gloucester. I'm on an advisory committee for the school system, and hear some of the things they have to deal with versus what we dealt with, is quite different. I can't think of how urbanization- although it has- I mean, Gloucester's a bedroom community, but in many ways it's been a bedroom community for a long time, because people even sixty years ago lived here and worked somewhere else. I mean, the shipyard has been active for- what- over a hundred years, you see. A lot of people have worked at the shipyard certainly since World War II. Beginning in World War II, it was a big employer, and it still is. The Naval Weapons Station over in Yorktown has been a big employer here for a long time, and it still is. There's always been a group of people that went across the river. Certainly, when that bridge was built in 1953, that really opened it up. Newton's bus started running when I was in high school, and they were running to the shipyard, and he's still running to the shipyard. I mean, they started running buses to the shipyard back in the mid-[19]50s, and it's still going.

T: Yeah.

W: Williamsburg, I guess, is probably a little less of our employer, because it's more of a service-oriented community. You've certainly got Langley Air Force Base, you've got NASA in there, and they've been big employers for a long time. So, Gloucester's always been a bedroom community.

T: Yeah. Facilitated by cars.

W: By cars. Exactly.

T: Yeah.

W: They had the ferry. I can remember distinctly the ferry before the bridge came in. The ferries ran, you know, every half an hour or something. Now, that restricted how many cars could go across, because ferries only held so many cars. There were people that went back and forth then, too. One of the ferries that ran in Gloucester Point over to Yorktown is still in service between Jamestown Island and Scotland Wharf. It's one of those ferries that's still running. They were the type of ferries that ran at Gloucester Point to Yorktown.

T: Right, yeah. That's a different pace of life, too.

W: Yep. It is, it is. The ferries usually stopped running about midnight, so if you were across on the other side, then you stayed over there until the next morning.

[Laughter]

T: That is true. Speaking of it being, you know, fifty, sixty years ago, part of life was segregation.

W: It was, it was. Yeah, it was. Certainly from a school point of view, we were segregated.

T: Right.

W: Now, down in the community where I lived, there were lots of African-Americans. My father ran a farm, and they worked on the farm from the beginning of time, I guess. I can remember it distinctly. One of the boys lives right down close to where I live now—he's a little younger than I am, but not much—he came from a big family, and I can remember going over and driving up in the front yard. His father would say, well, how many boys you need today? We'd say, well, we need about six. So, about six of them would come out and we'd work. We used to all work together; I mean, it wasn't like you'd say, okay, you go out there and do that. We would work together, and it wasn't that they were being taken advantage of particularly, because we were all doing the same thing. The work was hard, but it was, I mean, baling hay, baling straw, cutting weeds out of beans. I mean, we would all work as a team.

T: Yeah.

W: But you needed more hands. Yeah, we worked together and lived in the same community. But they went to different schools, and different churches, too.

T: That's true.

W: The churches are still separate, by and large.

T: Did you have to face that as an athlete?

W: I never played with any African-Americans, never.

T: No?

W: The other schools that I played, they were segregated as well.

T: That makes sense.

W: Never was an issue.

T: Were-

W: I don't remember race relations. Gloucester didn't have any major race relation issues. Now, certain counties in Virginia did during the period, but Gloucester didn't. I was out of Gloucester when they integrated. I think they integrated in- what- mid-[19]60s, I guess. I was not here at the time.

T: Right.

W: I don't remember any major issues here, but there were in some other places.

T: Right. What would you ascribe that tranquility to?

W: I think we kind of lived in the same communities. I can remember- well, we used to work together. The black families in the community- on the farm, certain times during the year, you needed lots of hands. Other times, you didn't need many hands. When you needed hands, there were always people out there that my father could go pick up. He just paid them by the hour. I assume that he had- I don't know in those days what the [inaudible 33:44] situation was. I assume he had money out. I really don't know. [Laughter]

T: Okay.

W: I don't remember that specifically.

T: Could they get jobs in places like Newport News and Williamsburg?

W: They did. They did.

T: They did?

W: Sure, they did. Some of them did. A lot of them that worked on the farm, would be- they'd be high school kids. They'd be my age. They were not necessarily the

breadwinners in the family; they were just big families. The daddy- anytime he could employ somebody, he would put them out there. You learned in a hurry which ones were good workers and which ones weren't, and the ones that weren't good workers, you just didn't employ them. You just employed the ones that were willing to work and the ones that weren't willing to work you didn't.

T: Right.

W: Another little tidbit that was kind of interesting- and it has nothing to do with this station, I don't think, although this station was kind of the center of things- this county, sixty, seventy years ago, was known as the kind of daffodil capital of Virginia or whatever- at least this region anyway. There were lots of daffodil fields. People used to pick daffodils, bunch them, and send them basically up North. The ones here would go to Baltimore primarily, but I assume they maybe went further up North, too. I can remember, we had probably four or five acres on the farm, but other people had them, too. You know, they'd have daffodil fields. They'd stop the school bus, and just say, who wants to pick these- they called them John Quills. Who wants to pick John Quills today? Whoever wanted to pick them just raised their hand. Whoever selected them made sure they weren't, you know, first graders. They wanted someone that could actually pick John Quills. [Laughter] Because some kids: oh yeah, I'll pick John Quills! We was getting a penny a bunch, and so if you were good you could pick maybe a hundred bunches between the time you got off the bus until it got dark. Of course, you were doing this the end of February, first of March.

T: Wow.

W: So, you got a dollar, you know? Then, they'd haul you home. You see, they'd take you home afterwards.

T: Wow.

W: That was something that went on. Then, they would collect these John Quills, actually down in Clay Bank, where I lived. They would truck them to- in those days, truck them up to Baltimore, but in bygone days they'd send them up by boat. They used to have several steamers that went up from the rivers in Gloucester, and went to Norfolk and then from Norfolk up to Baltimore.

T: Okay.

W: The steamers were before my time; the steamers stopped about in the late [19]30s, and before World War II. But Gloucester, as you may have noticed, doesn't have any railroads, so there was no- The roads were terrible, and so most everything travelled by water. Everything was by boat. The steamers were quite a large part of the county's commerce.

T: But this gas station in particular came pretty much at the end of the steamboats.

W: That would have been the end of the steamer.

T: Yeah.

W: Because it came, what was it, 1930 or something like that? Yeah.

T: Yeah.

W: Yeah. Yeah.

T: When you were growing up, what's your earliest experience of this gas station?

W: I don't know. I just remember it was here.

T: It was here.

W: It was here. I don't remember particularly stopping with my father, but he dealt with them, but I think that was mostly by phone. I don't think he'd really- because we didn't really bring our vehicles here to have them serviced.

T: Oh, okay.

W: Because we used to service them at home.

T: Did you stop and fuel up here?

W: No, because we had gas at home.

T: Okay.

W: It came from here.

T: Okay.

W: You see, we had gas at home.

T: Right.

W: So we never had to stop and buy gas anywhere-

T: Wow.

W: -because we always had gas at home. The thing that was interesting is, the gas that you put in the car or truck, anything that was on the road, had what you call road tax on it, you see? If you used it on the farm, you didn't have to pay road tax, so it was a whole lot cheaper. You had to be an honest farmer and make sure you put the right gas in the right vehicles, because the tractor gas would run in a car just fine, and it didn't have road tax on it. I remember my father used to tell us, now, this tank is for the tractor. This one is for the car. You don't put the tractor gas in the car because you have to pay the road tax. [Laughter] The road

tax is, the tax that we have—state and federal—we still have today to maintain—used to call it road tax.

T: Yeah.

W: I guess Captain Jack Brown- I guess he had to collect that because we were paying him.

T: Right. What kind of- you only dealt with them over the phone, but what kind of person is he?

W: I didn't really know him personally. I mean, I met him. He was obviously a lot older. He was Andy's grandfather. Have you met Andy, Junior yet?

T: Not yet.

W: Andy is, I don't know, three or four years younger than I am, but I know him. He's on the board of supervisors, and was in a real serious accident several years ago so he's in a wheelchair. That's sad, because he was always a very active person. Captain Jack- I just heard so many nice stories about him. He was Brown- his last name was Brown- and Ware Neck was about half Browns. I mean, they were all- a lot of Browns. Basically, all of them were kin to each other. My mother came to Gloucester—from North Carolina, by the way—she was from a place called Red Springs, which is down near Fayetteville between- actually, the county seat is Lumberton on 95.

T: I know what you're talking about. Mm-hm.

W: It's down near the South Carolina line. Anyway, she came up here as a schoolteacher. Her uncle was superintendent of schools in Gloucester County. He brought her up, and she taught. But she had friends: the Browns down in

Ware Neck. She used to go down there, and she knew all them. She used to talk about them, and I remember her saying that Captain Jack kind of did well financially, let's put it that way. So, he helped a lot of the others that were not doing as well financially.

T: Wow.

W: She mentioned that he helped the old doctor in Gloucester County, was Dr. Raymond Brown. He was the doctor forever, it seemed like. He was our doctor. He hasn't been dead that long, maybe ten years. I remember my mother saying that Captain Jack helped him go to med school, because I think he lost his father when he was a boy or something and so he didn't have any money. He helped him go to med school.

T: Wow.

W: He was just known as just a good person. The other Brown that I remember here--and this may have been mentioned by someone else--his name was Howard Brown. He had one arm. Has that been mentioned?

T: It's been mentioned, but everybody says something different.

W: Okay, well I remember him. His name was Howard. I don't know what his connection to Captain Jack was. He was a cousin, I would say; I mean, he wasn't a son. He's maybe a cousin. I remember back in the day when you'd come in to get gas, you'd pull up out there and of course, the attendant would run out and check your oil and wash off your windshield and then put gas in. I remember he used to run around with a rag on the end of his little stump on his arm, because you know, he had to carry it some way. He had to have one hand to do all of his

other things. He'd just lay that rag across the stump because it was off- I don't know, somewhere like this. The story has it that it got cut off with a pile driver, but I don't know if that's- I don't know how accurate that is. That's what I heard somebody say once upon a time. A pile driver is this thing that drives piling, you know, boom boom.

T: Yeah.

W: It makes a good story.

T: Yeah.

W: I don't know whether it's true or not. [Laughter] But it was- bip. Just like that. It was just a stub. That was Howard. [Laughter]

T: Were there other wild rumors about how he lost his arm?

W: I don't- that's all I ever heard. [Laughter] Ask Andy. Andy can tell you. Andy will know for sure. That's what somebody told me once upon a time at the barber shop. You take that for what it's worth. Oh, that's the other thing. There was a movie theater up on this hill, which was basically where the one is now. It's not the same building, but it's in that same location. And a couple barber shops. The barber shops, of course, were the center of social activity, because if you wanted to find out what was going on, you didn't have to get a haircut. Just go in and sit down and listen. It was happening, as you spoke, as you sat there. The barber shops were on Main Street as well.

T: That would have been all males.

W: Yes. They had beauty shops for-

T: Did they like it that way?

W: Well, they had beauty shops for the females. Now, I guess you have unisex deals.

T: Yeah.

W: Yeah. I haven't been to a barber shop since I was a grad student. My wife has been cutting my hair for forty-five years, and it keeps falling out, so I'm not going to have to worry about it too much longer I don't think. She's my barber.

[Laughter]

T: Nice.

W: Go.

T: If you have grandkids now-

W: I do.

T: -what do they know about Gloucester before they were born?

W: They don't know anything before they were born. What do you mean before they were born?

T: What did they know about the Gloucester that existed- what have you told them?

W: Oh. Well, to start with, they don't live here and never have. Gloucester is not that meaningful to them.

T: Right.

W: They come down and visit maybe a week a year, or maybe two weeks. They may come down over Christmas and then in the summertime they'll come down. They are now- well, the oldest one is twenty-one, so I mean he doesn't really come down much anymore. He's trying to finish up school. The other two are teenagers. They come down with their friends. Gloucester really is not that

important, even their- our daughters. We have two daughters, and see, they never lived in Gloucester either. None of them really spent any- my daughters used to come down and visit their grandparents; my parents lived here, so they came down to visit them. They've never lived here, so I don't think they have any thoughts about Gloucester other than just where their grandparents live.

T: Okay. Let me-

W: We have- I grew up here and left. Then, I came back fifteen years ago, so I was gone for forty years. It wasn't like I was here that whole length of time either, now.

T: Right.

W: I came back and visited my parents and then my mother, who actually was living when I moved back. You know, I was not here from [19]58 to [19]98, living here.

T: Right. Okay.

W: Back and forth a lot, and still maintained a certain friend base and so forth. Our high school class- we meet every six months as a class now.

T: Wow.

W: I was president of the class, so I kind of get them together, and we go to a restaurant down here on 17, and just eat and talk.

T: Yeah.

W: We don't do anything. We had a fiftieth reunion back a number of years- well, 2008, I guess. Every six months we just get together and have a meal together.

T: Okay.

W: We keep losing them, unfortunately. Our high school class was fifty-two or three. This year, they graduated almost five hundred. I mean, Gloucester's changed a lot in that length of time.

T: Well, that's a good-

W: Of course, that didn't involve the black community, because that was fifty-two or three whites, and I don't know how many would have been on the black side.

T: Right.

W: Unfortunately, a lot of those never finished high school.

T: Right. Right.

W: Most people in those days, when you graduated from high school, you went to the river, you know? You worked the river: fishing, oystering, clamming, crabbing.

T: Yeah.

W: Yeah. They still do some, but not to the extent that they did then.

T: Right. Well, that's a good moment to draw a parallel then. What would you want future Gloucester, say, high schoolers, eighteen-year-olds, to know about past Gloucester that you experienced?

W: Well, first I would hope that they've had a good experience growing up here during their time, and that Gloucester has a long and rich history. I mean, certainly two hundred years before me, and it's become much more urbanized in this period, because in those days it was quite rural before the bridge was put in down there, which I remember very distinctly. It was pretty isolated, and things have changed quite a bit in that regard. [Route] 17 was two-lane with no stoplights. A friend of mine who lived down between here and the bridge used to

say that they would play baseball in 17, because there wasn't any traffic. Cars would come by and they would- he said you could always tell when the ferry came in, because there'd be a stream of six, eight cars coming up the road. From that point on, there wouldn't be any until the next ferry came in. [Laughter] Yeah, it's, I think, quite a bit busier. I think Gloucester has moved from the village, because this was the center of commerce in the county- basically moved south between here and the bridge. Of course, the village of Gloucester- now they're trying to make it a historic village, which I think they're doing a fairly decent job of.

T: Yeah?

W: But, it was commerce. I mean, there were, what? Three or four automobile dealerships on Main Street. You had Ford, you had Chevrolet GM, you had Chrysler Plymouth, Dodge, and they were all right up on Main Street- automobile dealerships. Of course now, it takes a great big lot to have all these cars. In those days, you maybe had two or three to sell: one in the showroom and a couple out back.

T: Yeah.

W: That's changed quite a bit as well.

T: That's wonderful.

W: Yeah.

T: Do you have anything you want to add?

W: I don't know. I commend you for trying to do this and archiving these things, because you are aware probably that in- I think it was in 1976 which was before I

came back, the TV cable station in Gloucester at the time, it was called Gloucester Cable Vision which is now Cox. But it was Gloucester Cable Vision then. They did a series of interviews. Have you seen those, by the way? Okay. I've looked at some of them; I have not looked at all of them. But I found them to be interesting. They kind of ramble, just like this one's rambling. Most of those people, unfortunately, have passed away. It's kind of interesting to go back.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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