

TMP-010

Interviewee: Andrew James, Jr.

Interviewers: Jessica Taylor and David Brown

Date: June 19, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor and David Brown interviewing Andy James at the James residence. It is June 18...?

J: Nineteenth, isn't it?

T: Nineteenth! It is.

J: I think it's the nineteenth.

T: I think you're right- 2013 at 10:45 AM. Mr. James, can you please state your full name?

J: Andrew James, Jr.

T: Okay. What is your date of birth?

J: Twelve, six, [19]42.

T: All right. Where were you born?

J: Richmond, Virginia.

T: Okay. When did you move to Gloucester?

J: I've lived in Gloucester pretty much all my life. I just wasn't- there was no hospital in Richmond- I mean, in Gloucester- at the time. My mom went to Richmond and delivered me, I guess. Then we came back to Gloucester.

T: That's a trip right there.

J: That's a trip. [Laughter]

T: What are your parents' names?

J: My mother's name is Josephine Brown James and my father's name was Andrew James, Sr.

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

J: They both worked for J.C. Brown Oil Company, which my grandfather started in 1915. A Texaco distributorship.

T: Wow. Okay. Do you have any siblings?

J: Yes, I do. I have one sister. Her name is Emily Brown James- Emily Brownie James, I'm sorry. [Laughter] They built a new home at my mom and dad's home place. They tore the old house down, and built a new house on Ware River down in Ware Neck.

T: Wow. What did she do?

J: She worked for-

B: It's up on the wall.

T: Oh, okay.

B: A little turn of the video.

J: She worked for a developer in Northern Virginia-

T: Oh, okay.

J: -where they lived most of their married life.

T: Okay. All right. We're there right now, but the person that is listening wouldn't know: where do you live in Gloucester County right now?

J: I live on the eastern side of the county on the banks of the Ware River, which is a tributary of Mobjack Bay, which is a tributary of Chesapeake Bay. [Laughter] We live about a mile east of Gloucester Courthouse.

T: Okay. I think you've had many lives, but what was your occupation?

J: My main occupation- I was president of J.C. Brown Oil Company. I worked for J.C. Brown Oil Company most of my life. I left Gloucester to go to Randolph-

Macon College in 1961, I guess. After college, and had a stint in the Coast Guard Reserve, which I stayed in for twenty-five years, I came back home and went to work in the family business, which was J.C. Brown Oil Company. Worked for them until 1999, when I sold the business. That's all I basically ever did other than the Coast Guard and I was chief of Gloucester Fire and Rescue for twenty-seven of those years.

T: Wow.

J: Pretty much involved with the county. I'm now on the board of supervisors- a member of the Board of Supervisors in Gloucester County. That's pretty much all I've done, that and the Coast Guard Reserve.

T: Wow. I guess, if it's okay with you, we'll start at the beginning.

J: Okay.

T: What is your earliest memory of Main Street?

J: My earliest memory of Main Street. Gosh, I don't have much really, really early memory of Main Street. I remember that every Saturday morning, pretty much, when I was coming along, I would ride with my grandfather up to Edge Hill Service Station, where he came every morning that he lived, I think. He owned the service station; he was never involved with actually operating it, but he spent pretty much every Saturday morning there jingling change in his pocket and shaking hands with the customers, and just generally making conversation with whoever came by. I spent a lot of Saturday mornings with him at that location.

T: Who was likely to come by?

J: Different customers, friends of his. I don't remember a lot of names at this point, but just people in the county, some that he had grown up with, men that he had done business with. We would often ride up into the center of the village- and a good friend of his was J.H. Martin, who owned a general hardware store which at the time was next to where SunTrust bank is now. I think Mr. Martin was very instrumental in talking my granddaddy into going into the oil business. We would often wind up in Mr. Martin's store, too, which was kind of a little headquarters in the Courthouse at the time. That would usually be a part of this Saturday morning round, too.

T: Okay. When you say the headquarters, who ends up at Martin's?

J: Just people: customers of Mr. Martin and some of the friends. Some of them were lawyers around the corner. Mr. Martin's son was a prominent lawyer in the Courthouse; his name was James Bland Martin, I think. They called him Jimmy Martin. He was a prominent lawyer, and he would often be stopping by, too.

T: In the gas station on that immediate corner, where are people most likely to stop and socialize? What part of the gas station?

J: What part?

T: Mm-hm.

J: In the little office part inside, or when it's warm often outside. On the concrete surface outside, they'd be talking, making conversation.

T: Okay.

J: At that time, it was about the only gas station around early on, and one of not very many anyhow. People who worked jobs otherwise, during the week they

would often come to the Courthouse, which was the county seat at the time, I guess, and do business on Saturday mornings. Then they'd stop and fill their car with gas and talk with Captain Jack. That was my granddaddy. They called him Captain Jack. They would often make conversation and my granddad smoked the cigar all the time pretty much. Sometimes he would give a friend a cigar or something like that, you know? [Laughter] That's about what I remember of it.

T: Tell me about Captain Jack. A lot of people say he is a pillar of the community, but I don't really know what that means.

J: He was a well-known person in the county. Like I say, he was in the oil business. He started J.C. Brown Oil Company on July 7, 1915, I think. He got his first delivery of Texaco products the same day my mother was born. That's kind of sort of how I remember the date. I think it was like seven barrels of fuel he got, was his first delivery. I think it came on a barge or something or other, and I think they offloaded it into the water and floated it to shore, some kind of way, and rolled it up on some timbers, I think. That's how he started his business, basically. I think a big part of his business early on was kerosene for lamps and that sort of thing. It grew into gasoline as the motor cars became more prevalent, I guess. One thing led to another, and he basically ran the business a good part of his life, and he lived to be ninety-five, I think. Anyhow, my mom was real instrumental in all of the bookwork and everything as far as the business was concerned. She ran their office, basically. Often, she was the spokesperson for the company as well. When she and my dad married, my dad went into the business as well. He drove the trucks some, and was a salesman some. They

were both a big part of the business, coming along. My granddad, bless his heart, was not a tremendous dollars and sense kind of businessman. My mom was the brains of the operation, just between us. My granddad was a good people person. He was real good at talking to people and building the business that way. Not very often could he tell you the price of what gasoline cost him a gallon, that kind of thing. He could not tell you what his margin of profit was or anything like that. My mom and dad were usually pretty instrumental in that part of it. But like I said, he was a very good people person. I remember early on spending a lot of time down at the oil plant and all of that. From the time that I was old enough to work at the service station, pretty much every weekend I worked at Edge Hill Service Station, while I was in high school. From fourteen years old through high school, I probably worked at the service station almost every weekend.

T: Okay. That gives me a lot of follow-up questions. [Laughter]

J: Okay, have at it.

T: Okay, so you said that Martin influenced your grandfather's decision.

J: Well, I always heard that. I cannot say emphatically that he did. But, they were good friends and they discussed business a lot. Mr. Martin probably finally said, Captain Jack, you need to get in the oil business. Then that started the ball rolling, and one thing led to another. My granddad forged some kind of relationship with, I think it was the Texas Oil Company at the time. It wasn't Texaco then, I don't think. He was the one of the very first Texaco distributors in the country, I think. One of just a handful, I think.

T: What was his rationale for getting started, especially if you said he doesn't have-

J: [Laughter] I think he had kind of sort of been in the oyster business some early on. I don't think he really liked that a lot. I think this seemed like a good opportunity to get in on the ground floor of something that he thought was going to take off. It was good, very good, to him and his family.

T: Fred Lee Brown mentioned that there was a Ware Neck pier gas station that your grandfather ran?

J: A Ware Neck pier gas station?

T: Like a station for fuel there. Is that the case?

J: My granddad had his plant- his oil plant- down in Ware Neck. It was a pier out from the oil plant, that had a pump on the end of the dock. He sold fuel there to boats.

T: Okay.

J: For years.

T: So beyond the gas station and the oil plant, what were his other Texaco-related assets?

J: At that time, mostly heating oil. Mostly heating oil, and a little bit of gasoline early on. Then, the gasoline business grew and he built another service station down at Gloucester Point and that's since been sold. He sold to some marinas and stores. There were a lot of country stores at the time, like Ware Neck Post Office and **Nuttle's** Store, and Lloyd Brown's store in Ware Neck and George Ashe in Guinea. Every community had a store, and most every store had a kerosene pump and a gas pump. Most of the kerosene pumps early on were gallon-stroke

hand-pumps. You'd pumped it, and when you went a whole cycle- the stroke- you got a gallon. The gas pumps were electric-powered pumps, most of those.

T: Okay.

J: He sold a lot to country stores, like five hundred gallon tanks in the ground and one pump, you know, and then he serviced them like once a week. The modern stations nowadays, most of the tanks are probably in the neighborhood of twenty thousand gallon capacity. So, you can see where it's gone. [Laughter]

T: Yeah. What were his relationships like with country store owners? Can you think of any specific people or moments that stick out to you?

J: I can think of some stores that he had. One guy that he sold to up at Bellamy, which was Bellamy Post Office at the time, his name was **Edner** Horsley. He ran a post office slash country store there. My granddad sold him kerosene and gasoline. C.B. Horsley—I can't remember what his first name was, anyhow—C.B. Horsley, I think, ran the Texaco station, the store and the station down at White Marsh where the ice cream store is now. You've seen that: that has got a Texaco cut-glass insignia in the A of that now, that probably belongs to me. But anyhow. [Laughter] I'm good friends with the lady that owns it and she says if she ever gets rid of it she'll let me have it. Even though it probably is mine anyhow. [Laughter] But I'm not going to press that. Anyhow, that was once a country store there.

B: That's Short Lane?

J: That's Short Lane, yes. What did I say? I don't even-

B: You said White Marsh, but it's all good.

J: White Marsh. Okay.

B: We know what you're talking about.

J: It's not White Marsh; it's Short Lane. Right. That was like a community gathering place at the time. Down in Guinea, an area at the southern end of the county, there was a guy named George Ashe who ran a little- it was a pretty good-sized store, actually, and a post office there. My granddad sold him for many, many years. It was several fish houses in Guinea as well that had pumps to fuel the boats that sold the fish to the fish houses. He sold them a lot of fuel there, too. Over in Mathews County, same way. It's a lot of seafood businesses over there that had tanks and pumps, and a lot of service stations. Where North Star Mart is now was S.G. Jones's store. For years, my granddad sold him fuel—mostly gas and a little bit of kerosene and diesel fuel there. Down in Ware Neck, Nettle's store—I don't know if you've been by there or not. I don't know how much you've been around the county, but that's a pretty well-known place. It would be a good place for you to stop and look around, because if you go in that store it's almost like taking a step back in time. That was a county gathering place, or a community gathering place, in Ware Neck for years and years. At nighttime the guys went up and played checkers and just kind of hung out. He had a gas pump there and a kerosene pump there. That was close to our plant. That was one of his early stores. One of my granddad's brothers ran a store farther down in Ware Neck, and his name was E.B. Brown. [Laughter] He was a real funny guy. I remember going in and delivering gasoline to his store. I always called him Uncle Eddy, and he would always have a stack of third party checks. I mean, people

would give him checks and he would pay for his gas would checks. When he would give you the stack of checks, he wanted to make sure that he had endorsed every one. He'd say, is that E.B. Brown? Say, yes, sir. E.B. Brown, E.B. Brown, the bully of the town? And I'd say, yes, sir, that's him. [Laughter] He had a little bit of something funny to say about a lot of stuff, Mr. Brown did. He was an early-on customer, too. But that's kind of what I remember about the early part of the business. My wife and I- once I got old enough to really be a part of the business, on holidays we had lots of marinas. We sold a lot of gas and oil and diesel fuel to the marinas. We would always try to give the guys the days off on the holidays, like Fourth of July and Memorial Day and Labor Day and all that. These marinas would almost always give out on gas on those weekends, because they only had like five hundred and fifty gallon tanks. They did not have enough storage to carry them through the weekends. Roberta, my wife, and I spent most of most holidays in the gas truck. We would be delivering to the marinas around Gloucester and Mathews so that our guys could be off those days. We would wind up- I'd be driving the truck Sunday and holidays a lot of times. I spent a lot of holidays in the trucks, and we used to get our deliveries by barge and tanker. Early on, it was a small tanker, and after that it was a barge and tug that brought gas to us. That was early on before we finally graduated to tractor trailers. It seemed like it was cheaper to get it- you got a better price buying it in large quantities like that. My job was to pump the barge off. Invariably, it got there about six o'clock in the evening. We'd pump the barge all night, most of the time. I spent many, many nights on top of those tanks with the

barge and a flashlight and a measuring stick, and measuring as the product came up in the tank. When it got full, I would cut that valve off and cut another valve on and put it in another tank. I would spend all night long a lot of times down at the plant pumping barges off. My granddad didn't think that night work amounted to anything. If I worked all night long pumping the barge, and he would come to work the next morning, he would think that I should stay there the next day all as well. [Laughter] I spent a lot of nights working for nothing, and then working the next day as well. But it was interesting. It didn't hurt me, you know. [Laughter] At the time, I didn't think it was such a great deal, but it provided a real nice living for my family and I. All in all, it turned out okay.

T: Right. I talked to Bill Weaver a couple of days ago, and he was talking about how y'all would deliver out to his farm.

J: Exactly.

T: So you did that.

J: My dad did and I did. The Weavers were in business- they were probably out of business just as I started working in the business. Bill Weaver's dad was a chicken farmer. They were real nice people. I went to school with Bill; he was I think like three years ahead of me in school. But, he's always been a first-class gentleman. Bill was a good guy in school and he's still a good guy.

T: Yeah.

J: His family was one of the farms we sold to.

T: What was the relationship like with family farms, delivering out to them?

J: They were just customers. I guess sometimes one farmer would tell another farmer that he was getting good deals and he was getting good service. One thing would lead to another and we would sometimes acquire farm business by one farmer talking to the other. In this small community setting, you always try to treat everybody right, you know? Because repeat business was what it was all about. One person telling another was important as well. My granddaddy used to say, the customer's always right. I didn't agree with him all the time. [Laughter] But, it was a way of doing business that carried him through pretty well.

T: One of the things that you mentioned that's really interesting is that your mother sort of ran a lot of the bookkeeping and financial stuff?

J: Yes, she did.

T: Was she in the gas station a lot?

J: She didn't spend much time at the gas station. She did most of the books for the gas station. She was very instrumental in the operation of the business. She really was for most of my life, actually. Even after my granddad got where he could not do much in the business, she was still very active in it.

T: How late would you say she was active until?

J: Probably about 1985, probably 1985.

T: In those earlier years, was it sort of a novelty to see a woman in that position?

J: I can't say that it was novel. A lot of the businesses- especially the seafood businesses and all that- had women, wives, who actually handled a lot of the money. I know a lot of places that we went to deliver gas and oil, we would wind up having to walk up to the house. The seafood dock would be down by the

water and the house would be away from that. We'd have to walk up to the house and knock on the door, and the wife would pay us often. They handled a lot of the book work. I mean, it was really not that unusual to see a lady in business. But my mom was very active in the business. I daresay that J.C. Brown Oil Company would not have survived, especially early on, without her.

T: You said that she was a spokesperson for the company. What do you mean by that?

J: A lot of times, when she talked to people, she would talk about J.C. Brown Oil Company and all that. My granddad was kind of the same way, but my mom could talk sensibly about the business part of it more than my granddad.

T: You also said you worked with people- when you started working there, you were fourteen? Who worked with you?

J: There was a guy named Howard Brown. I think that's his hat over in that... [Laughter] That was when Howard Brown retired, I think. Howard Brown only had one arm. The one that he lost, he mashed off. Down at J.C. Brown Oil Company, they were driving pilings on the dock. Not thinking, he rested, put his arm up on top of the piling. The pile driver came down and mashed his arm off. I cannot say for sure, but I always thought that my granddad felt like he was beholden to Howard. He felt like it was his duty, since Howard lost his arm at work for him, that he should provide a job for Howard pretty much for as long as he lived. Howard worked at Edge Hill Service Station all of the time that I can remember. He worked there many years, and he retired. That was a little picture there of his retirement get-together that we had. Howard was a good guy. A lot of people

knew him, and he always had to put up with the likes of me. We usually had a schoolboy like me or some young guys working there part-time at least. Howard always kept everybody kind of pretty much in line. I feel like that I learned a lot from his as well. I learned a lot about dealing with people from him, certainly.

T: What sticks out to you when you think about working with him? Were there key times that you can think of?

J: He was there always. He was there all the time. I mean, he more or less ran the show at the service station, the times that I worked there. Being a high school kid, I was somewhat trifling at the time, I'm sure. He would not put up with that. If we had cars that need washing or cars that need greasing or somebody to wait at the front to pump gas in the cars, he would make sure that we didn't sit around and not do our job. He made sure that we were at it. That work ethic has carried over for me, I think. I've said many times that I learned to work with some of the best. When I first went to work full-time with J.C. Brown Oil Company, it was two guys working there who were cousins of mine. One of named Jimmy Nutall and one was named Walter Nutall. They were a man's man. They were men. They would send us out often in the mornings- we didn't have any backhoe or anything to dig tank holes- and they would send Walter and Jimmy and I in the pick-up with a tank in the back and three shovels. We would go to wherever they needed the tank installed and dig a tank hole and put the tank in the hole and then fill the hole back up and pipe it all up and everything. I was a young man at the time, but I felt like I was just as rank as Walter and Jimmy. I felt like I was as strong and able as either one of those. They were tough, and I would not let them see me

slack one bit. I would try to do everything that they did. I always said I learned to work from the best, with the best. All of that was good. Kids nowadays get out of school and they want to start at the top. I started at the bottom and worked my way to the top. That was the way to do it; it was a great experience. It was.

T: When you were in high school, how did J.C. Brown find other kids to work there?

J: Sons of my granddad's friends, or friends of mine. Some were my friends, I guess, I recommended and got jobs there. I played ball all through school—football, basketball, and baseball—but I remember Friday night football games, getting beat up pretty bad sometimes, and then having to get up and be at work at seven o'clock on Saturday morning after getting your head nearly knocked off Friday night. My parents felt like that if I had a commitment that I should live up to my commitments. I've tried to teach my kids that as well. I've been trying to convey it to my grandkids as well. I have felt like the work ethic I learned early on carried on with me through life. It's been good.

T: You are substantially younger than a lot of the people I have interviewed so far. Do you remember what the first family car was?

J: A black Oldsmobile, I think. Let me back up two steps. One of the places that J.C. Brown Oil Company sold product to was F.A. Clemmons and Son, which was the Oldsmobile dealer in the county at the time. He also sold to Bell Motors, which was the Chevrolet dealer in the county at the time. All of the trucks we bought from Bell Motors, and all the cars we bought from Clemmons. We always had an Oldsmobile car of some size or shape, it seemed like. The first car that I remember was a [19]60 Oldsmobile, I think. [Laughter]

T: That wasn't the first car for your family?

J: Oh, no. They had cars before that.

T: Did you remember anyone telling you when they first got one?

J: I don't remember.

T: Okay.

B: No, no, no, you're- great job. I got a couple of questions I'd like to throw in.

You're good.

T: Okay.

B: Keep going with the flow.

T: Okay. In high school did you notice that most kids had cars or not?

J: Not early on.

T: No?

J: No. In the community where I grew up, it was five of us played football down there. The first car I had was a [19]53 Chevrolet, and I was as proud of that as a peacock. I think one of the other guys had a car, too, but the other three, I think, could use their family car like one day a week. After we got to be maybe juniors in high school, football season, one of us would drive each day. Early on, we had to thumb home from practice. I don't know, we had to find a way to ride the best way we could from practice to get home in the afternoons. After that, we devised a system. I drove one day, and the other four drove. Each drove one day, so we were covered all week on the football practice after that. But it was no fancy new cars at the time, I mean, for the kids. My family was as well off as any of the families at the time, and my dad bought me my first car. I didn't have to work and

you know, and pay for it, but I had to pay for the gas that went in it and the tires that went on it and all that. They bought my first car, but it was not anywhere near a new car. A lot of kids nowadays get brand new cars as soon as they get a driver's permit. [Laughter] It wasn't like that anywhere that I knew of at that time.

T: Who did you notice that was late in getting a car?

J: I can't remember anybody. Most kids that I knew had jobs in the summer and they saved their money until they could buy some kind of a car. It usually wasn't anything fancy, and then they would progressively buy a better car down the road. I don't remember anybody really that wanted a car that didn't get one some kind of way. I can't remember of anybody.

T: You were a student athlete. What does a student athlete do with their car on a Saturday night when there's no football game?

J: Go find the prettiest girl you can find and take her for a ride. [Laughter]

T: That's what Ronnie Stubblefield told me, too.

J: Ronnie Stubblefield. He was a good friend of mine.

T: Did you guys go do that together? I have a sense that maybe you did.

J: Yes ma'am.

T: Okay.

J: Sometimes we did.

T: [Laughter] Describe the- because I've been thinking about this- describe the route that you take to go find women. [Laughter] Do you start in Gloucester? He said he went to Mathews. Did you go to Mathews?

J: We went to Mathews occasionally.

T: How- just on a Saturday night, and you knew where to go?

J: Saturday night in Gloucester- usually, you would date somebody from school.

Often, you would date somebody from school. You'd ask them sometime during the week if they wanted to go out on Saturday night. Often, you would double-date, you know, to save gasoline and all that. Usually, either the girls would be good friends or the guys would be good friends and we double-dated. Often, the guys and the girls were good friends. Around Gloucester, it was a Tastee Freez up in Ark, and a lot of the folks from this end of the county, the young people, would gather there on Saturday nights. Down at the south end of the county, I think that's where I met Roberta, who was at the Tastee Freez down at the end of the county. Well, she's right. You'd go down there, and if you had a date, that was fine. You'd pull up in there and get a cheeseburger and a drink or something or another. If you didn't have a date, then you'd probably just go round and round and round and round [Laughter] until you saw somebody that you liked and you'd pull in and talk to them or whatever. Or, you'd have somebody that you wanted to talk to and she knew you wanted to talk to her and she'd conveniently be there. You know how it goes. Over in Mathews early on, there was a place called Dunk's. It was a little hole in the wall soda fountain place. That was kind of where everybody hung out there until there was I guess a Dairy Freez or a Tastee Freez or something or another was built, and that pretty soon became the hangout place. You could meet girls there and all that stuff.

T: So, you got to know people from Mathews that way, too.

J: Mathews was kind of out. I mean, if you were squabbling with your girlfriend in Gloucester, then you would take a trip over to Mathews and take a Mathews girl out. Usually the word got back pretty quick that...[Laughter]

T: Oh my goodness.

J: So anyhow.

T: I'm sorry to break this down into slow motion because I'm so fascinated with this process of courtship. [Laughter] So do you just roll down the window of your car and just say, hello. Would you like to go inside the Tastee Freez with me? [Laughter] Or is there a process by which- I'm so sorry I'm like so interested in how this works.

J: Often it would be two or three guys. If we went to Mathews, it would be two or three guys a lot of times. During the course of the evening, you would find a carload of girls that didn't happen to have dates that night. You would pull up beside them at the Tastee Freez and roll the window down and say, you good-looking thing, you're sure lucky to see me tonight! You know, or something like that. [Laughter] The word kind of spread around who the cool guys in Gloucester were and who the cool girls in Mathews were. During the course of ball games and all that kind of stuff, you know, you'd kind of sort of meet them.

B: Roberta, you can feel free to chime in at any time here.

Roberta James: Trolling.

J: I have on occasion had girls from Mathews come by the service station on Saturdays to see me, too. [Laughter]

T: Really?

- J: You know. Often they would ride over to Gloucester and stop by the service station, get a dollar's worth of gas. [Laughter]
- RJ: I'll intervene right here. My group of girls used to troll to Williamsburg.
- T: Really? Really? Why did you go to Williamsburg?
- RJ: Because there were some hot guys-
- J: More money over there.
- RJ: -hot guys over there at the time. [Laughter]
- T: That you knew personally or did you- just knew that they were hot?
- RJ: Well, we met some of the girls through cheerleading- I did- and we would go up and see them. They'd introduce you to the guys, and when I wanted to tick him off I'd go to Williamsburg. [Laughter]
- T: Where did you go in Williamsburg that was fun?
- RJ: I knew some girls up at James Blair High School that were cheerleaders. We used to get together and one of them, her dad was a judge over there. Still remember her. We got to know her really well. You didn't do anything by yourself back then. You always had a group of girls and a group of guys.
- T: Right.
- RJ: We'd go to the Tastee Freez. I remember one night, I had a date with somebody and I wasn't real happy with that date. I knew he was going to be there, so I played sick and went home early on that date. Then I got in the car with a couple of my girlfriends and went up and met him. [Laughter]
- T: Wow. Did you meet these other people- like, these other girls through, like, being an athlete?

RJ: Well, I was a cheerleader.

T: That's an athlete now!

RJ: Yeah. Well, I don't think that. But yeah. [Laughter]

T: Okay, that makes a lot of sense. So you all were the cool kids.

J: Well, I don't know. I guess I would think I was. [Laughter]

B: What positions did you play on the football team?

J: I was a fullback on offense and I played defensive end on defense. The schools were not that big then, and most of the guys who could play ended up playing both ways.

B: Oh yeah.

J: Most of the time.

T: You had a couple of questions.

B: Yeah. This is why I definitely want to sit down and talk to Roberta as much as I want to talk to Andy, [Laughter] because God knows this is probably going to bore the heck out of you, some of the stuff he's talking about. We always want as much dirt on Andy as we can, so it's a good thing we're recording this. [Laughter] When Captain Jack finally made the leap and got into the oil business, I know there's some time between then and when he decided to open up a station. He knew all of Gloucester County, so why did he choose the spot he chose to put up Edge Hill?

J: I think he saw the opportunity there. He started out in the oil business at his home in Ware Neck. He had some skids built out of the water there, and I think they offloaded for the first several years—maybe five years—all of the barrels of

diesel fuel and gasoline. I think everything was in barrels then. They unloaded it off—rolled it off the barge and up these skids and up into the yard. He delivered a little bit by boat then, I think, but mostly in a truck of some kind. Then, fairly early into his business, he bought an old dry goods warehouse, where he established his business. It was a warehouse slash office built out over the water. It had a fairly large dock that went out from it. The steamboat—that was the way of getting a lot of product from Baltimore to Gloucester—came on the steamboat and a lot of it was stored in this dry goods warehouse. A funny story about the dry goods warehouse. They stored a lot of canned goods and all in that. The August storm of 1933- the water came way up in that warehouse, and most of that stuff washed into the river. After the storm was over, the kids went down and jumped in the water and retrieved all these canned goods and stuff out of the water. Of course, all the labels and everything was washed off of them, so they said that people in Ware Neck had no kind of idea what kind of vegetables they were going to have for supper for years after that. [Laughter] Their mamas had cans with no labels on them, so I guess they opened them up and whatever it was was what you had. He bought that warehouse, my granddad did, and established his business there. Early on, I think, Texaco gave him several tanks. The tanks were in Norfolk, I think, and they were like probably twenty thousand gallon tanks. He would arrange to have some of these guys that had commercial boats go down to Norfolk and tow those. They would roll them in the water, and they would actually tow them behind these boats up in the Ware Neck. He would arrange to have them put up on stands down at the plant. I think he- the first

several tanks he got were from Texaco, surplus tanks that they had. Then, he bought some new tanks after that, and established his business on the water down in Ware Neck at this dry goods place. I think the fact that it was on the water was important, because that was how the deliveries needed to be made then. You could maybe get some stuff by barrels on trucks. But it was not nearly as good as the tankers and barges they could pump off into these tanks. That made it a whole lot more efficient and more cost-effective, too, I think. So, he established at that location in Ware Neck. After I came into the business, we got tired of having every year to go under that warehouse and put piling under it. You know, every year it seemed like one or two pilings would go bad, and we'd have to find a real low tide and go under the dock. We had a couple of house jacks and we would actually jack the warehouse up. We put one on each side of where the piling was we wanted, and we would actually raise it up enough and take the old piling out. Usually the old piling was put in with a big timber—a big board—up. They'd dig it down as deep as they could in the water and then they'd set this piling, cut it at the right length, and then they would let the building down on top of the piling and it would secure it. That was a job, especially in those times when you didn't have a lot of people hired. You usually hired the very minimum amount of people you could to get the job done, because of costs and all. Usually, taking people away from delivering product and all of that to put piling under the warehouse got to be a hassle. We decided that we would build a warehouse—build a new metal building—up on the land to be our warehouse. That's what we eventually did. A lot of the things you see around here on the

walls and all were in that old warehouse. We stored a lot of it. When I got a chance, I made sure that I had most of it in my hands. That's where that came from. The old warehouse—it was a big warehouse over the water, and it had a lot of hand-hewn timbers in it. I mean, big, massive oak timbers in it. Three guys in Mathews—I don't know if you know Robert Podd that owns the Poddery-PODDery over there. He was one of the guys. Anyhow.

B: P-O-D-D. Like, Poddery.

T: Oh.

J: Yeah.

T: Oh.

B: [Inaudible 47:15]

J: He lives near Foster. I guess he's still living. But anyhow, he and Brent Heath—Brent and Becky's Bulbs-

B: Oh, yeah.

J: Those two guys and several others got together. They knew I wanted to get rid of the old warehouse which is over the water, which I did not want to go into the water. I wanted to make sure that we scrapped everything that we didn't keep. But they wanted the timbers out of it, so they agreed—they didn't offer me any money—but they agreed to take it down and get the stuff away from there, which they did. They built a bunch of barns and stuff with the timbers and all that came out of that thing. That was a win-win for them and us. That was a big step ahead for J.C. Brown Oil Company, when we got from being over the water up onto the land, and we could control stuff better, it seemed like.

B: So, the Edge Hill Service Station was a pretty good spot.

J: Yes. I think my granddad had been looking around for somewhere to build a service station. My granddad was good friends early on with a couple of the Texaco representatives. I can't remember their names right now. Anyhow, they would come by almost weekly, I think, and advise him on stuff. When he got to the stage that he decided he was going to build a service station, they provided him with some drawings, I guess some drawings of some prototypes- that Texaco had built in the western part of the country. I think he looked around and finally found the property in Gloucester Courthouse where the station is. He negotiated with Mr. Thomas Calhoun Walker. It was three parcels, and he bought the three parcels and put them together and built his service station there. Where the car wash is now, I bought that later on to build the car wash on. I needed some more property to build the car wash, and I bought that from John **Fitchett** some years later. I guess he thought that was a good location and it turned out to be a good location for him.

B: And for us. [Laughter]

J: Right, and for you. I'm sure that during all this process, even though I was not involved in it certainly at that time—it was before I was born--anyhow, I'm sure that the Texaco people advised him on a lot of that. You know, they would say, Jack. This is going to be a fantastic location. Or maybe he had somewhere else in mind and they'd say, well, that's not nearly as good as this other place. I'm sure that they helped him in that decision. But the building plan came from Texaco. I'm sure of that.

T: When the building was actually being built with convenience for the customer in mind, do you know how Captain Jack envisioned people using the gas station beyond just getting gas?

J: I think that was his plan early on. I mean, I think that he was thinking down the road to the point that more people in Gloucester were going to have cars all the time, and that the roads were probably going to get better all the time, and there was going to be a need for gasoline. I think that was what he was thinking. Probably in talking with Texaco, his negotiations with them, I would say that they told him about the importance of, for instance, a service bay, somewhere where he could change oil and grease cars. After the first bay, he was probably told that he needed a second bay to wash cars in. I can't see him dreaming that up. I think he was probably advised on that some. It was a time when things were changing. People were no longer coming to Gloucester Courthouse on Saturdays in a horse and buggy. They were looking at buying a Model T or something like that. He could see this changing, and saw the real need.

T: Right, and with more people coming through Gloucester Courthouse, you have things like that screened-in porch area that he had, and the Ladies' Lounge. Can you comment a little bit on that?

J: What wound up being the Ladies' Lounge, I think it started out as a hot dog whatever you want to call it- place. I think several of his nephews ran that, one being- you said you talked to Lee Brown- Lee Brown's dad, Fred. I don't know if you know Joe Brown or not- but Joe Brown is another cousin. He worked at the hot dog stand early on, too. He wound up being- I think he retired- a commander

in the Navy. He was one of the first people to land airplanes on an aircraft carrier, I think. His son is an admiral now, named after me. I'm very proud of him, too.

T: Yeah.

J: Joe Brown worked at that hot dog stand, too. I don't know what prompted them to- I think they moved the hot dog stand, actually, from one side of the station to the other, and it became a Ladies' Lounge. I think that the thinking on that was that the ladies would bring their cars up to get serviced, and this would be a nice place for them to sit and relax while the car was getting serviced. I think it worked for them. I mean, I think that was a good idea for a little while. That was not an idea that came from Texaco, I don't think. I think that was my granddad and mother decided that, probably.

T: Wow.

J: And I've got it somewhere- they had a book in there, like a comments book. While you were sitting there getting your car serviced, you could write down your thoughts on, you know, this is a wonderful place. Thank you for providing this for us, and that kind of stuff. In that book was listed people from all over the country- I mean, people that were visiting in the county and stopped by and get their car serviced, that kind of stuff. I guess it was a time when people were starting to travel more, seeing a little bit more of the country, and all that. The gasoline thing was a wild idea at the time but it was a good idea, I think. People, I guess, still had horses and still had buggies, too, but there were a lot of them who had Model Ts as well.

T: When you're looking at this book and you're talking to people that are passing through, where are they coming from and where are they going?

J: Most of the people that travelled in this area that I knew about came from Richmond, Norfolk, Newport News, Portsmouth. A lot of the people that had travelled by boat were starting to travel by car. I know of people in this county- one guy who lived right down the river here- he was a distant cousin of mine too, I think- but his dad ran a boat called the ***Ella Warden***, I think was the name of the boat. Charlie Robbins worked on that boat from the time he was old enough to get on it until he went to school, I guess. Anyhow, he told me one day- I was delivering oil to his house and it seemed like every time you went to his house, he always wanted to write a check for whatever amount his bill was, but he always wanted you to come down and sit down at his table and have a cup of coffee with him or something or another, and just talk with him for a little while. He always was a most interesting person to talk to. He told me one time that he had been in Baltimore numerous times before he went to Gloucester Courthouse. He would go on that boat to Baltimore and his dad would take the boat to Baltimore, and bring a load of whatever back that people wanted, or he would carry a load of produce up to Baltimore and bring maybe groceries back. This guy ran that boat. They said he was so good at it. A story I heard about him- and his name was Captain Bill Robbins- they said that he left Gloucester and went to Baltimore with a load of watermelons or whatever. He said when he started back it got real foggy, real real foggy. He said that he came all the way back, running time and distance on his compass and everything. Of course, didn't have any

GPS or anything like that in those days or radar or anything. He said he came all the way back from Baltimore into the Ware River and dropped anchor where he thought was where he always dropped anchor, still foggy as the devil. Guided his skiff, and stayed lost the rest of the night trying to get to shore from where he anchored his boat. He knew how to navigate from Baltimore to Ware Neck, which is two hundred miles I guess, and maybe a little bit more. But anyhow, he knew all of his courses and time and distance, and came right into the Ware River, and then it was probably several hundred yards to shore and he stayed lost the rest of the night. [Laughter]

T: Wow. As time passes, are people still coming from Norfolk, Newport News, Portsmouth, or are they coming and going from different places?

J: I think a lot of it had to do with people who married people. In those days a lot of times, the father might have been the captain of an oyster boat, and he might have been from Mathews. He might have, in the course of a day, delivered his oysters to Portsmouth. In the process of unloading oysters he might have met a lovely young lady down in Portsmouth and wound up marrying her, you know? I know my granddaddy and grandmother on my dad's side were from Mobjack over in Mathews County. She was from Portsmouth, and so my granddad, who was captain of an oyster boat, met her in Portsmouth and their families travelled back and forth. I think a lot of that went on, too. A lot of people before the cars really got going big-time around here married people in the neighborhood, you know, just because of the convenience of it. If they didn't marry in the neighborhood, they married somebody that they could get to by boat, you know?

They would learn about- meet somebody at an ice cream social or something or other, and she'd live across the river and they'd travel by boat over and take her out and court her in the boat, I guess. I think that over time people travelled because of family reasons, I think. They would live in Norfolk or Portsmouth and they would have family in Gloucester. They would drive up here to see them. I think that expanded probably to take in Philadelphia and New York maybe and Boston and all of that. A lot of it was because of family, I think. Then, you know, after that, it evolved to wanting to go see the Washington Monument and maybe other attractions other than family stuff. The Edge Hill Service Station was on really the cutting edge of all this. That's pretty neat.

T: Well, let's talk about that, then, because the service station facilitated a lot of these like lengthier trips, and people that may not be familiar with where to eat and where to stop. What other facilities kind of adapted to this change that y'all had, besides just getting gas?

J: It was more and more restaurants coming around. I know one of the first restaurants I remember in town was the downstairs part of the Calvin Hotel. The hotel is boarded up now, as you well know, and no longer used. It's right next to Tri-County Furniture Store. Mr. Booker owned the hotel and the furniture store at the time. He built a real nice restaurant downstairs in that, and a lot of people would eat there after church on Sundays and Saturday evenings. More and more restaurants for sure, though, and eventually more and more gas stations as well. Then, after you got several gas stations, then competition began to play into it, you know? You'd be real cognizant of what everybody's price was. If you were

getting twenty cent a gallon for gasoline, and somebody down the street was only getting eighteen, then you were losing a lot of business to the guy that was only getting eighteen. Then, you would have to think to yourself, well, can I beat his price and still make a dollar? Or maybe, can I go a penny under him and still make a dollar? Then it gets into a gas war. All those things led into what we've got today I guess. Competition is the lifeblood of capitalism, as you well know.

[Laughter]

T: How did your service station- what did yours have that the others didn't have?

J: Early on, it had just hand-pump gas pumps. You pump the gas into the glass at the top. If you wanted ten gallons, then you would pump it up to the ten gallon mark on the glass, and then you would squeeze the nozzle and gravity would flow it into your tank. After that, I guess the people with the modern electric pumps all of a sudden became the hot item at the time. One thing led to another, and then after the electric pumps with the meters on them- then the electric pumps with the meters early on would only show gallons, and you'd still have to compute the price. Then after that, you would- they came up with computers that also computed the price. One things led to another. That's how it all took place, I guess.

T: You had the hot dog stand and you had the Ladies' Lounge. What besides those two things did the gas station provide that allowed people to stay and linger and hang out?

J: [Laughter] Well, they probably had a couple of chairs around, and of course they had the restrooms. You could get your car serviced or you could get a can filled

with gas to put in your lawnmower. You could buy a quart of oil to carry home and put in your lawnmower. You could get your oil changed and everything while you were there. Like I told you, I think the Ladies' Lounge was a good idea for the ladies. A lot of, especially, the older ladies that had time on their hands would come up and spend a couple of hours sitting in there. All the windows were open, and there was usually a nice breeze flowing through there. Wasn't a bad place to sit back for a little while, and they usually had some magazines and a newspaper in there. All of those things were pretty good. Then it got to the point where time became important, you know? I know this applied to Edge Hill as well: a lot of the ladies would call and say, can you grease my car today? Or, can you wash my car today? Then, the next thing was, can you pick it up?" You know, or can you bring me home if I bring it up there? All of a sudden they didn't have enough time to sit back and read the newspaper and all of that. They had other things they needed to do, but they needed to get the car serviced. Often, they would come up and we would ride down to their house and put them out, and bring the car back and wash it and service it and fill it up with gas, and carry it back to them. Then that became important.

T: Wow.

J: Early on, it was an attendant to pump your gas and check your oil and sometimes even check the air in your tires and wash your windshield and all of that. Then somebody decided that you could get by with self-service and charge two cent less a gallon, and then that caught on. You could just do away with checking the oil and washing the windows and all that and just pump the gas for

maybe a penny less. A lot of the older ladies, especially, of course, didn't want to get their hands dirty, didn't want to get out. They usually had a dress on and all of that and they didn't want a gas hose rubbing against their glad rags and all that. They wanted a place that they could go that was full service, but then the dollars and cents thing became important, too, you know? If I can fill my car up with gas for a dollar less if I pump it, then maybe I'll do that. Maybe that's a good idea.

T: When did you notice that change?

J: Probably in the early [19]60s.

T: Early [19]60s.

J: Yeah.

T: Okay. So this earlier process by which you sit and wait- it seems like you could mix outsiders and tourists and people that just kind of wanted to hang out that were from there. Did that relationship, that mixing, change in the early [19]60s alongside-

J: I don't remember that it did.

T: Okay. Okay. As life gets more fast-paced, how does life on Main Street change beyond the gas station?

J: [Laughter] I can't remember. I mean, I can't remember anything changing big-time as far as Main Street is concerned. I guess the big change as far as the gas business is concerned, is when the change like 7-11 and the likes of them decided that they could sell gas cheaper. Then it became harder to make a living in the gas business. The places like Edge Hill that hired a guy like Howard Brown to work there, and myself and maybe one other guy- you know, you had to pay

these guys every day no matter what they were doing, you had to pay them every day. You could figure it out: you had to make ten cent a gallon to make it all work. Well, along comes 7-11 or some of these other company locations, and they would sell it for five cent over cost. If you put a pencil to it and find out that you can't sell it for five cent over cost and make any money, then the whole thing changes. Then you see convenience stores coming. The guys, the people like my granddad figuring that, I can't make it on five cent a gallon over cost with gasoline, then maybe I can put in loaf bread and eggs and soft drinks and Nabs and some of that stuff. People who will pay me a nickel a gallon over cost for gasoline and be happy will be happy to pay me forty percent profit on all this grocery stuff. Maybe all that together will make it so that I can turn a dollar or two. The whole idea of the service station changed. I can't put a time exactly on it, I mean, you could see it coming. And it would infuriate my granddad early on. He would say, so and so has a service station. He calls that a service station? That's a grocery store. You know, things like that. It would seem like you were stepping on his toes a little bit when you wanted to sell something other than gasoline in your service station, or gas-related products. He didn't think you should go to a service station to get a loaf of bread or a dozen eggs. He didn't think about the fact that you were making one stop there and you could save stopping at a grocery store if you could get the same thing there that you could get at a grocery store and not have to pull your car in and stop again. All of it was kind of an evolution, I guess.

B: It's kind of funny to think that some of the first gas stations were general stores.

J: They were.

B: So, you would be going there for food, and you would end up getting gas out of a convenience. Later on, you end up finding the food coming to the place where you're getting your gas.

J: That's right.

B: The two commodities end of switching to a degree. What are some of the other goods that you know Captain Jack started selling at the station? Did he decide- you know, start with one thing leading to another? You've mentioned to us before that you were selling- that they had to keep secure in the back room- cigarettes?

J: Cigarettes, yeah. Tobacco products was probably one of the first things that showed up. In those days- I never had been a tobacco user myself, but my granddad smoked a pipe all the time and smoked a cigar any chance he got. Sometimes he'd be smoking a cigarette and a cigar at the same time, you know? Tobacco was big to him and most everybody that you met- most every guy especially- some women, but almost every guy smoked something or other, you know? I don't know how I missed that, but I'm glad I did. That became a big part of it. People would come up and get two dollars worth of gas and sit in their car and say, well, give me a pack of Camels, too? They'd give you five dollars or whatever it was and you'd bring them the change. Most everybody that came in, especially guys, when they left they'd have some tobacco product: chewing tobacco or pipe tobacco or cigarettes or cigars or something or other. We sold a lot of that stuff. The reason we put it in the back room is because it'd walk so easy. It was so easy to be shoplifted, really, because a lot of people, when they

came in, they'd get out of their car and they'd say, put two dollars worth of gas in it for me. If you were the only person there- I mean, if Howard was greasing the car in the lube bay, and you were the guy working the front, then you were out putting gas in, and it would be hard to watch what went on inside of that store while you were out on the front. People could put cigarettes or cigars in their pocket quite easily. That was probably what prompted putting them in the back room.

T: So that was a problem- people shoplifting or things like that?

J: It's always been a problem, I'm sure. It's amazing the things that people will steal.

T: Is there a story there? I feel like there might be a story there.

J: I opened a convenience store, and it's still running. It's called North Star Market now. It's over in Mathews County, but not very far in Mathews County. We opened up a real nice convenience store there, and it's a post office there as well. It was a post office and convenience store together on the property. I hired a lady to run it for me, because I was running the oil company at the time. The first year in business- I'll try to get the numbers somewhere close to right, but the place grossed like two million dollars that year, and I lost three hundred thousand dollars. I'm still hearing stories about what went out of there that didn't get paid for. I learned pretty quickly that if you can't be there to manage it yourself, it doesn't matter if who you hire sings in the choir or teaches Sunday school. It doesn't matter. People will steal from you big-time. I sold that business when I found out that I didn't have enough stores that I could just hire somebody to just

manage the stores. I sold the store, and I'm glad I did. I lost a pile of money there in a year. I've heard stories- one story that I heard was a guy who fished gillnets. He was a waterman, but he fished gillnets at nighttime. He would come in there and the lady that managed the store kind of gave him wholesale use of the ice machine, so he would go come in the store at nighttime, go in the back room, and shovel ice in and he'd take his cooler back in there, and shove ice in his cooler. Well, what she didn't know was that he was putting a case of beer in there every night and covering it up with ice. He was going out with a case of beer every night. That's the kind of stuff that goes on, and it doesn't take but so many cases of beer to hurt you. People have realized in the convenience store business that you do a lot of things to make sure that you have security. If you look around- I don't know if you've ever noticed it- but none of the 7-11s or anywhere like that has a door to the back room. Anything that comes or goes in that store has to go past the counter. If you're a Coke deliverer, you deliver Cokes in, you have to stop the hand truck right at the counter and let the guy that's working that counter see every case of drinks and sign off on it. It's not like you're unloading stuff in the back room and saying you put ten cases in there and you only put five. That kind of stuff. People in the business have realized that people will steal from you.

T: Right.

J: I mean, they will steal big-time from you. You trust nobody. You may come up to me; I say, my Lord, that' a really nice-looking young lady. I know she's just as straight as an arrow. I'm just going to let her- I mean, I'm not going to worry about

checking behind her. I know she's a hundred percent. And then, two weeks later, I'll start sitting down at the desk and doing a little bit of figuring. I say, well, dang gone it. I lost two hundred dollars last week. Where did it go? You know?

T: Yeah.

J: So your family's eating good. Everybody's getting a couple loaves of bread a day, and plenty of lunch meat, and you know, stuff you can carry out in a bag. That stuff goes on big-time.

T: Got it. Tell me a little bit about how the locals, when they came to the station, how they interacted with you when you were there. Who did you see every week?

J: I can't think of any names now, but a lot of the time a lot of the guys that came in knew I played ball, and they would talk about the Friday night game. Or they knew my parents: how's your dad doing? Or, how's your mom doing? A lot of the younger people that came in were friends of mine. I knew them and we would talk some. It was a situation then when most everybody either knew everybody or knew about everybody, pretty much. When I would work in Ware Neck in the mornings- I lived in Gloucester Courthouse- and going to Ware Neck in the morning every car I knew. I mean, I knew everybody that lived in Ware Neck, pretty much. Now, if I go into Ware Neck on Sunday morning to go to church, I won't ten percent. [Laughter] I still wave to pretty much everybody, but I won't know who in the world I'm waving to most of the time. At that time, it was probably- well, now, it's almost forty thousand people live in the county; it was probably ten thousand then. Pretty much everybody knew everybody, or knew

about everybody. I would know that so-and-so was your first cousin, or I would know that your mother's sister had cancer, or something like that. I would say, how's your aunt doing? when somebody came in, you know? You knew something about everybody. Or they knew that we had beat the archrival playing football Friday night and they'd ask me, how in the world did you all do that? That was fantastic! You would talk about that kind of stuff, and school stuff, community stuff.

T: Has it been hard to adapt that ethic to a situation where the population is getting a lot larger?

J: Not really, not really. It's about 37,640 people in the county now, I think, or something like that. It's almost forty thousand. It's a lot of people that who have moved in the county, who have moved here from Newport News or Richmond or wherever. They want things that- they thought that they moved here because they wanted things to be in the country, and then the first thing they try to do is make it like Richmond or Newport News. They want you to change all your ordinances and all your rules, so that the neighbor's dog doesn't bark at night time, or the neighbor doesn't have chickens that worry you to death. They want rules that are like where they came from. That kind of stuff has bothered me as much as anything. I see it right now on the Board of Supervisors. I probably get twenty e-mails a day at least- sometimes twenty-five depending on what's going on- and it's invariably people that are newcomers to the community that things don't suit them, usually. People will come down here often and just come down here to want to discuss stuff like that. I'm sitting here thinking to myself, that's the

dumbest thing I've heard today. But I'm listening to it and saying, yes, ma'am, I understand what you're saying and all of that. But, by and large the people that have lived here a long time are pretty well satisfied with the way things were. Most people get along with their neighbors, and most of the people now that have problems, they will say, my next-door neighbor's dog is barking and worrying me to death and I want you to pass some kind of ordinance that they can't have dogs in this neighborhood. My first question will be, have you walked next door to talk to this guy? Well, no, I don't feel like I ought to have to go. You know, he's your neighbor! Why can't you go over and talk to him and say, you know, your dog's worrying me to death. Can you do anything about that? Let that be your first step. But a lot of that doesn't go on anymore. I would say that's one of the big changes. People are not as friendly towards each other as they once were. This county used to be a real tight-knit community and everybody pretty well got along. You don't see that as much now. That's been probably the biggest change with the population boom, I'd say.

T: How can the Main Street community adapt to these changes, both positive and negative?

J: It's been a lot of work done on Main Street lately, as you well know, making it a prettier place. It's not necessarily a good place to do business as it used to be. I've said a lot of times, when I was early on in business, it was three car dealerships on Main Street. It was a real nice hardware store, and a couple of grocery stores. It was a lot of places to do business on Main Street. Now, you can't even find a place to buy loaf bread on Main Street. You can't buy a loaf of

bread on Main Street anymore. They made it pretty, but they've not made it very business-friendly. That's one thing that's changed a lot. It was a lot of business done on Main Street years ago, a lot, but it was no big box stores then. Instead of going to Doswell Dutton's and getting a pound of nails or a box of screws or whatever you needed, now you go to Lowe's or Home Depot or Wal-Mart. The business part of Main Street has gotten away from Main Street. It's out at Wal-Mart and Lowe's and Home Depot and those kind of places.

[INTERRUPTION IN INTERVIEW]

They've done a lot to make Main Street look good, and it's a lot of people on the Main Street committees and all of that that are promoting shops- hoity-toity little shops that you can go in and buy jewelry or you can go in and buy small items. Well, the average guy- they want to cater to the guy that walks through the Courthouse, it seems like, or the lady in Main that wants to park down at Edge Hill Shopping Center and walk up through the Courthouse and maybe walk into some of the shops and wind up sitting down at the court circle and taking pictures of each other and all of that. But the bottom line is they don't spend five dollars altogether in their trip up Main Street. It's hard for these people that open these little shops to survive. They start out with big aspirations and expectations and a lot of it doesn't pan out just because it's not the volume of traffic in there to support the businesses.

T: Right. Did you notice that with specific businesses in the [19]70s or [19]80s?

J: No.

T: No.

J: I did not.

T: No.

J: Just because before Wal-Mart and Home Depot and Lowe's and all, if you needed- if you were getting ready to do a plumbing job at home or a carpentry-building job at home, you would go to one of the hardware stores in the Courthouse, and you would get a box full of stuff to go home and do your project. Nowadays, it doesn't happen anymore. It's no dollar volume for business there anymore. I don't see that changing. It's a lot of times now, before I had this accident, when I was getting ready to do something and I needed, you know, three or four water valves or whatever, then I would go up to one of the hardware stores at the Courthouse and get them. I knew they sold quality stuff. Nowadays, if I want the same thing, I've got to go to at least Lowe's or I might have to go down to Ace Hardware in Gloucester Point to get the quality of the material that I want. It's just not there anymore. But on the other hand, it's not worth my while if I'm in the hardware business in Gloucester Point to come to Gloucester Courthouse and open another branch, another building, because it's just too many people who are going to go to Lowe's or Home Depot, or going to go to Wal-Mart anyhow for something or another and they'll get it in Wal-Mart.

T: Right. So what's your vision for Main Street? What do you want it to be like if it's not this?

J: Honestly, I'd like to see a nice grocery store on Main Street. Honestly, I'd like to see a nice hardware store on Main Street. Those kind of things.

T: The way it was?

J: Well, I would like to see the way it was, but it's not going to happen. The car dealerships are not going to be there; they don't have enough room. They've moved out onto bypasses. It's just not going to happen with the hardware stores. I guess that with the grocery stores. I know Wallace Foods burned down before you came, I think, Dave.

B: Yeah.

J: But it used to be a grocery store kind of across from the service station in Edge Hill Shopping Center. A nice little grocery store, and it carried a real nice line of meats, carried good meats, and I can stop on the way home. I'd call Roberta before I left Ware Neck and say, you know, what do you have in mind for dinner? and she'd say, well, I thought I'd get you to stop by Wallace's and pick up some steaks and we'll grill some steaks tonight or whatever. It was real nice to be able to stop by there and pick up three or four items or whatever. Roberta did a lot of her weekly grocery shopping there, but now you've got to go up to Food Lion which is out in the Courthouse on the north side. I guess you could go down to Wal-Mart on the south side, which is, you know, not really convenient for me. I really miss the Main Street businesses, but I don't think it's going to happen. I think it's enough money behind the Main Street Association; there's a good amount of money behind the Main Street Association, and I think you're going to see it look pretty. I think you're going to see a lot of silver boxes and small antique shops and that kind of stuff that's not going to put any real tax dollars in Gloucester's coffers, I can tell you. It's probably going to- like I say, they've painted the buildings up pretty and they put a lot of flowerpots on the posts and

they really look nice. All that stuff looks good, but it's just not any big money to be made on Main Street, I don't think, unless you happen to be in the restaurant business or happen to be a lawyer, I guess. We've got an abundance of restaurants and lawyers.

T: Right.

B: The new thing that seems to be happening is doctors' offices.

J: Yeah. You're right. I understand at least one of them is coming into Edge Hill Shopping Center, too. I think it's a- I don't know- kidney dialysis maybe? I think that's coming in there, too, which is fine. That's all right.

B: We're right at about an hour and a half.

T: Oh, okay.

B: We've got an hour and twenty-six minutes of video, so I think we knew from day one this was not going to be the only interview. [Laughter] This will give us some time to go back and ask some more questions on the second interview we do, perhaps the next week that you come down. You've still got a few minutes to ask more if you've got some on the top of your head.

T: I have like two more.

B: Let's go with it.

T: Okay.

B: If you're up for it, Andy.

J: Oh, I'm fine.

T: They're really general. What do you see as the role that Fairfield and the Edge Hill Service Station can play in-

J: I mean, I'm really happy. I could not have sold to anybody that I'm happier with- would've been happier selling to than Fairfield. I think the world of Dave and Thane both, and I think they've got a fantastic idea and they've got some good people behind them. I think that the idea that that's going to be the headquarters, but even more than that, it's going to be an educational opportunity for the county. They're going to catalogue a lot of their findings there, and I think they're going to bring in lots of school kids and let them do hands-on stuff and let them see what was actually found in the ground here in Gloucester, what went on before they were here. I think all of that is going to be fantastic, once this gets finished up. I think it's going to be a big asset to Main Street. I think it's going to really look neat with those two pumps on the front of that old building. It's going to be a good thing. I think it's all good that they're doing. I'm very happy with what they're doing.

T: Okay. The last thing is, you have grandkids now.

J: Yes.

T: And they never experienced the gas station as you did.

J: No.

T: What do you want them to know about it?

J: I would hope that they will benefit from what I've told you today, and maybe will be some more documentation of this, so that they can see what it was early on. I've still got some stuff in my safe- some original deeds to the property there and all of that. I would want them to know that. All of my grandkids are as smart as they can be, like everybody's grandkids. [Laughter] But they are. They're pretty

bright kids, all my grandkids. I'm going to try to hold on to all this Texaco memorabilia that I've got, and try to bring them up to speed on as much as they could want to absorb. I've still got my granddad's [19]65 El Camino. I've got a picture of it on the wall over there. But that's out in my garage with a cover over it, and that's completely rebuilt and redone. That was his last vehicle. I've had it completely refurbished and got Captain Jack on the license plate. [Laughter] One of my kids especially is kind of into antique cars and all, and he likes that a lot, so he might well fall into that one. Anyhow, it's stuff like that that's interesting to me and important to me and I'm going to try to pass the legacy down onto them, as much as I can. You can look around you and see how much Texaco stuff is in here and it's mind-boggling, the dollar value of some of it. I would say they're going to have a heck of a yard sale about two days after I die. [Laughter] But anyway, that's up to them.

T: Yeah.

J: Bless their hearts. [Laughter]

T: That's all I've got.

J: Okay, darling.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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