William "Tootsie" Harwood
Gloucester, Virginia

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Date: May 20, 2018
Location: William "Tootsie" Harwood's home, Gloucester County, Virginia
Interviewee: William "Tootsie" Harwood
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski
Length: One hour, twenty-five minutes
Project: Tidewater Foodways

[*START INTERVIEW*]

[00:00:01]

PD: Hello, this is Patrick Daglaris. Today is May 20, 2018. I'm sitting here with William Harwood at his home in Gloucester County, Virginia. And sir, if we could start by just telling me when and where born?

[00:00:17]

WH: I was born at Ordinary, Virginia on January 21, 1936.

[00:00:27]

PD: And could you tell me your parents' names and occupations?

[00:00:29]

WH: My father was a grocery store owner, and my mother, a housewife.

[00:00:42]

PD: And what were their names?

[00:00:44]

WH: My father's name was William Hughes Harwood, and my mother's name was Lola Silver Harwood. She remarried after my father was dead, and married a fellow by the name of John Earnest Ralee, R-a-l-e-e.

[00:01:02]

PD: Okay, thank you. Did your father open the store, or . . . ?

[00:01:06]

WH: No, he bought it.

[00:01:08]

PD: He bought it?

[00:01:10]

WH: It was all opened, it had belonged to the Booker brothers, John Booker and Rowan Booker, that owned Tri-County Furniture Store.

[00:01:18]

PD: Really. Wow. So, do you know when he bought it?

[00:01:26]

WH: No, before I was born.

[00:01:27]

PD: Um-hm. Do you have any memories of the store?

[00:01:30]

WH: No. I mean, I have memories of it, but the store was closed after my father died.

[00:01:41]

PD: Oh. After he passed away, no one else bought it?

[00:01:43]

WH: Yeah. It was bought, but W.L. Shepherd opened it in later years as a grocery store. Willy Boy's is what they called it.

[00:01:54]

PD: Okay. And what is it now? Is it still there?

[00:01:56]

WH: It's L's Body Shop, and it's there. Still, the same building that's still there.

[00:02:01]

PD: Wow. Could you talk a little bit about what it was like growing up here?

[00:02:06]

WH: Well, this road here was a dirt road. When I was small, I had to walk on the home here up to Route 614 to meet the bus, rain or shine, snow or blow. It was rough going. And then, in later years when I was old enough to ride a bicycle, I got a bicycle and I used to ride the bicycle there.

[00:02:37]

PD: About how long was that of a walk?

[00:02:39]

WH: The walk was approximately one mile.

[00:02:42]

PD: Yeah. And what school did you go to?

[00:02:45]

WH: I was in the last first grade class of Walter Reed Elementary School.

[00:02:52]

PD: Really.

[00:02:54]

WH: I was in the last.

[00:02:56]

PD: So, where'd you go after there, then?

[00:02:57]

WH: Went to Botetourt School for the second grade. The Walter Reed was closed, and it was one teacher and seven grades.

[00:03:08]

PD: Wow. [Laughter]

[00:03:09]

WH: There was six of us in the first grade, yeah.

[00:03:11]

PD: Wow. And how long did you stay at Botetourt? You went there till–

[00:03:16]

WH: I went to Botetourt and stayed there till my senior year, Gloucester High School opened up, and I was in the first graduating class of the new Gloucester High School.

[00:03:30]

PD: Oh, wow. So, Botetourt, was it a high school, too, at the time?

[00:03:34]

WH: Yeah, elementary and high school. My father graduated from Botetourt.

[00:03:40]

PD: And do you remember your grandparents at all?

[00:03:43]

WH: I remember both grandmothers, my grandfather on my mother's side, he drowned July 3, 1933. On my Harwood side, he died of the flu in 1918, when they had the flu epidemic.

[00:04:11]

PD: Oh, wow.

[00:04:12]

WH: My Grandmother Harwood, I knew her right up until when she died. I don't remember what year she died. And my grandmother on my mother's side, I knew her until she died, and she was ninety-eight when she died.

[00:04:27]

PD: Wow.

[00:04:29]

WH: She died at the same nursing home my mother's in, I mean, my wife is in now.

[00:04:36]

PD: And how long has your family been in the county?

[00:04:37]

WH: The Harwoods have been here– I did a genealogy thing, and my tenth, date back to tenth great-grandfather came here in 16 . . . I don't remember the exact date, Mordecai Smith I think was the name.

[00:05:02]

PD: A long time ago. [Laughter]

[00:05:06]

WH: The Harwoods, my aunt said we've been here since the mid-1600s, and she did a lot of research on it. Her name was Catherine Elizabeth Harwood, most everybody knew her. In fact, all the boys from over here– the ones you talked to a while ago that do all this stuff here– they knew her personally.

[00:05:30]

PD: Really? What was she like?

[00:05:31]

WH: What was she like?

[00:05:31]

PD: What was she like, yeah, as a person?

[00:05:35]

WH: She was single and she never married. She was a very, very sweet person. She dearly thought the world of me, and she really looked out for me. She's the one that sent me to college.

[00:05:52]

PD: So, what did you do for fun in the area?

[00:05:55]

WH: Do what?

[00:05:55]

PD: What'd you do for fun as a kid? [Laughter]

[00:06:00]

WH: As a small kid, we were the only white kids on this road. We all played together and we were all friends and we still are. We don't have the problems that– as we see each other now, we shake hands, hug each other, don't make any difference, black and white makes no difference there. That's not what you can say in a lot of places.

[00:06:30]

PD: Um-hm. So, did you get into trouble a lot, or–?

[00:06:32]

WH: No.

[00:06:32]

PD: What kind of games did you guys do? Did you explore?

[00:06:36]

WH: We played hide and seek. My mother was way up into the church and Sunday schools, and we used to have softball games up at the home place there. Played softball and stuff with the families, get together. Fact is, we used to have homemade ice cream up in nearly every Sunday.

[00:07:01]

PD: Wow.

[00:07:02]

WH: They did the old crank type.

[00:07:05]

PD: What kind of ice cream was it?

[00:07:05]

WH: Oh, my goodness. They used to make peach, cherry, strawberry, chocolate, any kind– vanilla. No set kind.

[00:07:16]

PD: It was good?

[00:07:16]

WH: Yeah, if you eat it fast, though. You had to have a glass of warm water 'cause it'd give you a quick headache. [Laughter]

[00:07:23]

PD: So, you grew up in this area, then?

[00:07:27]

WH: I grew up right here.

[00:07:28]

PD: This is the street?

[00:07:30]

WH: I grew up at the house right up the road, that's where I grew up.

[00:07:34]

PD: Wow. So, did your family own the farm at the time, or–?

[00:07:39]

WH: Yes. My stepfather bought this. In 1929, he paid three thousand dollars for it.

[00:07:50]

PD: How many acres at the time?

[00:07:50]

WH: One hundred. Three hundred dollars an acre, he paid for it. And he was working for B.F. Goodrich in Akron, Ohio at the time. That's how he paid for it.

[00:08:04]

PD: Wow. So, what made him get into farming?

[00:08:09]

WH: [Laughter] His mother and father are right on the house right next to me, joined me right there. He was raised, he used to work for the Ferry Brothers out of Ark, and he used to get ten cent an hour, and that was big money then. He said, I worked six days a week, six dollars a week. Had all the money in the world you need, but had to walk everywhere they went.

[00:08:39]

PD: And who'd he buy the land from?

[00:08:43]

WH: He bought it from a fellow by the name of White Dunston. And the Larsons owned it before him, and I've got pictures at the house that I gave my son. I gave my son the house after my mother died, and got the pictures of the house, it was built about 1865. The reason I know that is because my great-grandmother told me that she was a little girl jumping rope when they were building that house, and I went and looked at– I remembered that– and I went and looked at her tombstone one day to see how old she was, and I put it at seven years old, and that put it in around 1865.

[00:09:38]

PD: Wow.

[00:09:40]

WH: And that house had hand-hewn– there's a piece of the wood, see that piece up there, see how that's cut?

[00:09:47]

PD: Yeah.

[00:09:48]

WH: All right. That was all hand-done. All of that was done, and that fit just the same as if you had glued it together. That's how they did the handwork.

[00:10:00]

PD: Wow.

[00:10:00]

WH: I've got quite a few pieces of that stuff around here.

[00:10:02]

PD: And that's from the house?

[00:10:03]

WH: That came with the house. That went with– we took part of it out. As I told the son, I said, "I'll give it to you, but you cannot tear down the original part."

[00:10:15]

PD: Did your grandmother tell you any other stories about growing up then?

[00:10:20]

WH: That was my great-grandmother.

[00:10:20]

PD: Great-grandmother.

[00:10:22]

WH: Oh, Lord. She talked all the time.

[00:10:27]

PD: She must have been alive during the Civil War, you said, then. Did she remember anything, did she ever say anything about it?

[00:10:302]

WH: Oh, yes. She told me, said they used to, when the Yankees were coming that they had to hide the silver and all that kind of stuff.

[00:10:42]

PD: Wow.

[00:10:43]

WH: Oh, yes.

[00:10:45]

PD: Where did she live? That house?

[00:10:48]

WH: That two-story house right there.

[00:10:50]

PD: Wow.

[00:10:52]

WH: The original house burnt. I don't remember what day– my Uncle John said he was out, he was fishing. He saw the smoke and, when he got home, people had buckets of water throwing on it, but the house burnt completely up. My father had that house rebuilt before he ever committed suicide.

[00:11:20.]

PD: Wow. So, were there any issues when the Union soldiers came, or was it okay?

[00:11:24]

WH: What?

[00:11:24]

PD: Were there any issues, when your great-grandmother said they had to hide all the silver and things? Were there any issues, or it worked out okay?

[00:11:32]

WH: Oh, it worked out. They were able to keep the silver. They said that the worst thing is that they took the chickens and stuff, you know, the food that they had.

[00:11:48]

PD: Wow. You don't get to talk to a lot of people who remember someone who lived during that time.

[00:11:52]

WH: Well, I'm some of the last.

[00:11:55]

PD: Um-hm. Wow. Are there any more stories you remember her talking about?

[00:11:59]

WH: Probably when you're gone, yeah.

[00:12:00]

PD: [Laughter] Just give me a call.

[00:12:04]

WH: I remember my mother talking about her father. One Christmas, when they were growing up—now, I don't remember what age they were, let me see, one, two, three, four, five. Was either six or seven . . . **Lorris**, Willie, Walter, Edward . . . May, Mama, and Wilbur. Was seven, seven children, and Christmas Eve, they's didn't have anything to cook for Christmas. Father came home, he had been out on the water oystering and had had to kill the wild goose, and he came in with it all picked, ready to cook. So, that was on Christmas Eve. Whatever, had to be

before 1933. In the storm of [19]33, my mother said that, down in Glass where she was, that the chickens came in the house, the water got so high. The chickens come in the house with them, and they looked, and a boat come floating down the river, and they were afraid it was going to hit the house. But it just missed it by inches.

[00:13:26]

PD: Wow.

[00:13:27]

WH: Was a big boat.

[00:13:30]

PD: That's pretty scary.

[00:13:31]

WH: She said that everybody had to go upstairs, they were above the first floor.

[00:13:35]

PD: Wow.

[00:13:37]

WH: That was the storm of [19]33. I remember a few things.

[00:13:42]

PD: Yeah, that must have been pretty tough for them.

[00:13:44]

WH: Well, it was, yes. Everything was tough back then. Yep, everything was tough then.

[00:13:52]

PD: Well, I want to ask you, how'd you get the nickname Tootsie?

[00:13:57]

WH: That's a simple one. [Laughter] My Aunt Hilda would say that I had only been born a couple of hours. She came in and saw me and picked me up, and said, "He looks just like a little Tootsie." I've been that ever since. [Laughter]

[00:14:18]

PD: That's a good one.

[00:14:19]

WH: Aunt Hilda was her name. [Laughter] She's dead now.

[00:14:25]

PD: What meals do you remember as a kid that your mom used to make, or that your grandparents used to make?

[00:14:31]

WH: Mother was an excellent cook. She had a layout for every meal. But it was one that I'll never forget. My stepfather had had an old sick hen out there, and he had put her up in the coop, out of everything, away from everything else, see if she's going to get better. My mother, he never did told my mother. [Laughter]

[00:14:59]

PD: Oh, no.

[00:14:59]

WH: He come home one night, "What we got for dinner tonight?" "I got baked hen." ". . . where you get that hen from?" "That coop out there." "That damn hen was sick." [Laughter] "Don't get it, throw it in the dump." [Laughter]

[00:15:25]

PD: Oh, no. [Laughter]

[00:15:25]

WH: That was comical. He may have been comin' from work.

[00:15:32]

PD: But no one ate it, did they?

[00:15:33]

WH: No, he didn't eat it, threw it out to the dogs. [Laughter] We used to have hounds; everybody had hounds. We had a back porch, and that's where we's kept the firewood. And where the hounds slept, on the back porch.

[00:15:51]

PD: Did a lot of people go hunting back in the day?

[00:15:51]

WH: Yes. That's the fox horn up there that he used, my stepfather used to use. He'd come out there, if the hounds weren't there, he'd get up there and blow that horn, they'd come from everywhere, coming home.

[00:16:05]

PD: Wow. What kind of game would they get here?

[00:16:06]

WH: They used to fox hunt.

[00:16:09]

PD: Oh, fox hunt, okay.

[00:16:10]

WH: Um-hm. They used to have big fox hunts here. I remember all of that.

[00:16:15]

PD: Did you ever participate?

[00:16:17]

WH: Oh, yeah. I went and listened, but I mean, never rode a horse or anything.

[00:16:24]

PD: Are there– I'm sorry.

[00:16:24]

WH: I still love to hear 'em run like that.

[00:16:29]

PD: Yeah. Does anyone do that anymore?

[00:16:30]

WH: Not foxhunt. We rabbit hunt. Our sons got rabbit dogs that do the same thing, and we deer hunt. We have– 'course, you know that. [Laughter]

[00:16:40]

PD: You got plenty of deer horns here, antlers.

[00:16:42]

WH: This is just– this is not a drop in the bucket to what we do. And all of 'em are legal.

[00:16:50]

PD: Wow. So, do you remember, what are some of the meals you remember as a kid? Do you remember any favorites?

[00:16:53]

WH: Any what?

[00:16:53]

PD: Do you remember some of the meals you remember your mom cooking, the favorite ones?

[00:16:57]

WH: One of the things that she used to do, before me and my brother come home from school, for a period of time, she used to make a jellyroll cake, which was a pancake with jelly put on it and then rolled up. And I would tell you, we used to look forward to that when we got home. We'd eat that when we got from school and then eat a big meal 'fore we went to bed. [Laughter] We used to have cattle, too, and we used to have the big bowls for cream and clabber, and Mother used to make butter, I've still got the press and the butter thing in the house.

[00:17:39]

PD: Wow.

[00:17:41]

WH: Way she used to make it, and it was so. Used that to trade for groceries and food at the country store, and that was sent to Baltimore by– see, I remember the ferry—the steamboats, when they used to come up here to Clay Bank.

[00:17:58]

PD: Um-hm. Did you ever ride one?

[00:17:58]

WH: No, but I been there and watch 'em when they come and go.

[00:18:03]

PD: Um-hm. So, that jellyroll cake.

[00:18:06]

WH: What?

[00:18:06]

PD: That jellyroll cake you mentioned. Was the jelly homemade?

[00:18:11]

WH: Oh, everything homemade. Nothing come from a store. [Laughter] Other than the flour and sugar and stuff, pepper and salt.

[00:18:18]

PD: Do you remember any other things your mom used to bake?

[00:18:21]

WH: Anything you want named. Excellent hams, turkey, meat, roast. We had our own beef, we killed our own beef and our own hogs and our own chickens, and our own eggs. We had nearly everything. None of the main food did we have to pay– we had our own garden. She canned. You know, you just beans, your tomatoes, your butter beans, your string beans. Everything was canned with the pressure cooker.

[00:18:54]

PD: Wow. Was that what a lot of people did?

[00:18:56]

WH: A lot of people, the older people did, yeah. 'Course the next door neighbors over here, they had a milk separator. I used to marvel at that, how you could pour the milk in that and that would separate the cream from the milk. First milk right in there, turn that thing, that thing turnin'. [Laughter]

[00:19:17]

PD: Wow. And so, do you remember anything, any special meals or recipes your grandparents used to make or great-grandmother?

[00:19:27]

WH: Not really, 'cause my mother used to– my great-grandmother, she was bedridden ever since I was small. In fact that I don't think I ever saw her stand up, but I'm sure she did. But she used to sit there and tell me stories, and I don't remember what they were. But my Grandmother Harwood, my stepfather told me that every time she picked me up, I'd try to bite her. [Laughter] So she was all, not trusting . . . I don't know why. I don't remember why. No. Just little things like that, they come back to you.

[00:20:14]

PD: So, do you remember any other stories about the country stores, what they were like?

[00:20:17]

WH: Oh, yes. There was one right there now, right across from Wawa [a convenience store in Gloucester]. Was John Booker, he had a tire store there, and he had a clothing store there. I remember, that's where I got my first long pants. I used to have to wear them damn knickers. You don't know nothin' about them. They cut off right here, socks come up here, and when you run, they go to your ankles. [Laughter] I remember I was so glad when he took me there and give me a pair of long pants. [Laughter]

[00:21:00]

PD: Were there certain country stores or stores that had different things, that sold different things? Did you go to one for clothes, one for meat?

[00:21:09.13]

WH: No, they didn't— The stores, nearly all of them would have nearly everything that you needed in 'em. We had a place out there now, what was it? Right there now where 7-Eleven is, right across from Wawa, that was a John Newcomb store. Big, two-story building. He sold a big store, big grocery store. He really carried everything under the sun. And he got killed walking across 17 one day, somewhere around 1955 or something like that.

[00:21:52.03]

PD: Wow.

[00:21:54]

WH: His son, he inherited everything, and then he eventually sold that piece to 7-Eleven or whoever it was. And he was one of the men that did some of the work for the first man on the moon.

[00:22:12]

PD: Really?

[00:22:12]

WH: John Newcomb. And he was younger than me, he went to school with me.

[00:22:19]

PD: Really. So, you mentioned that the area you grew up, were there any black-owned stores?

[00:22:26]

WH: What?

[00:22:26]

PD: Were there any stores that were owned by anyone from the black community in the area, like the general stores or . . . ?

[00:22:34]

WH: Any black?

[00:22:36]

PD: Like, were there any African Americans in the community that owned any of the stores? Like, the general stores?

[00:22:41]

WH: No.

[00:22:41]

PD: Were they able to own stores, were whites and blacks able to shop there?

[00:22:44]

WH: Oh, yes. We all– that's the reason what happened to my father happened to him. They said that, during that time, he could not stand to see these families not have money to feed their children. He would let them have credit and the creditors were coming down there so hard, that's the reason he did what he did. No, we were friends to all blacks. I know that we've had 'em when I was young to come to the house. And he called Mama Miss Lola, said, "Miss Lola, can I borrow a cup of sugar?" Mama let 'em have a cup of sugar. When they brought a cup of sugar, they'd bring a cup of sugar back. Cup of coffee. I mean, that's the way things were. If we had it, whatever they asked for, they could get, 'cause they always returned it. I mean, that's the way blacks and whites were here. We still are. I can go to any of 'em's house, any of 'em come here. They come right here and sit down just like you are. We're still that way.

[00:23:57]

PD: So, do you remember what year your stepfather bought the farm?

[00:23:58]

WH: No, that was before. He bought that in 1929.

[00:24:02]

PD: Oh, so he bought it before he married your mother.

[00:24:05]

WH: Yes. He married her in 1930. In fact, that's the marriage certificate right up there.

[00:24:13]

PD: Wow.

[00:24:14]

WH: See it, right underneath that–

[00:24:17]

PD: You have everything.

[00:24:19]

WH: I don't have much. It's history, yeah.

[00:24:24]

PD: So, what do you remember about the farm when you were young?

[00:24:29]

WH: Oh, we didn't have anything but horses at the time. And I used to– I don't know how old I was, but I was less than ten years old when I was let to work a horse. And we had, I don't know, seven or eight horses. In fact, one of 'em stepped on that foot when I was about eight or ten years old. I'm flat footed on my right foot, and it waited eighty years for it to start hurting. Started

hurting me but two years ago. But no, we used to work everything with the horses, plowed, cultivated. Everything was done with the horses until around 19 . . . oh, around 1948. He was able to a buy a Ford 9N tractor, plowers and cultivator and planter, Cole planter.

[00:25:30]

PD: So, what did he grow at first?

[00:25:31]

WH: Huh?

[00:25:31]

PD: What were the crops that he grew at the time?

[00:25:34]

WH: They grew soybeans and corn. And hogs. Fact is, we used to cure a lot of hams, and they used to have families at Christmas time would come from Richmond here to buy hams, and we used to make a lot of lard. We used to have what they call lard tins, and people come from all over to buy their home-cured, homemade lard. Fact is, I still cook with it. I like it better than anything else. Lard is actually, it cooks hotter; it holds the heat more than any other greases that you have.

[00:26:13]

PD: Wow.

[00:26:14]

WH: You didn't know that, did you?

[00:26:14]

PD: I did not. Wow. [Laughter] And so, what was it like to have the farm– I guess that would be during the Great Depression, during World War II, or . . . ?

[00:26:28]

WH: Well, I was small during that. My stepfather went to work over at Cheatham Annex in a factory. That's where he retired from. Now, he was in the First World War, he went through the Argonne Forest and all of that. He survived.

[00:26:54]

PD: What was the name of the store, what was the name of the place?

[00:26:57]

WH: The Argonne Forest.

[00:26:58]

PD: Oh, no, what was the name of the place he worked at?

[00:27:00]

WH: Cheatham Annex.

[00:27:04]

PD: Cheatham Annex?

[00:27:02]

WH: Yeah, that's right across the York River. It's still there.

[00:27:05]

PD: Yeah, okay.

[00:27:07]

WH: It's still there.

[00:27:09]

PD: So, it seems like a tough time to get into farming.

[00:27:11]

WH: He was farming during that time, too. But what I'm saying, that it was not enough money made on the farm to just stay on the farm. 'Cause there was very little income off the farm then, other than to feed the cattle and hogs that we had. Didn't make the kind of crops you make now, have to afford fertilizers and all of that stuff.

[00:27:40]

PD: When did the farm become more profitable?

[00:27:43]

WH: Oh, starting to become more profitable somewhere around 1950.

[00:27:52]

PD: Was it still soybeans and corn at that time?

[00:27:53]

WH: Soybeans, corn, and some of the first things, I raised all of them, soybeans and corn, was barley. We had excellent sales for barley for years. Then all at once, that's gone out with us. Fact is that wheat, we raised soybean, corn, and wheat now, but the only reason we . . . [Laughter] raise the wheat is, the straw is worth more than the food product.

[00:28:32]

PD: Wow.

[00:28:33]

WH: Make more money off the waste than we do off the product. And if it wasn't for the straw, I would not raise it. And it bought more in 1974 than it's bringing now.

[00:28:47]

PD: Really.

[00:28:49]

WH: The reason I remember that, 'cause that's the year I went out of debt and paid my home off and everything. I haven't been in debt since.

[00:28:55]

PD: Wow. So, what's the reason for the decrease for wheat?

[00:29:01]

WH: I guess it's overproduction worldwide. We used to use and deal in local markets, and then it was state markets. Now it's world markets. Whatever grows in Argentina or South America, Russia, all affects the price now.

[00:29:21]

PD: And so, did you– after you went to school, after you graduated, what did you do?

[00:29:30]

WH: First off, I worked for R.L. Clemmons, right there where Wawa is now, in a service station. He wanted me to take that over, and I didn't want no part of that. I worked for Virginia Power, and I worked there until 1958, when I went in the Army. I had worked up till I was a serviceman for Middlesex County, and when I came back, I kept after him to tell me where I was going to be able to go. They wouldn't tell me anything, so I bought a home here in Bellamy. And I got into

the Army, went up there and talked to 'em, "We want you to move to Richmond." I said, "That's the end of that." They ain't never tell me before, so I made 'em keep the job open for six months, the law required, and I went and told them I wasn't comin' back. "Well, why didn't you tell us sooner?" "Why didn't you tell me sooner? I wouldn't have bought the home." [Laughter]

[00:30:48]

PD: There you go.

[00:30:50]

WH: Huh?

[00:30:51]

PD: Mm-hm. So, how'd you get into farming then?

[00:30:53]

WH: Well, I had, like I say, I had eleven year, and I was workin' at the post office. My stepfather, he had hogs, and him and I gradually started doin' stuff together. Then he got so he couldn't do, and then I started getting a little bigger equipment, a little bigger equipment, a little bigger equipment, and then I stayed in the post office till 1980. Quit on the phone. I was scheduled to have fertilizer come in at . . . about 7 o'clock on a Monday morning. Postmaster called me at some time around nine, ten o'clock on Sunday night, told me I had to be in to open the post office the next morning at 6:30. "No, I don't have to be in there tomorrow morning at 6:30, I got prior approval to leave." "Know what the consequences would be?" I said, "There

won't be no consequences." "What you mean?" I said, "I just quit." "You're not given' me any notice?" "Give you the same notice you just gave me." That was my last day in the post office.

[00:32:09]

PD: Wow.

[00:32:09]

WH: I walked out. I was workin' a bunch of land, turned right around and I bought Sherwood Farm. And **[inaudible 32:17]**, was three hundred-some acres. I bought that in 1980 and I started renting a pile of land. That's where I've been there. Then I sold that in 1990 to E. Clay **& Robins** at **Dalton** Shoe in Richmond and rented it back from 'em. [Laughter] I got my money and then rented it back.

[00:32:46]

PD: Yeah, I was going to say, who's makin' money off it now, then? It sounds like they are.

[00:32:51]

WH: No, he's gettin' rent on it, but I still work it. I still make a reasonable income off that. We work all the way into Mathews. We work all the way down to Gwynn's Island. Point Breeze.

[00:33:07]

PD: Wow. And so, what are the primary crops that you were growing that started in 1980 to now?

[00:33:15]

WH: It went from corn, soybeans, and barley, now there's corn, soybeans, and wheat, and I've always kept a few hogs you have to have to personal use and just something to do from January to March. 'Cause we slaughter those, two a week, for . . .

[00:33:35]

PD: So, have corn and soybeans been profitable pretty consistently throughout your life?

[00:33:42]

WH: Not like I'd like to be a lot of times, but I have never lost a penny farming. I have people say they lost money in it, I thought I lost last year, but I hadn't. [Laughter] Not when tax time came, I hadn't.

[00:34:02]

PD: So, you mentioned, in your stepfather's time, how was he finding markets to sell? Where was he selling the product?

[00:34:10]

WH: All right. We used to have right now there at Clay Bank, Lewis Grove & Sons used to be the granary for this area. Everything then had to be bagged, you know, and everything was bagged off the combine, went . . . dropped in the field, then they had to go and picked the bags up, load 'em on the truck, take 'em down there, they'd weigh it, and then they'd take the bags off

the truck. Two bushel of beans and a cotton-pickin' bag is a hundred and twenty pounds. Imagine working all day and having to load them after dark.

[00:34:48]

PD: A lot of work.

[00:34:44]

WH: It was that. Like I said, the equipment we have now, that you don't have to touch the grain or anything. Everything is augured.

[00:35:05]

PD: So, can you talk about how the technology's changed? You said it was horses up until 1950s, you said, 1948?

[00:35:12]

WH: Yeah. Can I say what now?

[00:35:14.13]

PD: So, can you talk about how the equipment, the technology's changed?

[00:35:21]

WH: Oh, my Lord.

[00:35:21]

PD: You start with horses, you said, right?

[00:35:21]

WH: Yes, I did. They used to have that little old, started off with we used to have . . . everything was planted in 40-inch rows, and the way that they'd plant 'em, kept 'em forty inches, they had a long piece of 4x4 with horse **hairs** in it. You go down the field in a straight line and then come back, you put one here and that would give you two more rows over there. Then when you planted, you plant by those marks. You see, it's the markers in the field. Then it's these little one-row Cole planters, and then we went from that, we got the Ford planters, which had fertilizer hoppers on them and grain hoppers to drop fertilizer and grain at the same time, that's before we started spreading. And you plant two rows at the time, and when you come, you open the wheels up on the tractors, so when you came back, you had driving the same one-wheel track, the other wheel track goin' back. Of course, the combines we had, the first we had were pull-type, and that was awful with dust and stuff, you know. Awful, awful. Went from that to the self-propelled with no cabs, and most 'em used to have little 262 Chevrolet engine in a John Deere. That thing is 262, a gasoline Chevrolet engine mount. My father-in-law was the first diesel to come into Gloucester County. He bought a four-row, 600 combine, and I don't remember what year it was. After I had gotten married, somewhere in the early [19]60s, I'll never forget that. The dealer said, "You don't want to get a diesel engine." He said, "I want a diesel engine." He got the diesel engine, and diesel's been here ever since. One of the things that made him get it is, I'll never forget, I had no-till planters, the old type that weren't consistent like the ones we have now. And my brother-in-law, he was driving the combine with no cab, and when he got off that last day

when we finished up, he said, "That's the last day I'll ever ride that." He got off, the only way you could tell he was white was the tear streaks down his eyes.

[00:38:44]

PD: Wow.

[00:38:46]

WH: And his father bought the diesel with the cab and air on it to the next year. And the same time, I bought them the first cab air-conditioned tractors. And that was around in the late 1970s, early [19]70s, I think, 'cause I . . . most of my stuff is reasonably old, but I can raise just asgood stuff with the old stuff as do two or three hundred thousand dollar piece of equipment. If it wasn't for that, I wouldn't be able to keep my wife in a nursin' home, you know, 'cause I didn't waste it on all the stuff. But anyhow, we went to—like I said, from a horse to a small Ford tractor. The next size I got was a David Brown that Carl Lipscomb sold down at White Marsh, 1200. Went from there a 970 Case, to 1175 Case, 2090 Case, that I'm still payin' for. I bought that 1983 new and the planter 1983 new. I still use that same tractor and planter and both of 'em are just like new ones right now.

[00:40:06]

PD: Wow.

[00:40:06]

WH: Yeah. Fact is, that's what I'm plantin' soybeans with now. But the equipment has changed so much, with the GPS and all that stuff like that they're usin' out in the Midwest and all. But God, they've got to make a terrible amount of money to justify buyin' that type of stuff. They've got to work– we used to work two thousand acres, and we lost it, all of the land, to development. Nothing was taken away from us just 'cause of what we were doin', it's always been development, homes, a family member want the farm or something like that. That's the only way we've actually lost land.

[00:40:55]

PD: Really.

[00:40:56]

WH: Like I say, I've got a big, 200 horsepower tractor out here that my neighbor had, and I bought it from him in 1988 just before he died. I've had it overhauled once and it does the same thing as a brand spankin' new one. Got air condition, heat, air. I mean, there's other stuff looks good, oh, yeah. Show off stuff. I don't like showin' off. [Laughter]

[00:41:38]

PD: So, with all the changing in the machinery, how has that changed the labor force, the people working? How many people were working in the [19]40s and [19]50s versus now?

[00:41:43]

WH: Oh, for anybody to work the amount of land that we workin' now, good Lord, I don't know with just two of us now. My brother-and-law and I work together, just the two of us, and we workin' over twelve, fifteen hundred acres.

[00:42:04]

PD: So, you're still doin' it then?

[00:42:06]

WH: Yes. I'm eighty-two. I haven't stopped. And another thing, even this seed handlin' anymore like it was three years ago. We used to have to dump the seeds through bags, and I bought a trailer that—'course you can see it out there, it's got seed on it now outside in the shed. Everything is hydraulic and gasoline motor driven. All I got to do is open the shoot, start the motor up, and push a button, and she fill the drill right up.

[00:42:53]

PD: Wow.

[00:42:54]

WH: Used to be you'd have to lift about fifty bags, doing that, lift it from the trailer to the thing and dump it. 'Course I couldn't do it at my age now.

[00:43:05]

PD: So, was it always just you, the two of you?

[00:43:05]

WH: Um-hm.

[00:43:08]

PD: That's a lot of land.

[00:43:10]

WH: Yeah, but we know what we're doin', that makes a difference. He does one thing, I do another. He's sprayin', I'm plantin'.

[00:43:20]

PD: Could you walk me through your year, like the seasons?

[00:43:23]

WH: All right. Do you know, from the time you start planting to time you stop planting, is that what you want?

[00:43:35]

PD: Yeah, yeah. Just walk through the cycle.

[00:43:35]

WH: All right, the cycle. I usually start, I don't start planting corn until the ground gets 52 degrees at one inch. Corn germinate at 52 degrees. And regardless of when that is, I have had it do that in March, March 25, 26, 27 along in there, and you take this year, it didn't get there 'till around April 10. So, April 10 is where we started this year. And I do it by ground temperature. Another old test is too, there's another thing you do, too, that most people don't know it and you probably haven't heard this before. An old farmer told me this and this years ago: when the leaves on poplar trees get big and squirrely, it's time to plant corn. Usually, when they get poplar trees big and squirrely, it's 52 degrees. Nature you don't play with.

[00:44:42]

PD: Wow.

[00:44:43]

WH: [Laughter] You haven't heard that before, have you?

[00:44:43]

PD: No, I haven't.

[00:44:45]

WH: [Laughter] But anyway, and they didn't get that way till April 10 this year. I checked the ground, it was 52 degrees, I started plantin'. I don't see no poplar trees. I went down the road to go to another field, poplar trees, some there. I hadn't seen 'em. [Laughter] But anyway, and then we go to spray it first, now, because we're planting no-till. We spray it before we plant to kill the

weeds and grass and stuff that's there. We put about twenty percent of the nitrogen out with that, and we come back and we're just starting to put the second application of nitrogen now, 'cause that way, you don't lose so much through erosion and leak to the Bay, which we just started this past week, 'fore all this rain started. Once that's done, that's the end of the corn until harvest time, but then now we've already started planting beans. Everything was right, I plant something around a hundred and fifty, two hundred acres so far. And I see they're comin' up fine. Hopefully, we always like to get our early beans in before the time for the wheat to be cut, 'cause if we don't, we're really doubled up with work. You know, get beans in the ground but that's wheat's got to come out first, while it's ready. At West Point, they take it. They want it or some **moisture** in it, because they got better quality grain for food value for humans, if it's picked early and they finish dryin' it there, 'cause every rain you get on it, the test weight of it gets lighter per grain. Every rain after it matures, it gets lighter. Soon as we get that off then, like I say, my son like I say's got a baler straw, we probably get ten, fifteen thousand bales or whatever's here. We plant beans as quick as we can behind that, and then 'course we got to spray again for weeds, probably after maybe the beans get six or eight inches tall. And then whatever it takes after that, wherever any problems show up, that's what we have to do. Then we got a little slack period in there from probably . . . the end of July until close to the first of September, at first corn. So with the corn, we plant early maturin' first. So, I've got three different maturities, and I plant it the way I'm goin' pick it. There's early corn first, then medium corn, then the other one'd be late. We'll start that in August or early September. By the time we get that done and get land ready for wheat next year, time to get next year's wheat in, it's time to start soybeans. [Laughter] And we'll be harvestin' soybeans until– here's the thing, we like to get through by Thanksgiving. Sometime,

it's after the first of December, dependin' on the weather. Then we got a slack period, huntin'. Then we start killin' hogs in January.

[00:48:53]

PD: Okay. And could you talk a little bit about the hogs? How long has your family been doin' that?

[00:49:00]

WH: The hogs have only been off this place for one day or two days since I been born. We've always had them up at the home, and then when I got children, it got so it was more than I felt like I could handle, so I told her, I told my wife, "I'm gonna get rid of 'em all." I took 'em all to the stock market. Son came home that night, he said, "Daddy, you got rid of all the hogs?" I said, "Yes." "I was hopin' I was goin' to be able to . . ." And reckon I bought hogs the next day, bought back, and they'd been half his ever since. So, he takes care of the grind feed and feed that we've got, our own grinder mixes them, everything, yeah.

[00:49:49]

PD: How long has your family been making your own sausages and meat and all that?

[00:49:53]

WH: I got it from my mama and daddy. I don't have long after that. That's been ever since I been in the world.

[00:49:59]

PD: Yeah? So, you showed me the kitchen that you have now, the outdoor kitchen. What is some of the stuff you do in there? You showed me the grinder and everything.

[00:50:06]

WH: Well, in fact that I've got an electric wrench in there, and what we do is, when we cut the meat up for sausage, we bring it up there. It's got the hook on it, you hit the button and it raise up and we skin the meat and we cut the meat up. I don't know if you notice and all the table, everything's stainless steel out there. It's cut up there and put right back into the cooler until it's the next day, and then we grind it in five-pound buckets, and we got scales in there to weigh it. I told him, "Always be sure we got a little extra. I don't want nobody to be short." [Laughter] But then I . . . we like, say, all the deer processed and all that I do here, the son, we used to do 'em all here. But now, son, he's got his own up at his house now where he can skin, take his stuff home and do it.

[00:51:26]

PD: And do you sell that?

[00:51:27]

WH: It's against the law to sell venison.

[00:51:29]

PD: Oh, no, I'm talking about the ham or the beef, the sausages.

[00:51:36]

WH: You know what, I say I can sell sausages, spare ribs, and pork chops. But it's against the law for me to sell cured ham.

[00:51:44]

PD: Okay.

[00:51:46]

WH: And I don't sell no cured ham.

[00:51:48]

PD: So, who do you sell the other things to, then? What's your market for that?

[00:51:52]

WH: Like for what?

[00:51:52]

PD: The sausage, the–

[00:51:55]

WH: People just like you.

[00:51:58]

PD: [Laughter] You're not selling it–

[00:51:59]

WH: You can't, I can't sell it for retail.

[00:52:01]

PD: Okay, so you're just selling it locally.

[00:52:03]

WH: Right. I cannot sell it retail unless I'm U.S.D.A.-approved, but I can sell it to any individual.

[00:52:13]

PD: And the recipes that you have, did you come up with them on your own–?

[00:52:15]

WH: No, it's the same stuff been passed down for years.

[00:52:19]

PD: Yeah? So, from your parents?

[00:52:21]

WH: Um-hm, my grand.

[00:52:22]

PD: And how far back do you think that goes, grandparents, great-grandparents?

[00:52:26]

WH: I guess. I want to show you somethin' hangin' up out there, you never seen old cured meat?

[00:52:32]

PD: No.

[00:52:34]

WH: They'll keep forever.

[00:52:37]

PD: I know I've seen a lot of things, I just want to make sure I get it in the recorder. That's why I want you to try and get, describe some of these things.

[00:52:45]

WH: I'll let you see seasonin' meat, cured middlin' meat, hangin' right up outside there right now when you get ready to go. So you can look at it there, see it hangin' up. That's the ways used to hang it up in the smokehouses, and people would to– fact, get people comin' far as North Carolina to get it.

[00:53:02]

PD: Wow.

[00:53:02]

WH: Said they can't buy it anywhere else like that. But the difference is, I asked a fellow that worked for Smithfield when I used to deliver hogs to 'em over there. He said the reason that what you buy in the store doesn't have any flavor in it is because they take the middlins, they put 'em in a press like an old wash machine press, and run 'em through to squeeze the grease out of 'em. Once they do that, all your flavor is all is in that grease and all that's in the middlin'. And so you got nothin' but a dried up piece of meat, nothin' there for any flavor, is that? Fact is, a man was here just 'fore you a while ago, would come and get five or six pieces.

[00:53:53]

PD: How many pounds do you think you normally sell a year?

[00:53:58]

WH: Between two and three thousand pounds a year of sausage.

[00:54:00]

PD: That's a big operation.

[00:54:01]

WH: No, small.

[00:54:01]

PD: Yeah? I mean, in addition to all the farming you do, to have time for that.

[00:54:06]

WH: It's what I say, we do that from January to March, before we get into . . . we start the week after hunting season goes out. We clean out the deer and we wash the cooler down because deer, they're dirty. That dust and all, hair and all. Scrub the cooler down, and then put the– ready for pork.

[00:54:32]

PD: And you said it was all hormone-free and everything, right?

[00:54:33]

WH: No, they don't get nothin' but what's raised here.

[00:54:38]

PD: Wow.

[00:54:38]

WH: They do get several medicines to increase their protein content, 'cause corn by itself doesn't have enough protein. And the other is, you get that from soybean. The soybean has to be cooked for hogs to be able to digest it right.

[00:54:58]

PD: And so, you mentioned that, back in the day, you could sell your crops to the refinery here.

[00:55:07]

WH: Yes.

[00:55:07]

PD: How have your markets changed from then to now?

[00:55:09]

WH: Oh, my Lord. Great day. Back then, sometimes you get a dollar a bushel for some of the stuff. Right then, that was a lot of money. Right now, you take this year, the corn is less than four dollars, and it cost us a little over four hundred dollars an acre to raise corn now. So, I've got to raise over a hundred bushels an acre to make a penny on it.

[00:55:48]

PD: Wow.

[00:55:49]

WH: So, that's how bad it is here right now. Soybeans, they're a little better this year. I thought that this thing that Trump was doin' was going to mess it up, and it might, but I took advantage of some run-ups and **follow** contract. I follow contract on a lot when I know I got a profit.

[00:56:12]

PD: How have government regulations or subsidies, how have those affected your business?

[00:56:18]

WH: It really hasn't affected me that I can notice.

[00:56:26]

PD: Okay. I still have a few questions for you. So, what made you– the sausage that your family makes, those types of things, were those always to sell to people around the area, or was that just family recipes?

[00:56:40]

WH: That was just family stuff. Even back then, everything was hand-done.

[00:56:45]

PD: So, at what point did you start making enough of it where you could sell it to people?

[00:56:52]

WH: We started, maybe . . . I started with a small grinder that we had a devil of a time with. After my son decide he want to start foolin' with some of the stuff, I used to just do enough for our own use. Then when he started to fool with it, had the people that want, "Hey, can you let us have the sausage? Let us have the sausage?" And that's the way it started. The fact that I think there's some of this on the door there. Is there a pad up on that door?

[00:57:25]

PD: I see that, yeah.

[00:57:27]

WH: That's the names of the people now that are on there for me to call for it that want it. Like I say, that had to be around the [19]70s before we started doin' it like that for individuals.

[00:57:48]

PD: Okay. Has the process changed between how they used to make it to how, what you do now?

[00:57:55]

WH: No. The only big difference is that our grinders and all do a better job. Their old ones, used to have a lot of backin' up, and the meat was ground up more. This takes it right on through, and it does a whole lot better job as far as the seasonin'. We double-grind it, and the reason bein' that we got a big pan, and we put the meat on it, we put the seasonin' on it, stir it all up, grind it, and then we grind three pans, double 'em all up, stir 'em all together, then grind all three of 'em together. Again, that way you get the consistency through everything, as far as fat, lean, and everything, as well as seasonin'. That works, actually, because the pan out there– the pan, you saw about that long, that wide. So, you can put a hundred pounds of meat on that. [Laughter]

[00:58:56]

PD: I'm startin' to get a little hungry talkin' about it. [Laughter] So, who do you sell your crops to?

[00:59:07]

WH: Crops now sold to Old Man Gran Mannell out of West Point.

[00:59:14]

PD: When'd you start sellin' there?

[00:59:16]

WH: When this closed up down here. They used to belong to the Harrell family, and when they died, oh, started dyin' off, they sold it to Mannell about three years, four years ago. And they've been wonderful to us, too. They furnish us trailers. We don't haul anything. A lot of people got their own tractor trailers and stuff like that to haul, but they . . . we load a tractor trailer every forty-five minutes. [Laughter]

[01:00:03]

PD: That's impressive.

[01:00:05]

WH: Well, the combines hold two hundred– when they get there, we usually got four hundred bushels ready to dump on 'em when he pulls up there. Well, the combines hold two hundred bushels apiece. [Laughter]

[01:00:19]

PD: So, it sounds like, for a lot of your life, farming you were doing on the side– you were working at the post office, at the service station.

[01:00:28]

WH: Right. I was that up until 1980.

[01:00:30]

PD: Before you quit the job at the post office, did you want to be a farmer or were you trying to avoid–?

[01:00:37]

WH: No, no. I always wanted to be, and there just wasn't enough land for me to make that move. I was gettin' up to the point that, you know, I could make the move, and I wanted to go ahead and have enough time in it that I draw a retirement from it, which I did. I had twenty-three years. And I didn't . . . when I got sixty-five, I applied for it, they told me I was supposed to have drawn it at sixty-two. I said, "Good Lord, don't tell me I done lost two or three years." Oh, no. They sent me a nice check, all taxes taken out, for the back three years when I applied. So another year, I draw retirement from them, too. But the only reason I'm still workin' is because my wife is in the nursing home. I don't have to work, but with her there.

[01:01:34]

PD: How'd you meet your wife? [Laughter]

[01:01:38]

WH: Ah, that's funny. Really funny. She just lived on the next road over, and I had taken another girl– her name is Dolores. I had taken another girl to a dance. Dolores Camp. And we were at this dance and, of course, my wife says she was lookin' over at me, she's a beautiful girl. Fact is, that's one of our pictures up there, and right underneath that, my military picture. She said, "We call her Miss Hollywood." I said, "Why?" "Look how she dresses and all." I mean, this neat, and everything she did. So 'fore I left there, I said, "I'm goin' to see if I can't dance with Miss Hollywood." I been dancin' with Miss Hollywood ever since. [Laughter] That is comical.

[01:02:45]

PD: That's a good story.

[01:02:47]

WH: Huh?

[01:02:47]

PD: That's a good story.

[01:02:49]

WH: It's the truth, though. 'Course I knew she was older, but ‘course as far as me, I had never seen her, I'm five and a half years older than she is. 'Course, I was out of school once she was gettin' in to high school.

[01:03:04]

PD: What was her name?

[01:03:05]

WH: Dolores Lee.

[01:03:08]

PD: Dolores Lee. So, what was dating like in the area, what'd you do for dates?

[01:03:12]

WH: What'd I do for a date? We used to be at the drive in theater down there at Hayes. We used to go there. Used to go to school functions. I used to play basketball, too, and then, of course, that was up until I went in the Army in 1958. And we got married in 1960, while I was still in the Army. She went to Fort Gordon, Georgia, with me there. We took everything down there in a car, had two hundred fifty dollars to pay for a car when I got married. Never stole nothin' from anybody. You apply yourself, you can do it, but you've got to have an idea and you got to believe in yourself. [Door opens]

[01:04:23]

PD: So, you talked about your son. Did you have children?

[01:04:27]

WH: What?

[01:04:28]

PD: Can you tell me the names of your children?

[01:04:30]

WH: Oh, yeah. I got three. The oldest one is Tammy. She worked for Colonial– well, she went to West Virginia University for one year. At the end of her first semester, she called me and said, "Daddy," says, "I ought not say what I'm sayin' but I'll tell you the truth." Said, "Daddy, my advisor asked me what am I doin' here." I said, "Why, darlin'?" She said, "Daddy, I'm 4.0 and I would learn as much at Gloucester High School as I learnin' now. Asked me how come I was here with all the good universities in the state of Virginia." I said, "Well, what'd she advise?" She said, "Would like you to go to . . . shoot, the University of Virginia, William & Mary, or Longwood." And I said, "All right, I'll call tomorrow mornin'." That was a Sunday night, and I called, and they had closed applications for transfer at the University of Virginia Friday. And she was accepted at William & Mary, and along with, might have been Mary Washington. But anyway, she went to William & Mary, she graduated there, she had a degree, a history major. She left there, she went to Northern Virginia and she married her husband, she'd met him at William & Mary, and she went to work for National Geographic in Washington, D.C. or

Alexandria, I don't know which. And she left there after about two or three years, came back to Colonial Williamsburg, because she knew the Rockefellers on a first name basis. [Dog pants]

[01:06:34]

PD: Wow.

[01:06:37.10]

WH: So anyway, she stayed there till about a month ago. She worked there for thirty-three years. She went in to work one mornin' and they met her at the door with her keys and a pass, give her two hours to clean her desk out. Makin' too much money, and I wanna say the wrong shade. I mean, that's a terrible thing to have say, but that was what it was. Of course, she's already got another job, starts tomorrow.

[01:07:12]

PD: And we met your son Scott earlier. Does he help you on the farm?

[01:07:16]

WH: Oh, yes. Yes. And the next one, she's got two children, Emily Grace. She won the top scholarship at Philadelphia School of Song & Dance. She's on Broadway. And her brother won a all-expense paid scholarship to Citadel, books and uniform, four years. And he's workin' in security now out at Alexandria, on contract for the government. His oldest daughter, well, get back to the next one, Debbie, she went to Radford the first year, she didn't like that, went to Christopher Newport, she won't get what she want there, went to VCU interior design, and then

she had a wonderful business of her own there, up until the economy went bad five or six years ago. Then she went through a terrible divorce year, and she went to work for a contract for, that place did her the same way they did my oldest daughter, big companies don't care about you no more. So, she's, you know, got several things in the making right now. She's got one son, and he's fifteen October 30, and he's in high school now. Then he married Anna Miller–

[01:09:04]

PD: Your son Scott?

[01:09:05]

WH: Yeah, Scott. He went to Christopher Newport, he graduated at Christopher Newport, and he wanted to farm, but I didn't have enough land for him to come in with me, 'cause I was workin' with my brother-in-law and I just couldn't, you can't kick him out. No, no, that's not right. So, I couldn't let him come in full-time on this, so he went into contracting with Hunters Contracting, and I think he bought all my out– I haven't asked him or anything. You know, I see what's going on. I might be old, but I'm not stupid. But anyhow, they've got all the world they can do. They're very well-diversified. And they've got two girls. The oldest one, Tori, she's got a scholarship at Old D.U., field hockey, and I think she's a junior this year. The youngest, she's going to Longwood, so she got a scholarship at Longwood in field hockey. [Laughter]

[01:10:30]

PD: Pretty good.

[01:10:33]

WH: All of 'em are scholarships except the one that's still in high school, and he's not applyin' himself like I'd like because he don't have a daddy at home, and he goes and spends one weekend with his daddy and one weekend with his mama. But he does help her, and he helps out here some, but the son like he takes care of feedin' the hogs, the straw business out here, that he just load the tractor and took it to Southern States this mornin'. I don't . . . things are just . . . this right here where I am in what used to be a pasture when I was small.

[01:11:17]

PD: Wow. So, it seems like the farm's always been a family operation, it seems like.

[01:11:24]

WH: Oh, yes.

[01:11:24]

PD: Do you hope to pass that down to your–

[01:11:29]

WH: Everything is in trust to go down. That's all done.

[01:11:33]

PD: Are you hoping to see the farm continue in the family?

[01:11:36]

WH: Yes. Hopefully.

[01:11:39]

PD: And I wanted to ask, farming in the Middle Peninsula, in like Gloucester, how has that changed over time? How many people are farming, commercial farming, on this level?

[01:11:54]

WH: You take, I try to think here, now. The Pointers at Clay Bank, us here, that's two. Clemmon Dingham, Horsley over at Coke, that's three. Ray Ralee is four. Jimmy Blake is five. Charles Rich is six. Six that I know of in Gloucester County. It might be, old Greg Jenkins sounds last. I mean, he's seven.

[01:12:28]

PD: Is that less than was before?

[01:12:29]

WH: Oh, Lord, yes. Yes, it used to be my father-in-law, his brother Edward, his brother Howard, the Pointers, Woodberry, Cleveland, and Cameron, probably small, you know, fifty, seventy-five-acre places, but they can't make any money at it anymore.

[01:12:55]

PD: How come?

[01:12:56]

WH: 'Cause it's too small. You got to have volume. I couldn't hang in if I didn't have volume. In other words, your dollar per bushel doesn't last. You got to have more bushels.

[01:13:11]

PD: So, what would be some advice you would give to the next generation or farmers, or for new farmers?

[01:13:19]

WH: I think, right now, with the way Gloucester's growing and the fact that I even mentioned it to Scott there one day, one thing is could do is like that field right there, you could set that up in pastures and places for horses where people could keep their horses, you know, on a good deal. Not something is like you got over here, they got thirty horses on about five acres. The only reason that's that way is 'cause they're grandfathered. But if you had a nice barn and places like that, fact is, you could– another thing they could do is you could even put feeder cattle in some stuff. 'Course, you got, way we got the hogs there now, we couldn't– you know, with the runoff and all, we couldn't have much. I'm perfectly legal, they've been here to check me. That's the other thing you got to worry about if you get things too close to water. And another thing, too, they could do is you could get more people that need, want the fresh vegetable, either start a

vegetable stand or you could rent places out that people could have, raise their own. I mean, that's a lot of things been in my mind.

[01:14:53]

PD: So, what do you see the future of farming being? Here or in the country, even locally and nationally?

[01:15:01]

WH: People got to eat. Farmers got to go on somewhere. People got to eat. Future farmers got to go, got to be here. That's all there is to it. There's no farmers, no eatin'. I'll never forget when Willie Nelson had this thing on television years ago, helpin' the plight of the American farmer. It was on national television there. This woman in California, they asked her, what does she think of the plight of the American farmer? Said, "I don't worry about the farmer, I get mine at the grocery store." [Laughter] I've had children come here, and I used to let children come here for a field day or something and see what goes on. And I've had some come here and look at me say, "Well, what's that?" Corn I'm puttin' in the bin, dryin' corn. "What is it?" Don't even know what corn is. And another one gotten us there, I used to raise sweet corn out there, I used to sell it out there to Ware Neck Produce. Fact is, it's advertised 'Tootsie's Corn.' And people look for it. [Laughter] They, out there at the Catholic Church, Bob Louisell, he used to be head of that Bread for Life there. He used to come out here. I raised it for friends, family, and them, and the food bank. Well, then, two or three years ago, food bank didn't show up after I called them. Bob and them come and got all they could get, then they had all the peoples comin' in that they'd promised them they would get. Well, I cut it back the next year. I called St. Andrew's church, I

got the number there that takes care of their stuff. Yeah, say, I got somebody to go call you and they'll come. Never called, never came. So last year, I planted enough out there for family, friends, and Bread for Life. They came out here and they got it, got corn until other corn was comin' in. But I've been doing that for twenty-five years, raisin' it just to have for needy families. But that's something, when you can't get people to pick it.

[01:17:47]

PD: Yeah. It leads me to my next question, what do you see your role in the community in Gloucester to be?

[01:17:55]

WH: Me?

[01:17:55]

PD: Yeah.

[01:17:55]

WH: Oh, I'm just a little farmer, don't mind nothin'.

[01:18:00]

PD: Well, you're providing food to the food bank, you have the sausage and things that you're selling.

[01:18:06]

WH: Well, that's about like I said. I was raisin' sweet corn to have for, but I raised black-eyed peas, and they used to– I'm saying, comin' to pick up whole pickup loads of black-eyed peas, Bread for Life and Newington Church, come out here together to pick it. Fact, I have pictures around here somewhere. 'Course, like I said, all the meats. Now, the leftover meat here that I don't sell, that'll go for the Bread for Life.

[01:18:44]

PD: All right. And I think I only have one or two questions left. I wanted to ask, are there any organizations you're a part of, whether they're farming organizations or . . . ?

[01:18:55]

WH: No. I used to be. Now I have won the Clean Water Award. I've gotten to the age now, I used to be on the board for Southern States, used to be on the Board of Director for Southern States for probably twenty-five years. And until they– you don't know what happened with them, do you?

[01:19:20]

PD: No?

[01:19:23]

WH: All right. [Laughter] About five, six years ago, they said they were goin' close, they were going to do away with the fertilizers and stuff at Gloucester. We were at a meetin', and a private

farm meeting, and they were there. They were telling us what we were going to do. What you, the farmers, are going to do. And you're going to be getting your stuff from King William from now on. This, that and the other, and they'd go on and on about that. Presently, I had enough. I said, "Let me tell you something." They said, "What's that, Mr. Harwood?" I said, "I decide who I write my checks to." Ray Ralee spoke up, "Amen, William. Me, too." And Desmond Orange, he used to be manager there, he quit. Ten of us hired him. He takes—we got our own little organization now. We don't deal with no independent company at all. He was a manager here, knew all the ins and outs, he handled all our seed, our fertilizer, our billing, and we pay him a set price for a salary. Each one of us pays him so much, and ten of us. He takes care of nobody but us.

[01:20:57]

PD: Wow. Is that in Gloucester?

[01:20:58]

WH: Yes, sir.

[01:21:00]

PD: Wow, that's great.

[01:21:03]

WH: And Southern States, I don't know how many million they lost, 'cause Robert and I were buyin' about four hundred thousand a year.

[01:21:11]

PD: So, what, does he have his own operation now?

[01:21:14]

WH: Him?

[01:21:16]

PD: Um-hm.

[01:21:16]

WH: He buys from whoever for us that he can get the best price.

[01:21:21]

PD: Wow.

[01:21:22]

WH: He'll buy them at Southern States if they got the best price, but they've never had it.

[01:21:28]

PD: So, it sounds like that's been a way for you and the other farmers to stay independent.

[01:21:31]

WH: We are more independent. And we're all independent. I don't have to– because you say I'm going to, no, you don't tell me I got to do something. I may be old, but that's the way I am.

[01:21:47]

PD: No, that's so interesting. And is there any other community involvement that you're a part of?

[01:21:56]

WH: Not really, not anymore. I used to be involved in so many things. But since my wife been in the nursing home for the last eight years, I spend most of my spare time with her. I'm out there two hours every night. Fact is, I was quittin' early and goin' out there, but I told her, I'm goin' to have to stay and work now till I get caught up again. She's been in a nursin' home eight years now. She can't stand up. In diapers. Mind fine. Just like mine and yours right now. It's terrible.

[01:22:36]

PD: Well, it's nice to know there's a good facility, at least.

[01:22:38]

WH: Huh?

[01:22:38]

PD: It's nice to know there’s a good facility, at least.

[01:22:41]

WH: Yes. See, I couldn't– now, I got long-term care on me, but I couldn't get it on her because of her health.

[01:22:50]

PD: I guess my last question is, how do you feel about farming? How would you describe farming for–?

[01:22:59]

WH: It's a way of life. It's not a job. It's a way of life. I love it. You know, I don't feel like it's work. 'Course, I've got timber land, farm land, timber land. I don't owe nobody a penny but the good Lord. [Laughter]

[01:23:25]

PD: That's great. Well, Mr. Harwood, thanks so much for talking with me today. It's been a pleasure.

[01:23:27]

WH: Yes, you're welcome. Don't squeeze my hand. No, no, I mean, I don't want to break yours.

[01:23:38]

PD: [Laughter] Yeah, you've got, I'm sure.

[01:23:42]

WH: When I had the hip replaced, doctor come in there and told me– I'll tell you what, see those muscles right there? You feel that right there at my age. Put your hand right that for my age.

[01:23:53]

PD: Wow.

[01:23:54]

WH: That came from milkin' cows when I was small. I used to have to milk cattle by hand. You work those muscles every time you . . .

[01:24:06]

PD: That's incredible.

[01:24:07]

WH: Another thing I used to do, too, I'll never forget when they had kittens out there. You take milk, hold up a line, and there's kittens' up with their mouth right up there and spray all, I forgot to tell you about all that. [Laughter] Spray all the kittens over there, tryin' to drink it. Spray their faces with it. [Laughter] I hadn't told you that.

[01:24:25]

PD: No, that's pretty good.

[01:24:26]

WH: I just thought about that.

[01:24:26]

PD: That's a good story. All right, well, the last thing I have to do, I have to, for thirty seconds, we have to keep quiet so we can record some of the room noise. Is that all right?

[01:24:38]

WH: Yeah.

[01:24:38]

PD: I'll let you know, I have a timer here, I'll let you know when we're done. [Silent for recording] All right, and we're done.

[*END OF INTERVIEW*]