

TMP-021

Interviewee: Harvey Morgan

Interviewer: Jessica Taylor

Date: July 27, 2013

T: This is Jessica Taylor and this is July 27 at 4:00 p.m. in Gloucester Courthouse, Virginia. Sir, can you please state your full name, including your middle name?

M: Harvey Bland Morgan.

T: Okay, and what's your date of birth?

M: August the 18, 1930.

T: Okay. What were you parents' names and occupations?

M: My father was Loran, L-O-R-A-N, Vincent Morgan. He was born in 1901. He was a pharmacist, and practiced pharmacy in Gloucester for sixty-eight years. [Laughter] My mother's name was Louise Bland Morgan, or Mary Louise Bland Morgan. She was born in 1903 in Cologne, Virginia which is in King and Queen County, just fourteen miles west of us.

T: Okay.

M: But Dad was born in Portsmouth, Virginia and raised there.

T: Okay. Where were you born?

M: I was born here in Gloucester at home.

T: Okay. Great. How many siblings did you have?

M: Had one brother and one sister.

T: Great. And as for you, I know you've led many lives. [Laughter] I was wondering if you could maybe talk a little about your career.

M: Okay, where do you want me to start?

T: Well, I understand that you worked in your father's drugstore for a while.

M: That's correct, and after I was discharged or separated from the Navy, I came back home and worked with my brother and my father in the drugstore. Then, in 1979, I was elected to the state legislature and served for thirty-two years as a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, and retired end of 2011. My work in the drugstore was very rewarding, and I enjoyed it immensely, but I guess I reached a plateau. When my predecessor, who served us for thirty-eight years--so the two of us served one district for seventy years. That's probably a record. [Laughter] But he retired and so the Republican Committee asked me if I would run. I had to agonize about that a lot. I mean, I'd been thinking about it. I was interested and really wanted to do it, but it was a difficult decision because, you know, in our business we only took like a one-week vacation a year. For me to leave and go to Richmond for sixty days and also be going to lots of meetings in between, it was a big decision and I knew it would be a hardship on my brother and my father.

T: Mm-hm. What would you consider some of your bigger successes in the legislature?

M: One of the things that was pharmacy-related was freedom of choice legislation, which allowed any individual to choose that person's healthcare provider, particularly pharmacy. Some of the health maintenance organizations, or the HMOs--they called it managed care but it was really managed competition. They were trying to restrict where

you would go and get your prescription filled. I was able to get that legislation passed to ensure that you could go to the pharmacist of your choice. That's still on the books. It's been circumvented in some ways by these plans that pretty much coerce people to go to certain pharmacies, but legally they can get around that if they want to and they know the law. Another one of which I'm really- feel very good is the Chesapeake Bay Preservation Act. That's one that I co-patroned with another legislator. I worked the Republican side of the aisle; he worked the Democrat side of the aisle, and we were able to get the bill passed. It was landmark legislation.

T: So can you describe sort of what inspired that?

M: Well, I mean, the bay has been dying for a long time. The seafood industry has been declining. We've had more red tides, more indications of pollution. We just need to turn that around. The governors of all the states that border the Chesapeake Bay twenty years ago passed a compact that they would clean it up. Then they reiterated it again about a decade after that, and still not enough has been happening. Now finally, the EPA—the federal government—has stepped in and said- I told them, I said, if you didn't do it by 2010, they were going to tell us how. Well, we didn't get it done, and so now the Environmental Protection Agency has stepped in, and they've laid down some guidelines that are really more than guidelines. It's pretty much the federal law and it's determined by the agency. So, it's happening but it's still painfully slow.

T: Mm-hm. Okay. Going back to your childhood and your time at the pharmacy, I don't know how long I can hold my arm like this [Laughter] so I was going to ask you-

M: I can hold it for you.

T: [Laughter] You can just do it like this. Can you tell me a little bit about the time that Fred Carter- can you break it down for me?

M: Oh, sure. Oh, yeah. Well first of all, I have to tell you, our pharmacy was in three different locations. The first location was a portion of a store that's no longer there. It was a grocery store and there was like a twenty-foot section of it was the pharmacy. My dad came in 1922, and in 1932 the owner of the building, who was the grocer, built another store right beside it. That's where the antique store is up the street now. Anyway, the reason I mention that is because I was born in 1930, and my dad allowed me to help move in 1932 to the new store. I carried the ice cream dippers. [Laughter] That's what they tell me. I don't remember it. [Laughter] We had massive resistance, as you know, in Virginia after the federal laws determined that we had to integrate the schools. The schools I don't think had been integrated at this point, but the African-American community was staging sit-ins and all sorts of civil disobedience because of our so-called Jim Crow law that we had. There was, in fact, the law that whites and blacks had to be served separately and in other words, they had to have separate water fountains and separate toilets. It was just crazy, but it was what I grew up with. I hardly questioned it until a few years after the laws were changed. Just, you don't question things that you take for granted. Anyway, I knew Fred. I watched him grow up and I knew his family. But one day, he and three other students at the Gloucester Training School, which was the black high school, decided they would stage a sit-in at Morgan's Drugstore, at our lunch counter. We had two booths and several tables and stools. Well, they came in and sat down in one of the booths, and the fountain manager didn't know what to do. She kept looking over to the prescription department for some guidance,

wanted me to see what was happening. I don't when it was, [19]63- I was probably thirty-three, something like that. I don't know if it was [19]63, but it was about that time...I'll back up a minute. I heard this story because the black community has always been important to us and my family and my business. So, we've tried to treat people fairly. In fact, I think we hired the first African-American at our lunch counter. There was one that worked in the grocery store here, but I think first one to work as a clerk in the drugstore was in our pharmacy. But...I was invited to a wedding reception. There's a family here in Gloucester, the man had twenty-one children, I believe. This was the grandchild that was getting married of one of those children. The wedding reception was in a big hotel over in Williamsburg. They had a big banquet and I was invited as the legislator and just a family friend. They placed me at the head table and Fred Carter, who was the master of ceremony. As he was making his introductions, he said, let me tell you a story about Harvey. I didn't know what he was talking about. Then he told me about the fact that he and his classmates decided to skip school and go to Morgan's Drugstore and stage a sit-in. Anyway, to go back to the story- he tells the story. I still don't remember it, but he said, the manager looked over to see what to do, and I looked up and saw him over there and I said, hi Fred! [Laughter] She figured, it must be okay, so she went ahead and served them. Fred told the audience there at the hotel that night that I spoiled his sit-in. [Laughter]

T: Why did they pick your drugstore to do that?

M: Well, we were one of the few lunch counters in town. Gloucester was so different then. We had two drugstores, each one had a fountain. We called it a fountain. We're the only- I don't think the other one had booths. We had booths and tables. It was like a

restaurant. The local hotel had a restaurant, but there were not very many. I guess I don't know why they chose the drugstore.

T: Mm-hm. Did they have a relationship with Grey's Drugstore at all?

M: I don't know.

T: You don't know.

M: No.

T: Okay. Were there other places that they did sit-ins or other civil rights stuff?

M: Not that I know of. That's the only one I know of in Gloucester. [Laughter]

T: They picked you.

M: Yeah.

T: What were your relationships like with black patrons on an everyday basis outside of this moment?

M: Oh, well. I think we treated them as we would treat anyone else. That was sort of my father's philosophy and I grew up with that. But I'll share a story with you that really was a defining moment in my life. It was at the old drugstore before we moved to this drugstore. I point right here because the drugstore was right where Napa Auto Parts is. It's that building right across the street there by Southern States. Before that, though, we...I'm trying to get my time right. It was before the decisions were made about serving people, and it was our custom just to if someone sat down at our lunch counter- which we had several stools at the old store- to just say, I'm sorry. You'd have to take

that outside. And we served drinks in paper cups and we'd serve to white people- they'd be served in a glass. To African-Americans, they'd be served in a paper cup. They knew that they were supposed to take it outside. But one day, I was in the drugstore. I was probably in college; I may have been in pharmacy school. I don't know. But I went from the prescription department to the fountain, to the lunch counter to get a drink of water. As I was standing there drinking my water, there was a man, a big man, a great big very dark-skinned man, that was sitting at the counter. We had a tray of sandwiches that we always had on the counter. He proceeded to unwrap a sandwich and he'd ordered a drink, and he was gonna have his sandwich and his drink. I just bristled because I thought, what does he think he's doing? Then, as I was drinking my water, it occurred to me, why didn't he have just as much right as I do? So, I didn't say anything and he went ahead and ate his sandwich and I guess he went on out. I went on back to the prescription department. I remember that vividly because that was like a light bulb going off in my mind. From then on, I just always felt that they had just as much right. Up until then, I just did what I grew up with, you know? And I've told people that they had to take things outside. I just didn't think about it. That was the law.

T: Where did your father's philosophy come from, where you kind of treat everybody with respect?

M: I don't know. His family- his brother was a pharmacist; his father was the harbormaster of Hampton Roads. They lived in Portsmouth. He was the youngest son of six. He was six years younger than the one that was ahead of him. His oldest brother was a merchant seaman, and his next oldest brother was a pharmacist and managed the pharmacy in Portsmouth. He started working there as a teenager. He just learned at an

early age to treat people with decency and treat other people as you would like to be treated. He taught that to us. He and my mother, too. My mother's father was a merchant and a farmer in King and Queen County. In fact, I would daresay the largest number of their clientele was African-American, and that was in a time when people didn't have hardly anything. They would come in and they would trade eggs for groceries.

T: I wanted to also ask you about growing up when your father owns a business and you're in high school. Did you have a car in high school?

M: Oh no. I didn't get a car until after I finished pharmacy school.

T: Oh, really?

M: Yeah.

T: When was that?

M: 1955.

T: What was your first car?

M: It was a 1949 Buick, and it had been owned by the husband of a cousin of mine. He had gotten another car and so. I think he had owned that one. I've forgotten. He may have owned the second car that I bought. But anyway, it was a gold-colored, streamlined- no, he didn't own it, but Mr. Stanley Hall owned it. But anyway, they rode together to work, so that's why I associated it with him. It was a very good car, and I bought it just before I got married and drove it on my honeymoon.



T: [Laughter] That's wonderful. So, when you're in high school, what do you do for fun when you don't have a car?

M: Oh. Go with your friends [Laughter] who--almost nobody owned his own car. Most of our friends used their parents' car, and I was able to use my parents' car sometimes for dates. But we would always double-date and we did a lot of things. We had dances at the Boy Scout cabin or at school in the school gym. We would go to the skating rink or the movies. There was not a lot to do, but we didn't know that. We thought we had plenty to do.

T: Yeah.

M: We didn't get bored.

T: That's what counts. If you're dating a girl, your friends are dating girls, are they more likely to be from your high school?

M: Yes, yes.

T: Yeah.

[INTERRUPTION IN INTERVIEW]

T: We were talking about dating.

M: Yeah. My mother used to laugh at me. I had a recipe for making taffy that I carried in my pocket in my billfold. So, when I would go to a girl's house, I would suggest that we make taffy and I would pull out the recipe. [Laughter]

T: Wow.

M: Every now and then I'll hear about that from one of the girls I used to go with. [Laughter]  
My mother used to kid me, too. She lived to be a hundred and three, so I had her a long time. Dad- I only had my dad until he was almost ninety-eight.

T: Wow. Wow. [Laughter]

M: Yeah.

T: Oh my gosh. So how involved were parents in courtship?

M: Oh, I think they were very much involved, because they wanted to know who we were going with and they were very much involved in our lives. I never felt suffocated or threatened by it, but it was important to them to know what we were doing and who we were with, whether it be boys or girls. But most of the people in this community were really decent people. My class had about thirty--I think thirty-three graduated. There were like thirty-five in the class. And most of them still live in the area. We all knew each other well. We still know each other well. Now, the last several years we've lost a few, but about ten years ago we started having class reunions every six months. Every spring and every fall, we'll get together and usually it's at a local restaurant. Sometimes it'll be at someone's house. It's a lot of fun, because we know each other and we like each other. It's just amazing how close we still are after all these years. I have to tell one story. Right after we started the six-month reunions, one of the parties was gonna be at the home of a classmate in Williamsburg. My wife and I were getting ready to go, and I knew where it was and how to get there and all that, but I just didn't remember what time it was. We just started having these, now. So, I called up one of my

classmates, Joe Pointer, and the phone rang a long time and he didn't answer. So then I called Marvin Brown, who was another classmate, Ellis Hall's brother-in-law.

T: Oh.

M: Ellis's younger sister, Jean, married Marvin. Anyway, they live at Hayes. And the phone rang a long time and then he picked up. I said, Marvin, this is Harvey. Mary Helen and I are getting ready to go to Ruth's for the class reunion, and I know how to get there but I just don't know what time it was. He said, hee hee. We wondered where you were.

[Laughter] I said, what do you mean? He said, it was at 12:30. I said, 12:30? Give me a break! For a class reunion? He said, well you have to remember, some of these people don't drive at night anymore. I thought, oh, gosh. I just hadn't thought of that. Now, you know, we eat at 12:30; we'll meet at a local restaurant and have a great time and 2:30, it's all over. We'll go back home. [Laughter] But most of the people live within a hundred miles. One guy lives about maybe two hundred miles away, and he always comes.

Another one travels a lot—he has a travel trailer—they live in Florida and other places, but he almost always comes. One lives on the Eastern Shore; she comes frequently.

But most of the people are within driving distance.

T: Did you notice that a lot of them married each other or kept in touch?

M: Yeah, right, they kept in touch pretty well, and some married classmates or people in a comparable class. We had two high schools: Botetourt and Achilles. And now they've been joined as Gloucester High. But they were two rival high schools, and Achilles was down at Achilles. Do you know where that is? Okay. Marvin's wife Jean went to Achilles.

No. Yeah, I think she went to Achilles. Another one married someone who- several of them married someone from the other high school, but from Gloucester.

T: Did you go to Botetourt?

M: Mm-hm.

T: Okay.

M: We were very provincial. I say we were, and yet because- and I'll bring the drugstore in again. We had the Greyhound Bus Agency at the drugstore. Our drugstore was a general store. We had a photo department where we sold chemicals and paper, and not only did developing but we did- we didn't do the developing, we sent it away, but we-- my brother got out of the Navy and--I'm sorry, got out of the pharmacy school after the Navy, and came home and found out we had a direct account with Eastman Kodak, and almost no pharmacy did that. That was much more profitable than buying through the wholesaler. So, he exploited that and we developed quite a photo shop business. We had a nice cosmetic department. We had a gift department, and we used to go to New York and Charlotte and Washington, D.C. and Atlanta to buy gifts for the drugstore. So, we really catered to- and you knew your customers. We would go to a gift show and we would buy for certain people because we knew that this man would want that for his wife. [Laughter] In addition, we had the Greyhound Agency. We had six busses a day coming through Gloucester, plus a local bus that went from Middlesex to Mathews to Gloucester to West Point to Richmond every day and then back that night, every morning. So, the people in Gloucester were much more mobile than the people of Mathews or Middlesex or King and Queen. Also, our people had the opportunity to work

for the Naval Weapons Station or Fort Eustis or Langley Air Force Base or the Shipyard. Especially the African-Americans were given really good jobs when people of other communities were confined to working on the water or on the farm. Although we were very provincial by many standards, we were much more cosmopolitan than our surrounding counties. I don't know what led me to that point, but--oh, yeah. We were talking about my childhood and what life was like then. People of Gloucester were, as I say, much more mobile. They were able to go to New York or Washington or Philadelphia much more readily than other people of surrounding counties. I remember one day as a young pharmacist, I went over to Mathews to work in a pharmacy for a man that needed to be away. We did that as a courtesy. It was so different. While I was filling prescriptions, I would overhear the people having conversations who were waiting for prescriptions to be filled. They would be talking about who was at the funeral home, or what end of the clothesline they were hanging their clothes. A lot of things so mundane, I never heard any conversations like that here. It was just a mindset. The people in those communities were much more- I'll use the word provincial than people in Gloucester.

T: I was wondering about that because Ellis Hall, who is obviously much older than you-

M: Yeah.

T: -Was talking about how politicians in Gloucester would have stump speeches on the court green about issues that were facing everyone, but he couldn't really tell me what the issues were. But now I'm starting to imagine that, you know, politically and economically and socially they're going to be a lot different than the surrounding areas.

M: Yeah. If you look at some old issues of the *Gazette-Journal*, they have the page, "A Hundred Years Ago Today," "Ninety Years Ago Today." Have you ever seen that? That gives you a lot of insight on both Gloucester and Mathews, because they have it from the Mathews *Journal* and the Gloucester *Gazette* because they were two different papers.

T: Yeah. Did you ever, I mean- politically, you had your ear to the ground later, I guess, but did you ever notice-

M: Yeah, I think having grown up here and being, working in the public prepared me for that. In fact, one of my best friends said, Harvey, I just hate to see you do this, because he said, they gonna to eat you alive. You're just too easy-going. But I never had that problem, because I've been in public business virtually all my life. I worked in the drug store as a little--I was the worst clerk my dad ever had. I was so trifling. But, I did have the exposure. So, I learned to roll with the punches and to realize that there was always more than one point of view. So, when I got into politics, I didn't have any trouble dealing with people at all. Interestingly, I was the first Republican ever elected in this whole first district. First district is first congressional district. That included Hampton and Newport News and Williamsburg and all of King and Queen, King William, Middlesex, all of that area, all the way up to Essex and maybe farther, because this area had been pure Democratic all those years throughout the Depression. I would go to first district meetings and people would come up to me and say, you're our delegate. [Laughter] But that was a time when things were changing, and the time the Republican Committee asked me to run, I couldn't relate to the gubernatorial candidate, and I couldn't relate to the presidential candidate, the Democratic candidates. So it was easy for me to say,

yes, I can run as a Republican. The thrust was the Republican Party was the party of the open door, of the big tent, of less government. Unfortunately, now the Republicans seem to want more government. They want to be involved in your very personal lives and everything. I don't understand it, but the party has changed. But, that's the way. That's part of the dynamics of public life. Nothing stays the same.

T: To what would you attribute the shift from Democratic favoring to...

M: Oh, well, at that particularly time a state senator named Henry Howell, who was a very bright man and had good ideas but was abrasive, he was running for governor. And he turned off a lot of people. He ran a good race and almost won, but he was defeated. George McGovern was running for president, and he was what I would consider a liberal Democrat at that time. I just couldn't relate to him. So, I think my thinking was the same as many of the people who voted for me, because as I say, my own father had never voted for a Republican, I don't think. When I sat in to talk to him about running for office, I'd always heard him say anybody in public business has got no business in politics. [Laughter] So, he was not happy about that, but he said to me--I'll always remember this--he said, I wish you wouldn't do it. I know you're gonna do it, but I wish you wouldn't because they'll accuse you of being a horse thief. And what's more, they'll prove it. [Laughter] I've got lots of stories like that about him and why he felt that way.

T: Well what were some of the political issues that his generation had been facing?

M: The Depression. I mean, it was really hard to earn any money. There just wasn't any money. People would- well, he told the story of a man who would go in the York River and catch oysters, tong for oysters, and then he would bring his bag of oysters, or

whatever he carried them in. He would walk from Capahosic to Gloucester, which is nine miles. Sometimes he'd get a ride, of course, and I'd imagine many times he'd get a ride. But he would carry those oysters, and he would go to the local mills or whatever and trade them for bricks to build his house. And he would carry the bricks back to where he lived, which is down near Capahosic. Now, that's--you can't even comprehend that. That's walking nine miles, carrying a load of bricks, or a load of oysters and bricks. But he wanted to build that house. People just didn't have anything. Let me tell you how things have changed. When he came here in 1922, first of all, to get to Gloucester from Portsmouth, which is only an hour and a half drive, now he had to take the streetcar to the ferry dock and take the Norfolk ferryboat from Portsmouth to Norfolk, take the streetcar to the Newport News ferry dock in Norfolk, take the ferry to Newport News, take the train to Lee Hall. You know where Lee Hall is? Near Fort Eustis. Anyway, and then take a jitney, which is like a taxi, from Fort Eustis to Gloucester. There was no bridge then; they had to wait for the ferryboat, the York River ferry and then drive up the old roads. They didn't pave the roads in Gloucester until the late [19]20s, and that was just Route 17, I think. But the road didn't come straight up; it went around through Wicomoco and other places- one post office called Money. [Laughter] We have another one called Cash, but it's not in the same area. He left home--he left Portsmouth early in the morning, and he got here late, almost dark, that day. That's what it was like. What I wanted to tell you is that for the first few years that he was here after he learned new people, if somebody come into the drugstore he could tell whether they were from Harcum or Clay Bank or Ware Neck just by their dialect because they didn't get out. People in Ware Neck--the roads were so bad, everything was a dirt road, in the



wintertime you just didn't go in a car. Sometimes you could go in a wagon, but there were ruts in the road. So people would--from Ware Neck they would take a row boat and come up to the warehouse, which was about a mile from here and walk up to the Village. But from Harcum, it's about five or six miles. Capahosic and Clay Bank are like eight and nine miles away. People just didn't get here very often. In fact, he told a story: one night, a local physician down at Capahosic had died, and the **Border Pharmacy, or Border Medicine**--one or the other--asked him if he would go and inventory the narcotics that the doctor had. That's still traditional. Pharmacists do that. So, he drove down to Capahosic and did the inventory, but it got dark before he could get back. As he came through one intersection, I think in the Sassafras area- if you know where Sassafras is- when he got to that intersection, he didn't know which road to take. He knew that Mr. Newcomb owned the store there and he knew Mr. Newcomb. Most storekeepers lived either in the store building or behind the store, so he knocked on the door, and Mrs. Newcomb came to the door. He said, Miss Newcomb, I'm Happy Morgan from the drugstore. I'm on my way back to the Village, but I'm not sure which road to take. So, she said, just a minute. I'll get my husband. She disappeared, and Mr. Newcomb came out, and Daddy told him and he told him how to get here. Daddy didn't think any more about it. Well, about a week later, Mr. Newcomb came into the drugstore and he made his way back to the prescription department. He said, I just wanted to tell you a funny story. He said, when you came to the house the other day, you gotta remember. He said, my wife grew up right here. She has never been out of Gloucester County. When you said that you didn't know how to get back to the Courthouse, she thought you were drunk. [Laughter] And she didn't want to talk to you. [Laughter] That

was not uncommon. People just didn't know. They didn't know about other life elsewhere, because it didn't get anywhere.

T: [Laughter] How did people get to the pharmacy and around in your father's time, then?

M: In my father's time, they would come either by wagon or buggy or there were some cars. He had a car. He had a Model-T Ford. People could drive, but not as much in the wintertime because the roads would be just deep ruts. In fact, he was going with my mother who was a teacher in Urbanna. One night when he was driving either to Urbanna or coming home in the wintertime--once you get into the rut, you can't get out. But it's not a problem, because everybody's driving in the same rut. Well, he came up behind a car that was stopped and stuck. He couldn't get around it, because he couldn't get out of the rut. So, he had to spend the night right there in wintertime, and he had like a little horse blanket or something, put that over him. Every now and then he would start the engine. They didn't have heaters as such, but they had a disk in the floor that would open up and the heat from the engine would come up into the car. That's how he kept warm during the night. The next morning they found a farmer with a tractor or something and pulled the man out. Another night, he was leaving Urbanna to come back, and just as he crossed the old wooden bridge there at Urbanna, he hit a bump and his lights went out. He drove all the way back to Gloucester with no lights. But he said that wasn't a problem because there was no other traffic. [Laughter] And the ruts kept him in the right place. [Laughter] The Bank of Gloucester had bought them a vault, and the vault was shipped to West Point by train. Then, they put it on a wagon to bring it to Gloucester and it was in March. Woods Mill Hill was--now they had to build a highway. But the old Woods Mill Hill--if you know where Edna is--have you been to Edna? Edna's

nine miles up the road. The old road from Edna went down Woods Mill and in up a long hill further **in, and then Woods had a mill.** Anyway, the wagon got stuck on Woods Mill Hill in March, and it was July before it was dry enough for them to move that to the bank to then start it. It was a heavy haul. We can't even comprehend things like that.

T: No; definitely not. Definitely not.

M: And we had telephone operators. You had to crank the telephone and the central operator would come in. You'd tell her what number you wanted or what. In a small community, you didn't have to say the number. Just you say, ring Mr. Corr's house or ring Mr. Brown's house, and they would do it. Or they would say, well Mr. Corr's not home; he's gone to Richmond today. [Laughter] Anyway, one night he was calling my mother in Urbanna, and while he was waiting for--she was living with a family in Urbanna. He was just singing to himself. There's a song: yes sir, she's my baby, no sir, don't mean maybe, yes sir, she's my baby now. That's that song. You've probably never heard of it. But anyway, it was a popular song. The operator chimed in, and well, everybody knows it! [Laughter] He had no idea she was listening. Almost everybody had a party line. Your number might be six-seven-two—that was the number of our home—and the drugstore was six-seven. I think the drugstore had a private line, but most homes had a party line. Your ring might be a long and a short. You'd ring, ring...or two longs and a short, or a long and two shorts. That way, everybody could hear when your phone was being rung, but they wouldn't answer necessarily--sometimes they did [Laughter] because they knew it was for someone else. There are so many stories about that. And when other people would pick up, the signal would diminish and you couldn't hear as well. Well, this local doctor was talking to a patient and she was trying

to tell him what was wrong. Everybody was listening on the line, so he said, please, you all hang up. I really--this is important. I need to hear what the lady is saying. Most people--you could hear them clicking up, hanging up. Then he could hear better. And then he said, Mrs. So-and-so, please hang up the phone. I know it's you because I can hear that old red rooster in the background. [Laughter] Click-up! [Laughter] It was amazing. I think there were as many as fifteen or twenty on a line at times. Most people didn't have that many, but some did.

T: Wow. [Laughter]

M: I remember those days. That was--and oh, when they first put in electricity in about 1932, there was a man down down at Maryus in Guinea who had just put in an ice cream box. The current kept going off and his ice cream kept melting. Well, in those days, everybody knew everybody else. I mean, the business people in particular. His name was Clarence Williams. The head of the telephone- 'twas the telephone company and the electric company. When they put in electricity, the same company was called: East Coast Utilities. They managed both the telephone and the electric power. I believe I'm right about that. But anyway, Lloyd Pulley was the head of the utilities. Mr. Williams called Mr. Pulley, and the conversation reportedly went something like this. Do you know about how crabs grow?

T: [Laughter] No.

M: In order for a crab to grow, it has to molt. It sheds its shell. In fact, it grows a new shell, a soft shell, and it backs out of the old hard shell and then within twenty-four hours he's

hard again, but he's really vulnerable. If you go to a restaurant and order soft crabs, that's right after they've molted and the shell is very soft.

T: Oh.

M: You can eat the whole, virtually the whole crab.

T: Oh, got it.

M: Without it being hard crabs--you have to crack the shell and take the meat out. But anyway, crabs shed more readily on a full moon and high tide, than they do other times. Anyway, now the conversation--the folks in Guinea always use something that they can relate to. So, he called and the conversation went like this. Lloyd, this is Clarence. Man, you gotta get me some juice. He said, my popsicles. They're shedding their wrappers like soft crabs on a full moon at a high tide. [Laughter] That's his way of expressing his problem. [Laughter]

T: Oh, wow. Do you remember anything specific like that about this gas station?

M: Oh, I bet Thane put you up to that one.

T: I mean, yeah. I definitely have to ask that question. I want to hear your stories. Most people have nothing to add.

M: Well, they used to have a restaurant right over here or over there. I've forgotten now. Seems to me it was right over there. It was like a hot dog stand. But, we came here a lot and I could walk here. If we were going to the movies—the movies was where the theater is now—it's a different building. So, I would come right through here all the time and I lived right up less than a half a mile away. But, whenever my parents would come

to get gas, one of the promotions that they had was Texaco Fire Chief hats. They're little--I don't think they were--didn't have plastic in those days. It was probably heavy cardboard. I'm not sure, but it was a...I wanted one. Every time I came and asked for one, they were out of them. They didn't have any. And so, I never got one. [Laughter] I told Thane about that. He told Margaret Parrett. Have you talked to Margaret Parrett? She used to live in Gloucester. She now lives in Maine, but she's still very much involved in Gloucester. He told Margaret about it, and Margaret found one. I think Margaret found it--a real Texaco Fire Chief hat, complete with a battery and a microphone. I don't think that works. But, they ordered it on eBay or something. Thane presented it to me, Thane and David. So now I have my Fire Chief hat. [Laughter] But I was always so disappointed, that I grew up without ever having a Fire Chief hat.

T: Do you remember Howard Brown?

M: Oh, sure. Very well.

T: Yeah? What was he like?

M: He was just as nice as he can be. He was in those days--I say those days--we never had a true delivery service at our drugstore, but we knew people that lived in Ware Neck--Howard lived in Ware Neck--or Harcum, or Gloucester Point who came to work in the Village. At the end of the day, they would go back home. And so, they would deliver medicine for our patrons. Frequently, and Howard ate lunch at the drugstore, so when he was over there we'd give him Mrs. So-and-so's prescription and he would take it with him and take it by to her house. That was just the way people were. You know, we couldn't afford a delivery service. But Howard, as a young man, he was doing work with

a piling driver and it hit his hand and just completely--he lost his whole hand. He never had a prosthesis or anything. He could do everything he wanted with one hand and that arm.

T: Yeah.

M: But he was a really decent guy. People were always so kind to each other.

T: I understand that, and it seems like Howard Brown was a really good example of how you drum up business through the way you interact with people.

M: Absolutely. People wanted to come here and deal because of him.

T: Mm-hm. What was the inside like?

M: Oh! Well, that was the main office there, and these were the bays for getting your car lubricated or washed or whatever. They had a men's restroom, I think. You came inside; I believe the lady's room, you had to go out to the side. There was a separate door for that. I'm trying to remember where that hot dog stand was. That wasn't here very long in my memory. I know it was here because Dr. Raymond Brown, who was one of our most beloved physicians, was one of six children, I believe, five or six. He was the oldest, and his father died when he was in high school very suddenly. Captain Jack Brown, who owns Edge Hill Service Station, put him to work to give him something to do. I think he was working the hot dog stand. He spoke to my dad and asked him if he could give him a job because, he said, I don't really need him and he's a good worker. So, Daddy hired him. Raymond and his younger brother Bill both were outstanding. And here's what they did. Our drugstore was open till like nine or ten at night every night. Raymond would

come after high school, he would come to work at the drugstore, and when things were slow he would study. He would stand behind the counter and read his lesson. My dad said he never missed a customer. He was always very alert. Then, when the store closed, he was the night operator. The telephone company was two doors away from the drugstore. He would go upstairs at the telephone office, and he would handle calls at the switchboard until about eleven o'clock. Then, being a rural area, things would be almost--business would be almost non-existent for the telephone then. So, he would pull up a cot, and he would switch the switchboard from buzz to ring so it would wake him up—because it was just a buzz when--and it would plug in, you know. If it came in on this line, he would plug in there and connect it to the line that people wanted. If the phone rang while he was asleep, he would wake up and he'd plug in where it needed to go, then go back to sleep. Then he'd go to high school the next day. He did that throughout high school. And then he went to pharmacy school and got his pharmacy degree and he tended furnace for the family he lived with for his room. He worked at the local--it was called Skull and Bones, I think at that time. There were several restaurants on the MCV campus, Medical College of Virginia campus in Richmond. And so, he would get his meals there because he worked there. I don't know if he got paid, but he got his meals free. That's how he worked his way through school. And his uncle helped him, but then he went to medical school and he worked as a pharmacist to pay his way through medical school and came back. Went into the Navy during World War II and came back and opened his practice. But his younger brother Bill, who is my classmate--Raymond was the oldest; Bill was the youngest of six. So, Bill did the same thing. He worked in the drugstore and the telephone office and went to pharmacy school. Of



course, Raymond helped him a lot, but he went from pharmacy school into medical school and then he also went into the Navy. I think he was a flight surgeon. Then, came back in practiced with Raymond for a while. Then, he went back with the state: he became a physician with the State Department and that's where he had his career.

T: Wow.

M: But, outstanding people and hard-working people. They both were very sharp. Raymond was top in his class. He was top in his class in pharmacy and medicine.

T: Wow.

M: And he practiced medicine right here for his whole career.

T: That's incredible.

M: It's a shame you can't interview him. He died about maybe ten years ago. His widow is still here, Elizabeth Brown.

T: Oh, really? Okay, I'll write that down. I did want to ask you about if you remember any--because you've lived here on Main Street forever pretty much--if you remember Halloween or Christmas on Main Street. Any kinds of traditions--

M: You shouldn't ask me that.

T: Why?

M: [Laughter] I was so bad.

T: You were so bad? What did you do?

M: Well, when I was in high school, World War II was going on, and we had a militia, a branch of the state militia and there were local men who for one reason or another weren't in the service, and they would train at the school. They would march and drill and everything. As an exercise, they were looking after the town on Halloween night. Of course, we had some minor vandalism. We never really did anything bad, but we were very mischievous. Mr. B.B. Roane was the county clerk. We would take his gate off and hang it, run it up the flagpole and leave it up there. Things like that. Or we would stretch toilet paper across the court green, around the court green circle, **and fellows would think there was a barrier.** But also, I'm not very proud of this, but we had chickens when I was growing up and obviously, a couple of goats and a dog and a cat. A pet hen who laid an egg every day. But anyway, we had a coal furnace and then my job was to take a wheelbarrow and fill it with coal and take it to the house and put it down the coal chute, keep that coal bin filled. But anyway, one August I decided I had an idea for Halloween. So, I began saving a few eggs and I put them aside and I saved, I don't know, a dozen of them or more. By Halloween, they were pretty rotten.

T: Yeah. [Laughter]

M: Then I took these little paper bags and put flour in them, and then put one egg in the shell very carefully in and rolled it up. There was a flour bomb with rotten eggs. So, I would climb up on top of the old drugstore, which is as I said the antique store now. I would shimmy up the downspout and walk up to the front of the store, and as the militia would walk along, I would drop them. I didn't actually hit anybody, but I think I hit one on the toe one time. But as soon as it did, I would run to the back and climb down and then run down the street. This one night, one particular time, I was being chased and I ran as

hard as I could. I came to a hedge and I jumped over the hedge and just lay down and gasped. My heart was racing, and I knew that they could hear me but they went on by. They never found me. [Laughter]

T: Oh, wow.

M: There were stories like that, but that's the one I'll tell you. [Laughter]

T: Okay, that's fair. Oh, gosh. What about Christmas? What was Christmas like in Main Street?

M: Christmas, oh! Christmas was very nice because we had a Gloucester Village Association and we worked closely together. We wanted to do something special, but we didn't have the funds to put up Christmas decorations that wouldn't be tacky. So, what we did, every year for a decade or so we would buy cut Christmas trees and each business would put one or two trees. They would decorate them with lights. Sometimes they would put tinsel on them, but they wouldn't decorate like you would inside, but all the Christmas trees had lights and they were more or less consistent. And so as you drove through after dark up and down Main Street, every business had one or more lighted Christmas trees. If it snowed, it was even more beautiful. I think I may have some pictures. I've seen pictures of the Village. I always thought it was so nice, because you go to other communities and they would have these tacky things that didn't look very good but that people went and bought. They use the same one year after year after year and they get really ratty-looking. But our Christmas trees were always fresh. The only negative is that once in a while somebody would steal a Christmas tree.

T: [Laughter] Steal a whole tree? I thought you were going to say steal the lights.

M: No, they just take the whole thing. [Laughter] I can't imagine anybody doing that, but they do. You know, people never change. Anyway...being in the drug business, drugstore, it was the only place to go during World War II for teenagers, anybody that wanted to go out, was the skating rink or the movies or the drugstore. We had some restaurants, but they usually closed after dinner. So, at nine o'clock at night, our drugstore was open, especially Friday and Saturday night until midnight or at least eleven. People would come after the movies or the skating rink and they'd come and get milkshakes and ice cream and hamburgers or whatever. So, we were just open. And at Christmastime, again, we had a five-and-ten-cent store and Western Auto and stores like that. But, there really were not a lot of places to buy Christmas gifts. So, the drugstore was the Christmas headquarters for a lot of people. And on Christmas Eve-- Christmas Eve was the busiest day of our year for our drugstore. Again, we catered to-- we had gifts and all that sort of thing. We would be open till sometimes two a.m. on Christmas Eve, people coming in and doing last-minute shopping. A lot of people didn't do any shopping until the last minute. Working people didn't have time, didn't really think about it until the last minute. We would always be there and my parents, I don't know how they made it, because they would come home after all of that and then, of course, Santa Claus always decorated the Christmas tree and put the gifts out, and there were things to be put together. They would have to do that. So, one year it was about four a.m., and they were just finishing up putting the stuff together. And there was a knock at the door, and it was our next-door neighbor's children, our contemporaries. They had been up, they'd fired off all their fireworks, and opened all their gifts, and they

saw the light on so they assumed that we were up, too. They came over to see what we had gotten and my mother and Daddy hadn't even gone to bed. [Laughter]

T: That's something else.

M: But New Year's Eve, there were one or two neighbors would always shoot off the shotguns at midnight. They would just shoot them up in the air, you know. And fireworks.

T: [Laughter] I know all about that, yeah. Never got used to that, actually, I don't think.

M: Did you grow up in Florida?

T: No, North Carolina.

M: Okay.

T: Yeah. That's really all the questions I have, but I wanted to see if there was anything else you wanted to share.

M: Oh, lots of things. But I can't think of anything...I can share some stories, some anecdotes-

T: Yeah, do it.

M: -that my father and my mother used to tell me. We had a minister that pre-dated me. I hardly remember him. Named the Reverend William Byrd Lee. He was the minister at Ware Church for many years, and he was much beloved. But...he had sort of bushy eyebrows and was sort of an imposing figure. But he would walk up to someone on the street and he'd say, I know something good about you. And they'd say, oh, you do? And

he'd say, yes. God loves you, and he loves you with a great big heart. [Laughter] But another time, he picked up in his buggy--he was coming to town from I'd say Ark or someplace like that. And he picked up a traveling salesman. We used to call them drummers. The man had all of his suitcases and bags and everything, boxes, and he put them in the wagon. As he came on, coincidentally, the man didn't know him from Adam. As he got into a section of dark woods--he didn't mean for it to be at that time, just coincidentally, he turned to the man and he said, are you ready to meet your Maker? [Laughter] The man jumped out of the wagon and ran off in the woods. Mr. Lee was so embarrassed. He knew the man had to be going to Corr's store, which is right around the court green circle. So, when he got there, he unloaded all of the stuff and left it there with his apologies. [Laughter] My mother told a story: my mother's father had a country store with a potbelly stove. Her uncle down in Ware Neck had a store, and another uncle where Ware Academy is now had a store. And, you know, their family were merchants and farmers. At one of the stores, they had this potbelly stove and in the wintertime--first of all, people used to buy everyday things at the local general store. And they sold tar in a barrel; people would use tar for their roofs and so forth. They also sold molasses, and they bought molasses in a barrel. In the wintertime, because molasses gets so thick it won't run well, they moved the molasses barrel right by the fire, by the big potbelly stove. People would come in and sit down and prop their feet up on the stove and tell yarns. You know, spin yarns and it was laid-back, especially in the wintertime. Couldn't do but so much. Well, they noticed that the molasses had been disappearing faster than they were selling it. So, there was these two old codgers who lived together. One of them was named Oliver; I don't know what the other one's name

was. But, they thought that they might be the ones who were taking it. They came in the store. What they did, they substituted the tar barrel for the molasses barrel. They were watching them as they were talking, and they saw this man sort of reach over while he was talking and turn on--they would bring a little pail about this big around and flat there, like a one- or two-quart-sized metal pail with a handle. He finally set the pail down and took the top off and turned the faucet on the barrel. Every now and then, he'd look down and when his bucket was full, he reached over and turned it off. Out of habit, he did this. [Laughter] And it shocked him so much, he said, ha, Oliver, 'tis tar! [Laughter] I would say they caught him red-handed, but that wasn't right. Black-fingered. Anyway, there are lots of stories like that that my mother used to tell me.

T: That's really wonderful. That's so great. You have led a very interesting life.

M: Oh, my parents were so great. As I say, they had good, long lives and they were alert. I'll tell another story about my dad. He was almost ninety-eight; it was in February. He had been in good health until Thanksgiving. He just didn't get out of bed Thanksgiving that year. He declined and in February, he died on a Thursday. On the Sunday before he died, he'd been in and out of a coma, and the drugstore right across from ours was Grey's drugstore, which is where the restaurant Jessica's on Main is. That store I think was built in 1935. Daddy's store was there much earlier. Mr. Grey went to pharmacy school later and then came back and opened the pharmacy. Our families were friends. We were competitors, but we would help each other. If he ran out of something, he would send over and we would give it to him and visa versa. We were always borrowing medicines back and forth. But anyway, this man, John Harris, whose daughter opened the restaurant--and that's when it first was called Still Waters, that was the name she

gave to it--John saw me at church and said, do you think your father would have much history about the Grey's Pharmacy building? Because Melanie wants to put it on the back of her menu. I said, well, I'll ask him when I go home. So, I went home after church, and my mother was sitting in the room, and my dad was sort of in a stupor. The phone rang about three o'clock and it was John. I said, just a minute. Let me ask Daddy. So, I woke Daddy up and I said, Daddy, John Harris wants to know a little bit about Grey's Drugstore. Do you know when it was built and who built it and some details about it? Daddy roused up and said, oh, yeah. It was built—I think he said Jack Lawson. Jack Lawson was one of our better contractors. There were several others; I don't remember whether it was Jack Lawson or not. He said it was built by Jack Lawson in 1935. He said, interesting thing. He said, that building has been extended. It didn't used to be as long as it is now, and there used to be a mirror all the way across the back, a big mirror. He said, the Dunston twins--I knew these ladies when they were much older. But when they were teenagers they lived down in Hayes. The Dunston twins would come to the Village a lot, and in those days people would catch a ride with somebody that they knew. He told me all of this, and I remember Mr. Graves who drove the Bellamy ice cream truck. He said, one of the twins caught a ride with Mr. Graves on the ice cream truck, and as she came to the village, because the passenger side was on Mr. Grey's side, she just got out and went into the Grey's Drugstore because she would--they were going to both stores. But anyway, she apparently was ready before the other twin was, so she came on. As she walked in the door, she saw her reflection in the mirror and she said, oh Mamie! How did you get here so quick? [Laughter] We



laughed about that, and then he sort of went back to sleep. That was on Sunday, and Thursday he died. The fact that he could recall all of that detail was--

T: Yeah.

M: I thought it was amazing, but it was a great story, too.

T: Yeah, wow. [Laughter] People are strange, aren't they?

M: Yeah.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

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