

TMP-006

Interviewee: Betty Jean Deal

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: June 16, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor interviewing Betty Jean Deal on June 16, 2013 at 12:15 PM at the Gloucester Museum of History. Mrs. Deal, can you please state your date of birth if you wouldn't mind?

D: February the ninth, 1933.

T: Okay, and where were you born?

D: Right here in Gloucester. I was born at Naxera. Virginia.

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

D: Beverly Eugene Dunston was my father. He was a ferry boat captain and he was a docking pilot. He did so many things but mostly, always on the water.

T: Okay. And what about your mother?

D: My mother was a homemaker and she worked for a short time as an attendant at Eastern State Hospital in Williamsburg.

T: What was her name?

D: Vernetta May Deal.

T: Okay. As for you, what is your occupation?

D: I'm presently the director of the Gloucester Museum of History, but I'm also a retired postmaster. I was postmaster at Naxera Post Office, which is in Gloucester, for almost twenty-five years.

T: What years were those?

D: From 1968 to 1993.

T: Mm-hm. What did you do before that?

D: I was just a wife, mother, homemaker.

T: Wonderful. Do you have any siblings?

D: I have one brother.

T: You have one brother. What's his name? Okay. And you live in Gloucester County right now?

D: Yes.

T: Uh-huh. Going back to the 1930s, what is your earliest memory of Main Street?

D: My earliest memory... when I was a little girl my parents would come to Gloucester on Saturday afternoon to get groceries from A&P Store which was four doors down from this building. And they would go and get their groceries and give me a quarter to spend and I would go in Gray's Pharmacy, which was two doors from this building, and get my ice cream cone. Then I would come over and play on the steps of the Botetourt building, of this museum. It was a hotel then, so that's my earliest memory.

T: Uh-huh. Well describe this building then to me. Who stayed in the Botetourt Hotel?

D: Well, the Cox sisters ran it, and so many people spent vacations here or came here, lived a while before they found a home. It was the center of almost everything in Gloucester. You would always see people sitting on the porch in the summertime; there was a two-story porch there. So I really, this is my favorite building in the county. So I'm so happy to be working here.

T: [Laughter] Wonderful. So what about the gas station? Do you remember it in the [19]30s?

D: Yeah, not in the [19]30s. It would be in the [19]40s.

T: Okay.

D: But I don't know if anyone else remembers, it was cream-colored. That bothers me for some reason that it's white, but it was a deep cream, and it was a beautiful building. I remember us driving up between the columns in the front door to get gas. And a Mr. Howard Brown would come out; he was always the one who would- and he had lost one of his hands, but he would order your gas and you didn't say ten dollars worth, whatever you said, five gallons. And they would put the gas in your car and while that was doing they washed your windshield, they checked your oil, and I seem to remember them checking the air in your tires. And smiling and talking all the time.

T: Mm-hm. This may be too specific, but what did you talk about?

D: Just good morning, how you doing, and how's so and so. You know everybody in Gloucester; they knew everybody then. So, just friendly conversation while they were doing that.

T: Mm-hm. Who did you remember besides Howard Brown being there?

D: He's the only one I remember. Of course Mr. Jack Brown, who owned it- I remember him.

T: Was he there often?

D: I didn't see him there often but we just knew him, you know? In the county.

T: To what extent was the gas station a place to kind of congregate?

D: Well the little building on the other side of it with the chairs and the restrooms, I guess people sat in there and talked. We never did but I assume they did.

T: Mm-hm. You're the first woman I've interviewed so I have to ask you about the

ladies' lounge. Do you remember there being a ladies' lounge?

D: Yes, but I didn't go in there.

T: No?

D: Uh-uh, cause we lived so close you know? We came in and probably when we got groceries we got gas.

T: That makes sense. So how often would you come to this part of Main Street?

D: About once a week then. On Saturday afternoons.

T: Uh-huh. When did your family first get a car? Do you remember?

D: They always had a car of some kind. The first car I remember, well I was old enough to drive then, it was a maroon Chevrolet during the war. But before that they had cars, I don't know exactly what kind. A car. And my mother learned to drive with her hairpin. [Laughter] The car was in the yard and she would take her hairpin and start it and she learned to drive that way.

T: Wow. So she didn't have keys?

D: Well I don't know where the keys were but I heard her tell that so many times, that that's how she learned how to drive. [Laughter]

T: Wow. So did the war change the way transportation worked in Gloucester?

D: Yes, you limited because of the rationing of gas and tires were...you didn't drive unless you had to.

T: So if you were going to go on vacation you couldn't really go very far?

D: I don't remember back then us taking vacations.

T: Okay. Did people-

D: We would go to Buckroe Beach like on a Saturday afternoon. That was the big

thing we did and sometimes we would trade it to go to Ocean View, you know, amusement parks. So that was a big thing then.

T: That is nice, where is that?

D: It's over near Chesapeake and near Virginia Beach, Buckroe Beach, and Ocean View was the name of the amusement park.

T: During the war did you notice tourists coming to Botetourt Hotel more or less or...?

D: I didn't notice because see I lived ten miles away.

T: Yeah, okay. That makes sense. On Main Street just generally, with or without the war, did you notice tourists or people that you didn't know kind of moving around in their cars or on the street?

D: I don't remember anything like that. When we came to Gloucester, we knew almost everybody we saw in the street.

T: Right, right. So I understand that there are two pharmacies.

D: Yes.

T: And they're pretty close to each other.

D: They were, right across the street.

T: Uh-huh. How, how did one decide which one to patronize?

D: I don't know. You did both usually. Gray's Pharmacy was on this side of the street and Morgan's was directly across in that building. And what I remember most about them was it was a gathering place because I was in high school and we'd come down and you could- they had booths. You could get a sandwich or a sundae or a soda or ice cream and that's where the high school students, we

would meet and just sit and talk. Morgan's especially I remember was a very special place for my high school.

T: Yeah. That's wonderful. Where else in high school did you end up on a Saturday night or...?

D: At the movies. Where the Edge Hill station is, across the street on 14 where the bowling alley, that was the Edge Hill theater.

[INTERRUPTION IN INTERVIEW]

D: I remember going on Saturday nights, I would go to the movie with my aunt and uncle. It was always a Western, either Roy Rogers or Gene Autry, and that was a big thing to go to the movie with them on Saturdays.

T: And during the day?

D: What did I do?

T: No, did you go to the movie during the day?

D: No, they only had movies at night then.

T: Oh, okay.

D: They had two shows on Saturday night but during the week I don't know exactly, I can't be sure what they did.

T: Right.

D: But I think it was almost always at night.

T: Well you brought up during the day on a Saturday or a Sunday. What do you do recreationally?

D: Golly. They had a skating rink, at Cow Creek Mill was a skating rink. And then on 17 at White Marsh, a later, well in the [19]40s that was a Double R skating rink.

But they didn't open during the day usually I don't think. I don't remember what we did during the day for recreation, we would swim in the rivers and creeks around and that's it.

T: Okay. What years were you in high school?

D: I graduated in 1950. We only- eleven years was the school then. About [19]53 they started twelve years in Gloucester, when they built the new high school.

T: So from [19]46 to [19]50 did you notice that more kids from high school were getting their own cars?

D: No. [Laughter]

T: No? Okay.

D: We had one, Frank Phillips, who was Phillips Oil, he would get his aunt's car. His Aunt Rose would let him drive her car sometimes. And we would pile in and, an excuse to get away from school the principal would give us permission to go and get ads for the yearbook. [Laughter] So we had a jolly old time. We didn't get many ads but that's what we were supposed to be doing.

T: Well where would you go?

D: I remember we went as far as Saluda. No farther than that. And all around here, the businesses and...

T: So there would be one guy that had a car and then you knew that guy.

D: Oh yeah, it was only seventeen in my class when we graduated. So we were like a family.

T: That's wonderful. So if there was a family like yours that lived far away that they didn't have a car, how would they get to town to get groceries?

- D: They would hitch a ride with somebody. But most of them had a car.
- T: Okay. So on Main Street in the [19]40s, you're one of the people that remembers that time period, did you notice the effects of segregation on the community at all?
- D: No. I don't recall any problem with segregation in Gloucester. Understand there was something with the school, you know, in the [19]50s but I don't remember that at all. It was never- we were all just you know, neighbors and friends. I don't recall any problem whatsoever.
- T: Okay. So, blacks and whites could equally patronize the businesses on Main Street?
- D: As far as I could see and we knew most of them cause they went back for, you know, old families, and they were respected, trusted people.
- T: Okay. Okay. Did you notice that black families had cars?
- D: I don't remember. Some of them did. Not all.
- T: Okay.
- D: And one thing you mentioned cars, I remember angled parking on the street which was much better than what we do now.
- T: [Laughter] How about that. So from a woman's perspective, did you notice that your mother did most of the shopping or maybe experienced Main Street in a different way than your father did?
- D: Oh yeah. Well, they were together on Saturdays. I remember they were always together when they came up to get the groceries at A&P, which was four doors down. It's been torn down now. Didn't have shopping carts. You stood at the

counter and told them what you needed, what you wanted, and they'd put it and then they'd add it up.

T: Wow. That's wonderful.

D: And there was always a butcher there, and then Martin's store across the street was another grocery store.

T: Uh-huh. Hmm. Okay. So would your mother stock up and make the lists and buy the groceries or did your father have a role to play in that?

D: No, my mother decided, you know, what we needed.

T: Uh-huh. Did your father ever patronize the barber shops?

D: Oh yes, very much. Because Claude Chapman was a friend of his and he was a barber, and he went to the barber shops very- and Phillip Lawson's barber shop down the street. And when I was that age the little girls had this hairdo that was shingled in the back and down on the side and I went to the barber shop a lot and had my hair shingled in the back with- I liked it when they did the brush and the powder. [Laughter] But they would put a board up on the barber seat and I'd sit on that board and get my hair shingled. In the back.

T: That's wonderful. So did women go to beauty shops?

D: Yes, we had beauty shops. They got perms, permanent wave they called it then, and then there was this stand with all these wires that they clipped on each curl, it was electric. It wasn't like it is now. And they would burn your scalp.

T: Wow. So socially what went on in those spaces?

D: Where?

T: In the barber shops and the beauty shops.

D: Well, they just visited, laughed, and talked and they were just them, you know.

The county, the population was so small. Everybody knew everybody from way back. And if a new family moved to Gloucester everybody knew it.

T: Yeah. How were they treated?

D: Just fine. They were just welcome and just a novelty really.

T: [Laughter] A novelty.

D: Uh-huh, because somebody new was in the county.

T: Can you think of a new family specifically?

D: I remember another family, the last name was Deal. They moved to Gloucester and were active with the Boy Scouts and camping and all, I remember that.

T: Yeah. How did they introduce themselves?

D: They just became active with the Boy Scouts and the camping and-

T: And that helps?

D: Mm-hm.

T: Okay. That's really interesting. Hmm. So the way your parents experienced Main Street and did kind of the same thing every week, how's it different from what your grandparents did every week?

D: Well, my grandparents didn't get much farther than the neighborhood, the country store to buy everything they needed. Unless they came to Gloucester to pay their, they called it the hay tax, you know they would come up here for things they needed to, the county administr- and everything was in this little court green there, the clerk, the treasurer, the commissioner of revenue. The county was run from that little court circle in the middle of the street.

T: Uh-huh. Did they come to court day? Was that a thing?

D: Yeah. My mother-in-law, this was before I was born, but she told me how she and her father-in-law would get in the wagon and come up to court day. It was a big thing. They loved it.

T: So they got in the wagon.

D: Uh-huh.

T: Interesting. So did your grandparents have cars?

D: Um, no. Never.

T: Never.

D: And my husband's grandparents- well this was when they were first married, when she would come up in the cart with her father-in-law to court day.

T: So how long did your grandparents live till?

D: My grandmother died in [19]39 and my grandfather was thirty-five, I don't remember him at all.

T: Oh okay. So your grandmother never expressed an interest in getting a car?

D: No.

T: No? That's really interest- so did she ever hitch a ride with your parents?

D: Yes, she went with- they took her where she needed to go.

T: That is wonderful. So during your parents' time were the country stores still active?

D: Oh yes, very much. And my mother-in-law ran a country store down in Naxera.

T: Really?

D: Uh-huh, we had two country stores in that little community.

T: Which ones?

D: It was Ms. Verna's store and then the Naxera post office was the general store.

T: Wow.

D: Several owners.

T: Uh-huh. Did they compete effectively with the A&P and the-

D: Well they, for a long time they did but along about [19]55 I would say people had cars. And they would go to Rich's. We had Rich's on Route 17 and they would go to the, you know, big supermarkets and get their groceries and it got so the country store, they would just run for a loaf of bread or something they needed or some gas for the lawnmower. That used to irritate my grand- my mother-in-law. People who didn't get anything else from her store would come on Saturdays wanting a little bit of gas for their lawnmowers. And she said they just used me for convenience. She didn't like that at all. But it got so that she couldn't make any money in the store because of the supermarket.

T: Uh-huh. My other concern is that it's kind of like the gas stations where there's so many of them? How did they compete with each other?

D: Well they had, each country store had a gas tank. And the nearest gas was out on 17 so when people wanted gas for the lawnmower they would run to the country store and get it. Instead of-

T: Instead of here.

D: Mm-hm.

T: So how did Captain Jack compete with the other gas stations on Main Street?

D: Well, I don't remember too many gas stations.

T: Oh, I've been told that there's an Amoco and a Mobil on Main Street, up in this area. No?

D: I don't know. I don't remember going to them, we always went to-

T: Captain Jacks.

D: Uh-huh and then he had, there was a Texaco station out the end of Featherbed Lane too.

T: Mm-hm.

D: Later you know, not early.

T: Mm-hm. What was Captain Jack like as a person?

D: He was just nice. A good pillar of the community.

T: Mm-hm. I guess maybe can you break that down a little more for me as a pillar- what do you do to become a pillar of the community?

D: Well he was just a, he was a good church member for one thing.

T: What church did he go to?

D: One of the churches in Ware Neck. I think he went to Singleton Church I believe.

T: Okay.

D: And I know he was very devoted, dedicated to relatives. He would help them with education and everything. And he employed a lot of people.

T: He did?

D: Mm-hm.

T: Do you know anyone that was employed by him?

D: Yes, Walter Nuttall, when they started having the trucks, you know, to deliver fuel oil and all. He had a lot of people, I can't even, there's so many I don't remember,

but he had pretty thriving business with the trucks delivering oil to the houses.

T: I've heard about that, when did he start doing that?

D: I would say sometime in the [19]40s or earlier.

T: Okay. Was there a need for it before he started doing that?

D: I don't remember. They had space heaters after the fireplaces and the wood stoves. And they needed fuel oil. It got to the point where they would put a tank outside the house with a pipe running the oil to the space heater instead of having to fill it up with a can all the time. And the oil truck would come and fill those tanks outside the house. And then they started putting them underground in the later years.

T: Mm-hm. When did the space heater start to really become a thing?

D: I would say early [19]40s.

T: That might answer why he got the trucks when he did. Huh. So Captain Jack employed a lot of people, were they young people or, you know-

D: All ages.

T: All ages?

D: And a lot of them were relatives of his.

T: Okay. That would make sense, too. Had you been into the interior as a child?

D: What, of the Edge Hill station?

T: Yeah.

D: I don't remember going inside. I remember driving up between those columns and the front door. You drove in there. And Howard Brown was almost always the one who came out and filled your tank.

T: Mm-hm, so he was waiting inside?

D: Mm-hm.

T: Okay. So if you were to go inside would your dad have been the one to go inside?

D: I mean yes, I'm sure.

T: Okay. Just trying to, you know, get a feel for the routine of it. So most people would have gone to Captain Jack's, right?

D: Well, most people I knew did, you know.

T: Hm. That's interesting, I was wondering how people would, if he was the first person there, change loyalties basically.

D: I don't know. Trying to think. I can't remember. He must have been the first one to have the trucks deliver oil. And then I can't remember, you know, the other company started but I can't- I just remember Jack Brown's oil.

T: Yeah, absolutely. So did the gas station, because you've known it for a very long time, how did it keep up with like changing technology and increased traffic?

D: I don't know. It was just like it, the same for so long.

T: Okay.

D: I've tried- I don't remember when they closed it. I can't remember the date. But I remember it well. I remember getting gas there all the time.

T: Mm-hm. Can you think of any specific times when something unusual happened, like an anecdote or something like that? No?

D: No.

T: Okay. I just thought I'd ask.

D: I'll think of something later, I'm sure.

T: [Laughter] That's how it goes. So about Main Street in general, how has travel to and on Main Street changed over time?

D: Well, the stoplights. Red lights. And there's so much traffic through Main Street and the parking, like I said, angled parking was wonderful. But we don't have that anymore and when I'm here, you know, we see cars going by just constantly so it's difficult to cross the street.

T: Someone was telling me they used to play in the street.

D: I'm sure.

T: [Laughter] Before it got so busy. So would you characterize it as more of a- you would walk rather than drive on Main Street?

D: Yes.

T: Really?

D: Mm-hm.

T: Okay. So where would you park your car and then-

D: Most of the time we parked right in front of this building. On an angle. And wherever you were going there was almost always a parking space, you know, you didn't have to look around. You could just park.

T: And then you would just walk up and down Main Street getting what you needed? Did your family ever take the, you know, kind of bi-yearly trips to Richmond to get things?

D: Yes.

T: Yeah? How often did you do that?

D: Well, almost always went up there just before Christmas.

T: Just before Christmas?

D: Mm-hm. On a Saturday, we'd go to Richmond. It was an all-day thing but that's what we- just before Christmas we would go to shop. But my mother had relatives, had a sister living in Richmond so we went up to visit my aunt Lillian often.

T: Describe going to the commercial district of Richmond as a kid.

D: It was wonderful. Thalhimers and Miller & Rhoads. And the clock in- that was in Miller & Rhoads and Thalhimers sweet shop, they had the most delicious things, seven-layer cakes, and we would all shop and then we'd say we'll meet in the sweet shop. To you know, come home, and then they had the Virginia Room, the restaurant in Thalhimers. We would eat lunch in the tea room at Miller & Rhoads, it was just wonderful. They had Murphy's and all. And one thing so many people did- the Greyhound bus, you know, went to Richmond. We would get on the bus early in the morning and go to Richmond, shop all day, and get on the bus, and come back in the late evening.

T: Wow. So you wouldn't even-

D: I did that often.

T: You wouldn't even have to take the car?

D: Uh-huh.

T: Would you have gone with your high school friends or something like that?

D: I went with high school friends often and I went with my aunt, one of my aunts on the bus and my parents in the car.

T: How is it different going with your friends?

D: [Laughter] Well, we just frolicked, you know. We would go to Richmond and my best friend Barbara and I went, spent one day there, and do you know who Sunshine Sue was? She was a singer. A kind of a country singer and she had the Sons of the Pioneers, the men who sang with her. And she would come around and make personal shows around but Barbara and I saw Sunshine Sue walking down Broad Street. And we followed her. And she went into a shop and we went in and looking at her and she just turned around and smiled, she seemed happy that we recognized her. But we had fun following Sunshine Sue that day.

T: [Laughter] That's wonderful. And you know, maybe Sunshine Sue wouldn't have been here.

D: Pardon?

T: Maybe Sunshine Sue wouldn't have been in Gloucester Courthouse.

D: Yes, she did come. She had shows in the old gymnasium up at Botetourt school, oh yes.

T: She did? Really?

D: Uh-huh.

T: So you went to concerts when you were here too?

D: Yeah, we had the- oh, the one who married Johnny Cash, Mother Maybelle and her daughters, they came.

T: Really? How often did you have concerts here?

D: Not often.

T: No.

- D: Cause it was a special thing when we did have it.
- T: Uh-huh. Wow. That's wonderful. What about places like West Point, Newport News, Williamsburg? Were those shopping trips as well?
- D: Not necessarily West Point, although I lived in West Point for a few months, but mostly shopping was Richmond and Newport News.
- T: Mm-hm. Okay. What in Newport News could you get that you couldn't get here?
- D: I don't know. We would go on Washington Avenue and they had a Sears and a- was it a Grants on Washington Avenue? And they had a [inaudible 21:15] and Nachman's and you know, stores like that. Woolworth. That was one of my favorite stores.
- T: Really, why's that?
- D: It's a five-and-ten and you can get just about everything, even plants you know. It was nice- and you could eat at the counter.
- T: What were you likely to get that you didn't need but you kind of wanted?
- D: Hmm. I don't know because you didn't have a lot of money then. What would I get? I remember during the war my mother and my aunt would go, I think it was Montgomery Ward's to get nylon stockings. And they had a- there was a clerk there that would send them a card when, because it was very difficult to get them during the war. And they would get a card that she would save some and they'd go down and get the nylon stockings.
- T: That's wonderful. I've heard that you couldn't get them at all.
- D: Well, they got them now and then. [Laughter] And they weren't panty hose you know, they were the kind with the garters.

T: Mm-hm. So over time on Main Street did the reasons that you came down to Main Street change over time?

D: Oh, yes. Because you just had a car and you could get around so much and you'd go to town.

T: Uh-huh. When did you start noticing that change?

D: At least in the [19]50s.

T: In the [19]50s? Do you know what facilitated that change?

D: No. Just people got more mobile and had cars and I guess more money and they would go-

T: More money?

D: Mm-hm.

T: Where was it coming from?

D: They got jobs and- it just seemed to me that money was scarce the first part of my life of almost everybody.

T: You know, I've noticed that but no one can really help me understand how-

D: Why?

T: Yeah.

D: Well my father was born in 1903, married in [19]25, and he had trouble working. He worked for what did they call, the steel fleet or something to do with boats. He did that and they worked in the water and the first- trying to think. In the [19]40s he worked on a tugboat in West Point. And then he got his license to, master's license to be a captain, and he started on the, he was a captain of the ferry between Yorktown and Gloucester Point. And that's when you know, you started

having more money, an income.

T: Yeah, absolutely. What was that job like for him?

D: It was wonderful. [Laughter] I remember going up in the pilot house with him and the ferry would, I think they ran every fifteen minutes during the day and it would tie up at night and run once an hour. And when they started to build the bridge then he left the ferry and went to the Old Bay Line, which you know, runs to Baltimore.

T: Wow. So he is in a really great position to notice change over time in transportation.

D: Oh, yes.

T: Did he ever talk to you about that?

D: I'm trying to think. We talked a lot and I should have taped things he said but he was just on the water more than anywhere else. And most of his stories were connected with things that happened on the boats and...

T: Well all of those, if you can you remember a couple of them?

D: Hmm...They were so general, you know?

T: Mm-hm.

D: He would tell, it was a lot of jokes between the pilot house and the engine room. They would make cracks at each other. [Laughter] And I remember jokes he would talk about the engineer on the ferry and things he would say. But I can't remember any one particular thing.

T: Did he ever talk about his clientele?

D: Oh yeah. Some of them he loved and others he couldn't stand.

T: He couldn't stand them?

D: [Laughter] I don't know if he'd tell them that but he didn't like, not just the ferry but other places, you know, that he worked.

T: Really? Hmm. I'm tempted to ask, you know, what would make someone that's just on the ferry for forty-five minutes in a day unbearable. But...

D: Forty-five minutes?

T: How long does it take to get from-

D: Yeah, but you know the crew was all day.

T: Oh, I see what you're saying.

D: Yeah.

T: Yeah. So there were members of the crew that he- how big is the crew?

D: Well they had a captain. And they had one or two in the engine room. And then they had the men who would put the blocks under your wheels when you drove onto the ferry, they'd put big blocks under your front wheels and your back on both ends.

T: Right.

D: They were deckhands, I guess, and then you had a person on the dock and you had the office. So there were right many people.

T: Wow, that's a lot of people, yeah. So how did he make the transition from working that ferry to working on the Baltimore route?

D: He made it very well because the first job he had after his mother died, he was fifteen when his mother died, and his first job was on the Old Bay Line between Old Point and Norfolk. So you know, he went back to the Old Bay Line in about

1950 or so.

T: How did he feel about the bridge?

D: Well he just- I guess he felt sad when they started building it. That's when he decided to leave the ferry and go back to the Old Bay Line. He just saw it as necessary progress.

T: Hmm. That's stoic.

D: Yeah.

T: So in Gloucester as a whole, you know, there's an increased population. Which does help with necessary progress and enterprise and kind of creating a bedroom community aesthetic, but some people might say something's lost?

D: Oh, yes. It was a simpler, more relaxed way of life. But that's not necessarily because of the population. One thing, so many people in Gloucester were employed at the Naval Weapons Station. And my husband retired from there. And they were wonderful positions that they had- civil service and retirement benefits and all- and you don't find positions like that anymore. The Naval Weapons Station, that's just a ghost town over there now. But that was one blessing to Gloucester County that so many retired from the Weapons Station in Gloucester County. With excellent retirement and benefits.

T: Yeah. If you could pinpoint a single change that, you know, characterizes the difference over time in Gloucester, what would it be?

D: The traffic. [Laughter] Yes, indeed. When we come out from where we live, get to 17, the traffic is unbelievable. And we have, is it thirteen stoplights between the bridge and here? Something like that. And see we lived, when I grew up there

were no stoplights at all. Stop sign now and then. And the Featherbed Lane that goes down to where we live was a dirt road. That wasn't hard-surfaced until in the [19]50s. So the traffic, there are so many changes, but the thing that we notice the more and mind more is the traffic.

T: What do you attribute that to?

D: Well the excess of people with the population increase. They're talking about a upriver crossing of a bridge, that would relieve it, I guess. I don't know if that many people just pass through Gloucester that would make a difference or it's just that we have so many people in Gloucester. And we notice, there's one person in almost every vehicle. Just one. When we worked at the Weapons Station, you carpoled. You had five or six in the car when you went to work. Now people drive just their own cars. And I wonder why. The gas didn't cost that much then but my husband was in a car, it was five or six in his carpool. So if they carpoled again it would cut down a lot on the traffic.

T: That's true too. Do you have children or grandchildren?

D: I have a daughter. And two grandchildren.

T: What do you want your grandchildren to know about Gloucester County as you grew up?

D: I want them to know about family history. I tell them all the time things that happened and what I learned, I hope. But my grandchildren, my dream for them because of what my life, I wanted both of them to go to college. And they did. My granddaughter graduated from CNU this past May. And my grandson got his Master's from Old Dominion a few years ago. So they were dreams that I had

and I financed it. That's how much I wanted them to have that.

T: Yeah, absolutely. What stories do you pass on to them?

D: Things that just come up that what my grandmother said or what some of my aunts, just little sayings you know.

T: Mm-hm.

D: My Aunt Kate, she said so often, either root little pig or die. That was her favorite expression. And then we had a friend, he was a millionaire and he lived down the creek from us and he had so many sayings. Every day I think of something that he said, and he lived to be ninety-six. But one thing he said, don't kill the lily. And that's so true, if something is good and wonderful, don't try to make it better, is what he was trying to say. Appreciate it for what it is. And there are things like that, and I tell them how we didn't have,-you know, we had a wood stove, we had to get up in the morning and make the fire and we had to walk to school and I try to let them know that they have it better. But it backfired. They think what we had was better. They often tell us, I wish I had lived when you were little.

T: How do you feel about that?

D: I just feel like I made a mistake [Laughter] somehow in giving them that impression. And it was a good life, but it was difficult you know. I remember lamp lights, we didn't have electricity or running water. We lived like that.

T: When did you get electricity?

D: I guess around 1940. And down where I lived they got it earlier in this spot. Yeah.

T: That is interesting how nostalgia works both ways.

D: Yeah. I felt that it backfired because our grandson would often say, I wish I had

lived back when y'all did, you know.

T: Mm-hm. What did your grandparents try to tell you?

D: Well the only grandparent I remember is my maternal grandmother. And what I remember most about her, she did say that one half of the world worries the other half to death. But I would be in her bedroom at night with her on the featherbed with the iron and she would have a lamp in the corner turned low, oil lamp, and she would kneel and pray. And I would kneel beside her. She died when I was six. But when I was little, younger than that, I would kneel beside her when she prayed. And I remember this one night she prayed so long. And I would say grandma, are you finished? And she says not yet, not yet. And that went on, so finally I reached, I said she's gone to sleep and I reached up under her arm to feel her face and the tears were running down her face. That's my, I remember that a lot.

T: Wow. Did you ever know what she was praying about?

D: She didn't say. But she was a widow then, you know. Her husband had died and some of her children.

T: Yeah. Wow. It's interesting how it's very different what we choose to pass on compared to what our parents and grandparents did.

D: But I remember that most about her and I remember she kept her money in a bureau upstairs, she didn't have social security or anything then. I was very fond of her.

T: That's wonderful. Do you have anything else you want to add?

D: Well it's been a pleasure. Meeting you.

T: It's been a pleasure.

D: I wish I had been more help.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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