



**Charles and Mary Woerner
St. Therese Catholic Church
Gloucester Courthouse, Virginia**

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Interviewer: Jessica Taylor
Transcription: Diana Dombrowski
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[*START INTERVIEW*]

Jessica Taylor: This is Jessica Taylor. It's May 20, 2018, and we're in Gloucester Courthouse, Virginia, and I'm here with Mr. and Mrs. Woerner. Sir, can you please state your full name?

[00:00:13]

Charles Woerner: Charles Vernon Woerner.

[00:00:17]

JT: Okay. And when and where were you born?

[00:00:18]

CW: I was born in Denton, Maryland on the Eastern Shore in 1937. I grew up most of my years, early years through the fifth grade, in Newport News, and then moved to the Eastern Shore of Virginia and graduated from high school on the Eastern Shore of Virginia. From there, I went away to Virginia Tech, got a degree in mechanical engineering in 1960, and got a master's degree from George Washington University in 1970.

[00:00:50]

JT: Ma'am, can you please state your full name?

[00:00:53]

Mary Alice Woerner: Mary Alice Revere Woerner.

[00:00:56]

JT: Can you spell Revere?

[00:00:56]

MW: R-e-v-e-r-e, like Paul Revere.

[00:01:01]

JT: Okay, just making sure.

[00:01:01]

CW: Her father's name.

[00:01:02]

JT: Oh. And when and where were you born?

[00:01:06]

MW: I was born in 1936 in Newport News.

[00:01:10]

JT: Okay. And where did you grow up?

[00:01:15.09]

MW: I grew up in Hampton, but I went to— graduated from Newport News High School, and then I went on to Westhampton College, which is part of the University of Richmond in Richmond, Virginia. And I got a degree in math in 1958, and then I went on to work at NASA for my career.

[00:01:39]

JT: Wow. What did you do there?

[00:01:39]

MW: I was a mathematician, and I was one of those—I don't know if you've recently seen the book *Hidden Figures*, I was classified as one of those computers. These ladies that were written in the book were older than I am, but I went through a lot of the same things they went through.

[00:02:01]

JT: Wow. Oh, my gosh. When and where did you all meet?

[00:02:07]

MW: At work.

[00:02:07]

CW: At work. Um-hm, yeah.

[00:02:09]

MW: He also was an engineer at NASA.

[00:02:11.27]

CW: Yeah, yeah. I was an engineer at NASA. You don't know anything about me, but in my work, I was selected by NASA to go to Alpbach, Austria, to write the first requirements for the United States' first climate research satellite instrument. A week later, I gave a paper in Innsbruck, Austria, on how to measure the earth's global climate, and finally, I gave a talk to the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C. to sell the program and get their support. We flew the first experiment in 1984 on the shuttle *Challenger*, which was the last flight, right before it exploded. To map climate, not like weather, you can look around the equator and watch our weather across the United States, but for climate, you have to cover the whole globe. So, we launched two other sites out of Vandenberg Air Base in California, and they travelled north-south and they covered the entire Earth, including the globe. One out of Canaveral covers around the equator. And that's still an ongoing program since 1984, which makes it thirty-two years they've been making measurements related to climate research.

[00:03:29]

JT: And why did you think that was important at the time?

[00:03:31]

CW: Well, I'm concerned, being from this area and the low water levels and too many places building too close to the water, which is going to get 'em, eventually. So, I just liked engineering

and science. Both of us liked our work so much that we always wanted to work. If we were sick, we wanted to go to work. We never stayed home. [Laughter]

[00:03:58]

JT: How did—oh, go ahead.

[00:03:59]

MW: We both ended up—at the end of our careers, I had thirty-seven years and he had thirty-eight and a half, and we both ended up with sick leave, which they don't pay you for, but I had enough that they credited me with nine more months of service. And you had a year?

[00:04:19]

CW: Um-hm, yeah. And so, at the end of that flight on the climate satellite, after those launches, I received NASA's Outstanding Leadership medal. And so, I was proud of that.

[00:04:37]

JT: Wow. I had no idea that this interview was going to go this direction, this is amazing. So, in your work with measuring climate, how have you seen peoples' attitudes towards that kind of research, and space research in general, change over time?

[00:04:57]

CW: Well, most people are uninformed, and a lot of 'em don't believe it, particularly since we have a new president. But there's no one single piece of evidence that says that it's not true. I

mean, they have so many different ways that they can prove that the climate is changing and it's warming. It's just not one piece. And there's been a special recently on TV by NOVA showing you the research they've done to prove that global climate is changing and it's warming, and that it's all been since the Industrial Revolution and man, and therefore it's carbon dioxide-related. I think it's irrefutable. But there's a lot of people, don't want to hear it.

[00:05:43]

JT: Okay. Do you have anything to add to that, ma'am? Oh, okay. So, with your research, you'd said before we turned the recorder on that you always wanted to give back. That's kind of your thing. How do you feel that this research gives back?

[00:06:03]

CW: I think, when there's so much that comes out of the research, I mean, NASA's well publicized all the benefits of their technical development they've been using everywhere. For once, they're making the world aware of that it's a changing environment and we need to be concerned about the environment as well as the climate. I think, you know, the work effort in those areas that we've both worked in have kind of supported that and made us feel good about the kind of work we've done in the past.

[00:06:40]

MW: Mm-hm. He was on the hardware side of the missions, and I was on the software side, reducing the data into engineering units so that scientists could work with the data.

[00:06:55]

CW: So, it's been something we've been proud of, not only our work, but just as proud of the side of giving back to society by doing a lot of volunteer work, which I've been doing since I was in my twenties. And I'm eighty now and all, and all. It's something we've always both felt strongly about.

[00:07:16]

JT: Before we move on to the volunteer work, I want to ask about, sometimes we think about religion and science as, like, mutually exclusive, and I wanted to see if you felt that your work in science and math is part of your ministry.

[00:07:33]

CW: Well, I've always thought that . . . we're not really sure how the Earth was created. We believe, Christians, that it was created by God. How it was exactly done could have been the Big Bang Theory. We watched a video, which we currently have loaned out, on a speaker at Houston, Texas, talking about the world and the universe. And he starts out with a view of the Milky Way, and how huge it is, and down in this little right-hand corner is this little, teeny dot, and that's our Earth, and us. And he says, "You people have completely underestimated how big God really is. I mean, you're aware of our galaxy and this little dot that we are down here, but there's another thousand galaxies out there, and it goes on and on and on." And he says, "There's just no end to this." And he shows all these pictures that have been generated by the Hubble Telescope, from space, where you can see so much further, and he would cover all these beautiful galaxies and make it seem like it's bigger and bigger and bigger and you've completely

underestimated how big this God is, with this little dot, which is us in this one little, teeny corner of this one little galaxy that is only one part of jillions of galaxies. And he says, "Now, I'm not trying to make you feel small." He says, "You are small." [Laughter] And then, he ends up, his presentation, he says, "I'm going to carry you out to the furthest number of light years the Hubble Telescope has looked." And before he does that, he shows an image of a wooden cross with Christ on it. And he says, "Now I'm going to carry you out to this." And he shows this shot, the furthest they've penetrated into outer space, and there's a galaxy there, and it's got a white, clear hole in the middle of this galaxy. And in the middle of this white hole is this cross. And it really, you know, almost brought tears to my eyes when I saw that, you know. So, it's an outstanding presentation by NOVA on PBS.

[00:10:08]

JT: Wow. What about you, ma'am? Have you found any, like, other kind of fulfillment from the work that you do?

[00:10:19]

MW: I'm not as good at thinking of things as he is, so . . .

[00:10:27]

CW: Well, I think most of her work, as she said, is converting all the scientific data into engineering units for scientists, and so her pleasure is that she troubleshoots scientists' programs when they run into problems. She debugs them, she helps them, and so she's even been recognized as someone who has worked in the scientific area of support. One time, NASA

Headquarters asked her to come up for an interview, and they wanted to know, if she had to do it over again, would she be a mathematician or would she be a computer scientist?

[00:11:04]

MW: Because I took all my computer science courses after I went to work at NASA, because they weren't offered. And my answer to this person from NASA Headquarters was, I would still major in math, but in today's world, I would minor in computer science. But having a degree in math enabled me to analyze the data.

[00:11:27]

CW: Because, if you look at the data and all you have is computer science and not math, all you got is a bunch of numbers. You don't have an idea of, well, are they right or are they relative or what are they? But you have a feel. You would not have that if you didn't have a degree in mathematics.

[00:11]

JT: Do you remember the time when you met each other? Like the specific . . . ?

[00:11:55]

CW: We probably met each other in 1960, [19]58, even. Yeah.

[00:12:00]

MW: Well, no . . .

[00:12:00]

CW: NASA, when you were working—

[00:12:01]

MW: You were in one building, and I was in another. [Laughter]

[00:12:03]

CW: Yeah. We were always in different buildings, but I rotated around the different buildings as part of my engineering studies at Virginia Tech. I did it when I worked at NASA. I worked, pretty much, at NASA, three months at Tech, back and forth, till I finished my degree in five years.

[00:12:23]

MW: It's called the co-op plan.

[00:12:23]

CW: Co-optimative Engineering Plan. And there, I worked in seven or eight buildings at NASA, so I ran into her on some of the assignments. Then, finally, when I went there permanently in 1960 after graduation, I pretty much got to choose where I wanted to go. So, they told me they were going to send me over to an outfit that did space research. I'd never worked in that group, but I went over and I said, "If I don't like it, can I transfer in two weeks?" They said, "Yeah. We'll move you somewhere else." I was over there one day and I called them up and said, "I'll take it."

And so, I've been on the space side, even though at NASA Langley in Hampton, Virginia, probably 65, 70 percent of the work they do is aircraft research, only about 25, 30 percent is space research.

[00:13:15]

MW: But I went to work in the summer of 1957, between my junior and senior years in college. I was assigned to . . . space, it was called Pilotless Aircraft Research Division. I was assigned to that, and at the end of the summer, they were crying for mathematicians. And because most of the state schools in Virginia didn't offer enough math for a woman to come to work as a mathematician. And so, if I would sign a paper saying I would come back after my graduation the following June, then they would put me on nine months of leave without pay, which went to my time in service. So, I got nine months for free just for signing that paper.

[00:14:10]

JT: Wow. What was it like for you to come to work to NASA, especially at first?

[00:14:17]

MW: I loved it. I really did. I loved every second. And I had a supervisor that was just waiting till retirement. I was in a computing group, like the *Hidden Figures*, and she didn't want to go take any of the classes. She sent *me* to all of the classes to learn to program and to learn Fortran, and so it was to my advantage. And she even put me in for a raise which was above what she was, which was great, but she sent me to all the classes.

[00:14:57]

JT: Why was that great for you?

[00:15:00]

MW: Well, that I could climb the ladder. That she thought enough of me, that I was doing well, that I could climb the ladder.

[00:15:07]

JT: So, was it—it kind of like a group of women, like the computers—?

[00:15:11]

MW: When I went to work, it was a group in sort of what they like to show in the *Hidden Figures* movie, where they had calculators crunching at numbers, and then eventually, I got beyond that where I took the computer classes.

[00:15:32]

JT: Wow, wow. What was the environment like where it's kind of like a group of women kind of working together?

[00:15:39]

MW: Well, I eventually became the supervisor when she, this lady, retired. And I was told by other women that I was the only woman that they knew they could work for. That was a compliment.

[00:15:57]

JT: Wow. That's amazing.

[00:16:00]

CW: That's why I work for her. [Laughter]

[00:16:04]

JT: Do you all remember your first date, where you went . . . ?

[00:16:09]

MW: [Laughter]

[00:16:10]

CW: [Laughter] Yeah. We were talking about it the other night. I lived over in Williamsburg and she, of course, lived over here. I drove over and met her. She was going to take me to a seafood restaurant that's down on the water up north of here, in a little town called Weems, and it must have been a good forty-minute drive up there. She knew the way, took all the backroads, and we got ready to leave that restaurant, I said, "I'm completely at your mercy. I don't know how in the world we got here. How are we getting home?" [Laughter] And that was back in –

[00:16:50]

MW: And then we left the restaurant and went to another place that I knew about, and we went dancing. They had dancing in, like, a gazebo—

[00:17:02]

CW: Yeah, sitting outside on the docks of the yacht club.

[00:17:02]

MW: And we went dancing.

[00:17:05]

JT: Where was that at, the dancing?

[00:17:07]

MW: It was—

[00:17:07]

CW: Tides Inn. You've heard of Tides Inn?

[00:17:11]

JT: What was that like? I've never heard of anyone that's actually gone to Tides Inn.

[00:17:14]

MW: Oh, it's wonderful.

[00:17:16]

CW: Yeah, they had two locations. They have Tides Inn on the, I guess, the south side, and then they have what they call Tides Lodge on the north side, separated by the creek, river there. And they run a little shuttle back and forth. We always preferred to stay in the lodge. It was not only cheaper, it was more laid-back, where the hotel was a little more formal. So, we always went on that side, and they had a gazebo there with dancing, and a gazebo there that had a restaurant inside. But she took me to this other restaurant. But we came by there for after-dinner drinks and dancing. It was a beautiful spot, you know.

[00:18:04]

JT: What year was this?

[00:18:06]

CW: That was late [19]77.

[00:18:08]

JT: Okay. So, was the music—it wasn't disco, was it?

[00:18:13]

CW: Yeah, it was [19]50s, [19]60s music, um-hm. Yeah.

[00:18:16]

JT: Okay. Just trying to paint the whole picture. So, how early on did you start volunteering together?

[00:18:30]

MW: Well, we became members of—we got married in [19]78, and we were invited to join a yacht club which is on the Ware River, which is where we live. And we immediately became, well, shortly after, I would say [19]82 or maybe [19]81, I don't know, we became the social chairs. And so, we would have to come up with ideas for—we'd have an event once a month, and we'd each have to come up with ideas and get people to help us. But we would do all the planning. And then he became commodore.

[00:19:14]

JT: What is commodore?

[00:19:15]

MW: The commodore is—

[00:19:16]

CW: Similar to the president, yeah.

[00:19:19]

JT: Okay.

[00:19:20]

CW: He's the head of the yacht club, and all. I know, at the yacht club where I've talked about my New Orleans food, which is supposedly the best north of New Orleans, my corned beef and cabbage I cook down there people say is to die for. And we did an Oktoberfest. Of course, I'm from German background, and we did outstanding food for the Oktoberfest that we had down there. We would cook it all. And we had a couple helpers in the kitchen, but we cooked it all.

[00:19:54]

MW: But he is so organized that people love working with us, because they say all they have to do is show up and we tell 'em what we want done. [Laughter]

[00:20:07]

CW: Yeah. I'm particular, even my volunteers. They didn't cook right, I'd tell 'em. I'd say, "I want it done this way, this way." [Laughter] And they appreciate that. They want to know where they stand.

[00:20:20]

JT: You said you taught yourself how to cook. How did that happen?

[00:20:22]

CW: Well, particularly with all my travel with NASA, I've been all over the place. Of course, you're eating out all the time, and I'm trying different foods. I'll go to a restaurant and I'll like something and I'll say, "I can cook that." And I'll go home and, if I don't get it right the first time,

I'll get it right the second time, and she'll say I improve on all the recipes simply because I have a heavy hand at seasoning, which is true. [Laughter] So, it's a teaching process. You eat good food and you love cooking, and then you'll do well in your food preparation. If you don't like food and you don't like cooking, it's not going to taste very good. [Laughter]

[00:21:07]

MW: And also, tell them about your mother dying when you were young.

[00:21:10]

CW: Oh, yeah. Well, it didn't have a lot to do with it, but my mother did die when I was nine years old. My father was out working, and I had a sister who was ten and one that was not even a year old. And my sister hated cooking. She said that she'd do the dishes in the evening if I'd do the cooking. And so, I started prepping meals when I was nine years old.

[00:21:36]

JT: What did you cook when you were at home with your sister?

[00:21:37]

CW: Oh, I did liver and onions and fried chicken . . .

[00:21:42]

MW: Spaghetti and meatballs.

[00:21:42]

CW: Spaghetti and meatballs, you know, stuff like that. I'd get suggestions from my father, obviously.

[00:21:52]

JT: Did you go to the store to get the ingredients as well?

[00:21:54]

CW: No, my father always took care of making sure there was stuff in the house.

[00:21:58]

JT: Oh, okay.

[00:22:00]

CW: So, now that I've gotten older and I'm doing all this other cooking, yeah, no matter what we're doing, I make a menu list and I go to the store and I buy everything. Sometime it takes ten trips because I'm particular about what I get when and all. I look for things on sale. So, a typical expense list for anything we do will probably have at least ten or more visits to different places to get the food.

[00:22:25]

MW: And he told me when we got married that the children were ten, fifteen, and eighteen, and he said, "I know what they'll eat and what they won't eat. And so, I will prepare the meals,

because I don't want you to go through the trouble of fixing something and they go, yuck."

[Laughter] So, he prepared. But he had one son who was fifteen, and I have a specialty, my crab cakes, that everybody loves. And he said, "Okay, I'll try 'em. But I'll put ketchup on 'em." Well, it wasn't long before that child loved the crab cakes, and he didn't put any ketchup on 'em.

[Laughter]

[00:23:11]

JT: What did you prepare at home for the kids?

[00:23:12]

CW: Ah, you mean now?

[00:23:15]

JT: Oh, well—

[00:23:17]

MW: Way back.

[00:23:17]

CW: Well, our whole life, we don't dump anything out of the can. We don't take anything out of the freezer units in stores. We buy everything fresh, including meats, vegetables. So, we would get home from work, kids would stay, "We're starved. What are we going to eat?" And, of

course, they'd have to wait until it could be prepared, because it was going to be cooked from scratch and all. You name it.

[00:23:44]

MW: It was just the two boys, because we got married in June and his daughter graduated from high school in June, so she went off to college. But she was with us at all breaks.

[00:23:57]

CW: Mm. So, we could cook—you name it, we'd cook it. We had a lot of variety. A lot of seafood, a lot of Italian dishes. So, we had a lot of different variety.

[00:24:10]

JT: Did you teach the kids how to cook?

[00:24:14]

MW: The daughter does not like to cook.

[00:24:14]

CW: Yeah, my daughter hates cooking. [Laughter] My son, my middle son, he does the cooking in their family, so our traditions now are, since we've gotten older, we've begun to offload things. We do Christmas, the kids all come down to our house and the grandkids and we do Christmas dinner. My son-in-law, he likes to cook, which is good because my daughter doesn't like to cook. So, he cooks the Thanksgiving dinner, and the whole family, everybody goes there. Then my

middle son, he does Easter, so we go to his house for Easter. We may get a traditional Easter luncheon, or we may not. Last time, we had barbecue, because he just moved down to North Carolina, so for Easter we had barbecue for our Easter meal. [Laughter]

[00:25:13]

JT: What's a traditional Easter luncheon in your family?

[00:25:14]

CW: Used to be, instead of turkey—we've never done turkey—I've always done two ovens, stuffed with roasters, eight pounds, instead. Turkey meat's too tough, dry, so I'd rather cook two ovens stuffed with roasters, and that's what we would have, and dressing and the usual mashed potatoes, candied yams, which is her specialty, and we'd always have to have crab cakes and we'd do the same things at Christmas, except we asked the kids if they'd rather have steaks or prime rib for Christmas and they all voted for prime rib. So, Christmas, we have a prime rib, her crab cakes, and the accompaniments and all. Like I said, my oldest son, we don't know. Sometimes it might be lasagna at Easter. [Laughter] It might be, you name it. [Laughter]

[00:26]

MW: And the youngest one is a boy, also. He doesn't cook. Very little, I should say.

[00:26:27]

JT: [Laughter] Can you tell us a little bit about your crab cakes? Your crab cakes, can you tell us a little bit?

[00:26:32]

MW: Oh, the recipe was from my aunt, my daddy's sister. And the first time I made 'em, I made 'em for friends, and they said, "These are the best crab cakes I've ever had." And we have continuously had that response, and his son even used to make 'em at Christmastime for his crew in the shipyard, in Newport News Shipyard, but we've learned – we've done a few things different that we've learned over the years that has enhanced 'em even more.

[00:27:16]

CW: Yeah. Again, from eating out, you learn things. Mrs. Crockett, who has a place over on Tangier Island – which they worry about the water overriding here eventually because of the rising seas – we found out that we have half a cup of mayonnaise, a little, two tablespoons of mustard, a teaspoon of Worcestershire, pound of crab meat, a stick of butter, and just two and a half slices of bread. And the thing we learned from Mrs. Crockett was, you ought to take all the wet ingredients, put 'em together—

[00:28:00]

MW: Oh, egg.

[00:28:01]

CW: The egg, the mayonnaise, all that stuff and whip it up—

[00:28:07]

MW: Whisk.

[00:28:07]

CW: And now, throw in the filler, the bread. Then throw in the crab meat, and you don't tear the crab meat all apart mixing it up, now, because you've already got all the wet ingredients in it, and so now you'll have a crab cake that's got lumps of crab meat in it instead of being a mush. The other thing that's unique about hers is, you don't cook it in a pan with any oil. In fact, the preferable way to cook it's on a grill, and she puts a pound of butter—

[00:28:39]

MW: No, a stick.

[00:28:39]

CW: I mean, not a pound, I'm sorry. A stick of butter in with the crab meat and all the ingredients and you mix 'em all up and you put 'em on a grill. And, as they cook, the butter comes out and actually greases the grill and is cooked out of them, and the flavor seems to be so much better that way, rather than frying 'em in a grease or something.

[00:29:06]

JT: Wow. And where was your aunt from?

[00:29:07]

MW: Gloucester.

[00:29:07]

JT: She was from Gloucester. Where did she learn it from, do you remember?

[00:29]

MW: Um . . . no. But Aunt **Eva** loved to cook, and her cakes were known, I mean, all over. And people would call her and ask her to bake cakes, and they would buy 'em, you know. It would go to a charity, it always went to her church. And so, that's where I learned. And I have a recipe from her, too. I don't know where she got it, but it's called cornflake cookies, and he loves 'em.

[Laughter]

[00:29]

CW: Mm-hm.

[00:29:48]

JT: What is that?

[00:29:49]

MW: It's, like, it's made with cornflakes and coconut, and other usual ingredients. When I was in college, she would make a cake and send it to me at college. And man, the girls on my hall knew.

[Laughter] When I would receive one of those cakes that they knew they were gonna get a treat.

[00:30:17]

CW: So, a lot of the recipes for desserts come from her side. She also has a killer recipe for an apple dapple cake, which is basically an apple cake, and she uses black walnuts in it, which is the secret to the really strong flavor.

[00:30:33]

MW: Rich.

[00:30:33]

CW: And we just recently did a hundred and twenty desserts in one day for the King's Daughters Spring Luncheon that we just had. We have a recipe for chocolate pie, where I can make ten chocolate pies in less than two hours, and they turn out very silky. In fact, we got comments about how silky they were and how smooth the ingredients were in it. And then it took a little bit longer to make the two apple dapple cakes, which we got forty dessert cuts out of those. So, that's where our hundred and twenty desserts came from.

[00:31:17]

JT: What's the secret to the chocolate pies? What's the ingredient list?

[00:31:21]

CW: So, it's only got four ingredients: it's got a pie shell which is a graham cracker crumb. You take – she won't let me use Nestlé's or anything—she makes me use Ghirardelli.

[00:31:32]

MW: No—

[00:31:34]

CW: Yeah, the Ghirardelli.

[00:31:34]

MW: It is Ghirardelli.

[00:31:36]

CW: Yeah, semi-sweet chocolate bits. And so you got twelve ounces of Ghirardelli chocolate bits, twelve ounces of whipped cream. You put it in a microwave for three minutes, and then you stir it. We take two ounces of Kahlua and add to it, and stir, pour it into the shell, and you're done. So, in five minutes, you can turn out one pie. So, if you've got ten to make, you know, theoretically in fifty minutes you could do 'em, but we don't rush. It'll be less than two hours, we can make ten chocolate pies. And they're very consistent. You've got the rich chocolate, you got whipped cream, and you got Kahlua. There's only three ingredients in the pie.

[00:32:17]

MW: Everybody loves 'em.

[00:32:18]

CW: Everybody loves 'em. They go like hot cakes. And the apple dapple cake is also one of their favorites, so we do that a lot, too.

[00:32:27]

JT: And you said it's apple . . . ?

[00:32:27]

CW: Dapple.

[00:32:28]

JT: Dapple, okay. Okay.

[00:32:31]

CW: Yeah. Just named that way. [Laughter]

[00:32:35]

MW: And we used to, we have a Governor's Cup sailing race every year at our yacht club, and so, when we were social chairs for the Governor's Cup, I have a recipe for oatmeal pancakes.

And we would have people call from Richmond, "Are you going to have the oatmeal pancakes?"

[Laughter] So, they were very popular.

[00:33:03]

JT: And what's in those?

[00:33:06]

MW: You use buttermilk and oatmeal and marinate it overnight, and then you add all of the dry ingredients and the eggs.

[00:33:17]

JT: Um-hm. So, when you cook for this many people, how does it change how you use the appliances and, like, the actual—I don't know if you use Correlle ware, or what you do with, like, pots and pans?

[00:33:31]

CW: Well, for instance, at the yacht club, if you're doing it for a very large group, let's say a hundred and fifty to two hundred people, you can't cook everything on the top of the stove, you can't cook everything in the oven. Some things you can do ahead of time, so you do a mix of where you have salads that are independent of that. Some of the things you cook on the stove in pots, and some of the stuff you cook in ovens. And so, you have to have a mix of the way you're going to prepare things to turn out that much food. The yacht club has a stove; it's got ten burners on it, and it'll take four commercial-size trays in the ovens. So, we'll generally do a mix. One exception is the St. Patrick's Day—the corned beef and cabbage we do. I cook everything on top of the stove, so I'm using all ten burners. I'm reaching across, I get burned every time. [Laughter] Reaching across the burners, moving pots and pans because we're doing the corned beef and cabbage and everything. We do carrots with brown sugar sauce on 'em and we're doing the mashed potatoes – no, boiled potatoes. I'm sorry, boiled potatoes with parsley and butter to go with the corned beef and cabbage. So, we have the whole stove humming but not the ovens. So, that's the one meal where we couldn't do everything with a good mix.

[00:34:55]

JT: Can you put us through a day of when you're cooking for, like, a hundred, a hundred and fifty people?

[00:35:00]

MW: It takes days to shop for everything. And he is totally wonderful. He makes lists, but we have had to go out, like, for the Governor's Cup. We would sell so many pancakes that after we would get home from doing the dinner that night, he'd have to go to Walmart and get more ingredients, 'cause we'd have to make up more pancake batter for the next day.

[00:35:30]

JT: Wow.

[00:35:33]

MW: So, it's days of shopping.

[00:35:38]

CW: Yeah.

[00:35:38]

MW: And then, days afterwards are compiling all the bills.

[00:35:43]

CW: And the bills for the yacht club, of course, we get reimbursed for. When we do it for charity, we list all the bills and I save 'em for income tax, I put 'em on my income tax filing as a donation. But a typical day is, we try to have any salads done before that day and have those ready. So, the only thing we're going to do that day are hot foods. We'll try to have the desserts all done before that day. So now, we've got salads, we've got desserts, so whatever hot meals we're going to cook, we just time out which ones, what time you want to serve 'em, how long it's going to take 'em, and when to start each one of 'em. And that's why I describe her as the operating room manager because she says, "Hey, have you started this?" Or, "Hey, don't forget to do this," and all, to make sure my timing's still on. And so, you just time 'em all to come out at one time. So that your planning is when you start all of 'em to get 'em to come out all together, so the meal all comes out at one time.

[00:36:43]

MW: We started a Valentine's brunch at our yacht club. And I was sitting in a doctor's office one day and I saw this recipe for crème brûlée French toast. And so, I didn't want to rip the page out of the book. I should have, people do it all the time. [Laughter] But anyway, I sat and copied it down, and then we added to it. Well, it became every year at the Valentine brunch, we would have a hundred and twenty-five people, that people wouldn't eat dessert; they would come back and get a second piece of the crème brûlée French toast. And it got to the point, we had to keep one in the kitchen for the kitchen crew, or else we didn't get any. [Laughter]

[00:37:30]

CW: So, then we'd have, typically, at that meal, we'd have a blend of breakfast stuff and we would have a Mexican egg casserole with eggs and all the trimmings. We would do her crème brûlée French toast and she got rave reviews for that. Then, the desserts we've had, we got one dessert for tiramisu from a lady in Italy, and I've made that many, many times. Friends love it; I'll call 'em up and say, "We have tiramisu in the house," they'll come over to get a couple slices. But we'll do those a lot for when we're doing the charity event. We have tasted tiramisu everywhere. If you give mine a ten, the closest anybody's gotten to it is maybe a seven, and I'm not sure that's happened over once. [Laughter] I've ended up cooking it twice for two restaurants, free for the staff.

[00:38:27]

MW: For the staff

[00:38:30]

CW: You know, because we were there a lot. And we'd carry it in to the staff and we'd make 'em tiramisu and blown the restaurant staff and the owners away and they'd want the recipe and all. So, when we cook something, a lot of our items are outstanding. Some of 'em are regular stuff. But every once in a while, we'll hit a winner, and her pancakes are one. The tiramisu is one. Her crème brûlée French toast is another. There's just so many of these that we'll finally get.

[00:39:01]

JT: How has what you serve to the big groups changed over time since you started doing it?

[00:39:08]

CW: I don't think it's changed a whole lot. We've gotten very diversified, but I don't think it's changed a whole lot, other than we get more tired now than we used to. [Laughter] Because we're older. We have to recognize that, you know.

[00:39:28]

MW: Yeah. And sometimes, people that take over from when we're trying to back down and retire, they're not . . . a lot of what we do is labor intensive and with love, called cooking with love. And they're not willing to do that. So, they've changed a lot of things.

[00:39:49]

JT: What does cooking with love mean to you?

[00:39:54]

MW: That's his, I'm going to let him answer.

[00:39:56]

CW.: It means that I love what I'm cooking and I love for people to taste it and if I don't think it's cooking with love, then it's not worthy to give to them, and that's why I guess people really like most of the dishes we do. It's kind of become, I guess, our thing. We, one time, started calling ourselves volunteer caterers, because we would—for volunteer organizations—we would fix things. But we wouldn't charge them, we would donate it. And so, we've pretty much got hundreds of recipes that are mostly mentally in my head, but also written down. But when we get

ready to do one, I've just gotta refresh myself and then get to it, because I don't do a lot from recipes. I like to really redo everything from scratch. And so, every meal won't taste exactly the same every time because, you know, it's a matter of tweaking this and that, whatever I feel like that day and whatever.

[00:41:05]

JT: So, the recipes are always evolving.

[00:41:07]

CW: Mm-hm.

[00:41:08]

JT: Okay.

[00:41:10]

CW: Yeah, and when, in addition to the pig roast, which really turned out to be a labor saver, before that, for Relay for Life, we did a sit-down dinner for twenty-eight people in our house, four courses, wine at every course. We cooked a whole meal on a five-burner stove which had about six different items, so I was switching things back and forth all evening. A friend of ours, Dr. Davis, said that I didn't miss a beat. And that exhausted us, it really did.

[00:41:46]

MW: That wore us out.

[00:41:46]

CW: And so, after that, we found out it was less effort and could reach more people by going to the pig roast. And so, that's when we then shifted over and started doing the pig roast. And everybody talks about my barbecue like they do our other food, and so it's again cooked with love. It's got to be done right. Or, you know, even like I told you, my volunteers help us in the kitchen. If it isn't right, I'll tell 'em, and they know. And they know, even if they're volunteers, they're going to get critiqued.

[00:42:22]

JT: When you do the pig roast, where do you get the meat from?

[00:42:26]

CW: Well, earlier, the very first time, interestingly, there's a farmer up the road here in Gloucester. We would send a team up at three o'clock in the morning, they would go to the farm, they would literally shoot the pig, dress it right there, and then they would bring it down to us at the yacht club. I would have two charcoal grills, which are the size of an oil drum, each one of 'em. Those big old drums, now, not the little round ones, and we'd put a side on each one. It would take about ten and a half hours, I guess, to cook two sides of a pig. You can do Boston butts in about five and a half hours. So, as we got older and more people, I finally said, "Hey, this is too much work cookin' this all day. We have to be down there lighting fires at four o'clock in the morning—"

[00:43:20]

MW: And we were still working.

[00:43:25]

CW: And we were still employed, so I finally told 'em, "I'm going to shift over, I'm going to use Boston butts, because I can do it in half the time and my time's valuable, too." Then, in more recent years, we've used Boston butts for the barbecue. And I get those, I go through Sam's Club and pre-order 'em ahead of time, and we'll cook—well, back when we had 375 to 425, we would be cooking three hundred pounds of pork for a hundred and fifty, a hundred and eighty people, we're talking about a hundred and fifty pounds. And I can do a hundred and fifty on one big oil drum, needed two for the three hundred pounds. So . . .

[00:44:16]

JT: What's in the oil—oh, sorry, go ahead.

[00:44:19]

CW: No, go ahead.

[00:44:19]

JT: I was just going to ask what's in the oil drums that you're burning in order to—is it applewood, or is it . . . ?

[00:44:28]

CW: No, we use charcoal.

[00:44:30]

JT: Okay.

[00:44:33]

CW: And some of 'em use gas and things, but I just think for barbecue, it's much better if you use charcoal. It'll take 'em, I say five and a half, it's generally five, five and a half, and it'll be done for the barbecue. They used to over-baste 'em before me. They'd turn 'em every thirty minutes, and you're losing your heat from your fire every time you open it up, for turnin' 'em over and bastin' 'em, so I went over and told 'em, one hour turning the meat, basting it is fine, so that's kind of averaged out to where we don't have to switch 'em so much.

[00:45:16]

JT: Who's the farmer—it's not Mr. Harmon, is it?

[00:45:21]

CW: No, what's the guy?

[00:45:23]

MW: I don't remember, because we weren't involved in doing that part. We were just at the yacht club getting the fires ready.

[00:45:32]

JT: Oh, okay.

[00:45:34]

CW: Yeah, I don't think you probably want it on your recorder, but we had one time when the guy's sitting on the pig and they've shot the pig, but it didn't kill him. So, they going to take another shot, and he's sitting on the pig, and the guy says, "No!" He was afraid of getting shot.

[00:45:53]

JT: Wow. [Laughter] So, first of all, where are we, and how did you get involved with the church and volunteering for the church, specifically?

[00:46:08]

CW: We're in St. Therese Church here. And I was always a Bible reader or what they call a lector, and I would make readings at the church services on Sunday. I used to have an English girl who would read with me, because there's always two readings you would make. And one day, she moved. I came home from church and I told her, I said, "It's put up or shut up time. You going to be my new partner?" So, then we started being the two that read together all the time and all.

[00:46:49.08]

MW: And I wasn't Catholic when we got married. But I was raised Presbyterian. But I felt like, for the children, that we should worship together. So, therefore, I converted to the Catholic faith at that time.

[00:47:09]

JT: Wow.

[00:47:11]

CW: Then from that, they gradually knew that—somehow or another we got involved in volunteering, cooking and things at the church, next thing we know, it was more and more and more.

[00:47:21]

MW: And he was on, one of the first times they ever established a parish council. And he became president of that. And then later, I became president of the parish council.

[00:47:36]

JT: Wow.

[00:47:38]

CW: Yeah. So, we're the only husband and wife team at this church that both the husband and wife have been president of the parish council. And when this church was expanded and doubled in size, I was on the parish council at that time, and became chairman of the building committee

and all. So, I don't know, we just gradually—if you do one cooking thing for an event, what do they do to volunteers? They always go back to the same people and overwork 'em. And that's, you know, what happened with us. They kept coming back, saying, "Hey, will you do this? Will you do that?" We're gluttons for punishment and enjoy it.

[00:48:13]

MW: The maid we had at the time said she was going to buy us a muzzle. [Laughter]

[00:48:19]

CW: 'Cause we couldn't say no. [Laughter]

[00:48:22]

JT: So, with the church here, do you remember any specific events or years that stuck out to you? Very memorable or the first time you tried something, anything like that?

[00:48:35]

MW: We had a pastor that came in 1987 and he got—we have three different masses here, and so we were, like, three different communities. And he got us together. I was chairman of parish community life at that time, and he got us together and he loved parties. And so that's when we started having the Mardi Gras, we had the indoor picnic, we had the barbecue, and we molded together as a parish. It really helped us.

[00:49:13]

CW: That's one of the problems of Catholic Church has, it has a mass on a Saturday afternoon, has at least two on Sunday, and so there are, like, three different communities who don't know each other because they always go to the same service. As a funny sideline to that, when we had the old church here, we were in church one day and we're sittin' at the back, and the usher came up to me and he said, "Excuse me, would you two be willing to carry up the gifts?" The money for the presentation to the priest. And we said, "Yeah, we'll do that." He says, "Are y'all visiting? Where y'all from?" And by that time, the music started. Anyway, we go all the way through mass. Father gets up, he says, "Okay, I'd now like to introduce you to the president of the parish council and the chairman of the building committee, and he's going to give you a short talk on where the program stands." Up I pop, go up to the front, give the talk, the ushers were completely embarrassed. [Laughter] They didn't even know. And that's an example of why you need things to come together within a church if you have different worship groups. And so, Father John then would get people to come to Mardi Gras and mix barbecue and the spring meal that all the parish would be together. So, that was good.

[00:50:37]

MW: He would walk in and he'd say to me, "Mary Alice, is everything ready?" And I'd say, "Yes." He'd say the blessing and usher the people in.

[00:50:47]

CW: And it'd been three months since he'd talked to us, so he was completely confident of us being ready, you know? He didn't have to follow up or anything. He just walked in the day of the event, "Is everything ready?" She'd say, "Yep." [Laughter]

[00:51:04]

JT: This is the second time Mardi Gras has come up, so I wanted to ask about—I know Mardi Gras exists outside of New Orleans, but how you got interested in New Orleans flavors, and how you put your own spin on it.

[00:51:18]

CW: Well, we'd been to New Orleans, and then when the idea of the Mardi Gras came up, we wanted to serve something traditional at the barbecue— I mean, at the Mardi Gras— that was Mardi Gras food. So, I looked at recipes and I looked at half a dozen and I never use anybody's recipe, as I told you. I then blended my own opinion of what I thought it ought to be, and I prepared a chicken andouille sausage gumbo with the other one being a seafood gumbo. And so, I'd have a seafood gumbo and a chicken andouille sausage gumbo with filé, which is a sassafras seasoning. Then we would augment that with some hors d'oeuvres that were Cajun blackened tuna, bite-size that they could eat with a toothpick, and . . . but the primary thing were two gumbos. And Cajun dirty rice. We didn't do the traditional Cajun dirty rice with the old liver and gizzards, things that really go in it. We decided to be more traditional and we would use sausage instead in the dirty rice.

[00:52:45]

MW: But we work well together in creating the ideas, and he's the chef, though. He's . . . like he said earlier, he's heavy-handed on the seasonings.

[00:52:59]

JT: Is that what appeals to you about New Orleans food, the seasonings?

[00:53:06]

CW: Yeah. The other thing we do is, every other year we have, in this parish, called Soup with Love. And what that is is, we invited the whole community at lunchtime to come in for free soup. You can make a donation of a couple of dollars, but they can have all the soup they want. There'll be at least twenty different soups here, by different parishioners. A lot of 'em will do cheese soups, potato soups, vegetable soups. So, realizing that, I always did seafood soups. I have a recipe for an oyster spinach bisque, which is a killer. I do a clam chowder, which is the traditional clear broth type, like Bull Island, which is in Poquoson. And I've done a seafood bisque. And I've also done New Orleans shrimp creole as a soup for that. Well, what I'm finding out is, I cut it in half for the spices that you have in the conventional, I've cut it down to a third. My last event, it was about a fourth, and still they talked about it being too spicy. So, we finally agreed that we're not gonna cook that one anymore. [Laughter] I mean . . .

[00:54:33]

MW: But we've been doing this so long that we used to make the soup, come by—

[00:54:39]

CW: At 11:30—

[00:54:40]

MW: No—

[00:54:40]

CW: Well, we come here before eleven to leave it, but I mean, they're open for soup from 11:30 to one.

[00:54:46]

MW: But when we were workin', we would come in that back door and drop off our soup that we had made the night before at six o'clock in the morning, and then go on to work.

[00:55:00]

CW: There'd be, like, twenty-four quarts.

[00:55:01]

MW: Took both of us to carry it.

[00:55:04]

CW: And all. And we'd get a call by noon from the church secretary, saying, "Your soup's gone already." [Laughter] So now, I'm . . . well, this coming year, the three soups I'm going to use are the—seafood gumbo I'm cutting out, so I'm going to do the three straight seafoods, more the traditional clam chowder, seafood bisque, and the oyster spinach bisque.

[00:55:35]

MW: Ah—

[00:55:35]

JT: Oh.

[00:55:35]

MW: We've learned from a friend of ours that has retired recently and she started working on Fridays with the Soup with Love, and she told us, she said, "I've already learned they always wanted to know what soup Charlie made." [Laughter]

[00:55:51]

JT: What was making it so spicy that people—

[00:55:53]

CW: Well, it has . . .

[00:55:57]

MW: Cayenne.

[00:55:59]

CW: Cayenne pepper is one. It's got cayenne pepper, white pepper, black pepper. It calls for three peppers. So, I've begun to cut down the cayenne pepper predominantly, because that's the most spicy, and it also calls for Tabasco. And so, I've cut down on the amount of Tabasco in it.

And we have, well, I guess we've visited Avery Island, and one time we got a whole bunch of little teeny bottles, little half-ounce size. And they gave us probably a couple dozen bottles. On the trip to China, when we go to a Chinese bar, I'd give the bartender a little bottle of that, man, they loved it, because they'd heard of it, but they hadn't seen that. So that got us a lot of mileage in bars.

[00:56:57]

JT: Wow.

[00:56:58]

CW: And all. So basically, those two ingredients, Tabasco and the cayenne pepper, you just have to cut down. But you've got to feel it, you know? You've got to taste it. [Laughter] Just drink a lot of beer with it.

[00:57:12]

JT: And where were you getting the seafood for the crab cakes and the soups and—

[00:57:18]

MW: Well, we used to have a local market that's gone out of business now, but would get fresh crab meat. He, the owner, would say he knew, and he would save it for us. But now, we get it at . . . there's a place here called Ware Neck Produce. And they have crab meat.

[00:57:42]

CW: Yeah. And then I've gotten a lot of stuff at Sam Rust Seafood, which is down in Hampton, and I would go down there to get things. I guess I'm sounding like an advertiser for Costco, but I like the Costco salmon. When I do any salmon that's Cajun blackened, because it's fresh, it's not only filleted, but it's also skinned, so it's 100 percent ready. And then again, it's another item that you dredge through butter, but you cook it in a dry cast iron skillet. You don't add any lard or oil, you just cook it right on the coating that you sprinkle it with after you've dredged it through butter, it protects it from getting overburned. And so, that's a product that I really like so much. Almost exclusively, I get whatever I'm going to do for the Cajun blackened salmon, I'll get from Costco. The other seafoods, generally, I'll go to Sam Rust and get 'em. And then I've gone, on occasion, to regular stores and got 'em.

[00:58:58]

JT: Before there was Costco and Walmart, and when you all first started, was the cost a lot more, or how would you make it so it was—?

[00:59:10]

CW: Probably about the same, because things were cheaper back then. As they've gradually got more expensive, then that's been offset by going to a place like Costco. So, it's been probably about the same cost over the history.

[00:59:22]

JT: Okay. I also wanted to ask about the Poquoson clam chowder you were talking about. You said Bull Island?

[00:59:28]

CW: Um-hm. It's called Bull Island because they say those people from there are full of bull.

[Laughter]

[00:59:33]

JT: Oh, really? [Laughter]

[00:59:36]

CW: There was a period of time, in the old days, when the Hampton, Newport News boys did not go down to Bull Island or Poquoson at night because it wasn't safe, because boys in Poquoson didn't like guys coming down there to date their girls. And so.

[00:59:53]

MW: Same thing's true with Guinea in Gloucester.

[00:59:55]

CW: You know. So, anyway, it's a clear broth. So, it'll have onions. Mine always has shredded carrots; a lot of people don't, but I'll have onions, shredded carrots, potatoes, celery, and clams. Yeah, so . . . a lot of them will have onions and celery and potatoes, but I always like the multicolored—and it tasted good. I think carrots add to the flavor. So, that's the way I've always done it. And she prefers the clear broth, too, rather than the Manhattan or the Cape Cod.

[01:00:42]

JT.: How do you put it all together? Is it in a giant pot for—

[01:00:47]

CW: Yeah, I start out with two twenty-four quart pots, one twenty quart pot, and one twelve quart. So, depending on what event we're doing, obviously the biggest size is needed for that, and then the middle size for other things, so . . .

[01:01:05]

MW: But a lot of times he starts out in the smaller and he has to go to bigger, because it grows.

[Laughter]

[01:01:10]

CW: She says I have to do that for anything. It all grows as I'm cooking. [Laughter]

[01:01:16]

JT: So, for the—I wanted to ask about the church and how you feel about the work that you do here. Is the cooking of the food for these huge numbers of people, is it a ministry for you?

[01:01:31]

MW: I would say so.

[01:01:31]

CW: Yeah, I would say so.

[01:01:33]

JT: Okay.

[01:01:34]

CW: I don't know. Maybe it's a calling. Whatever volunteer work we've done that we seem to end up doing something in the cooking area, and it's something we enjoy. Other people seem to enjoy it. So, it always seems to go in that direction, whatever we're doing.

[01:01:52]

MW: But we've both been on parish councils, so that tells you something, too. We're active in other areas of the church.

[01:02:00]

JT: Um-hm. And you find it meaningful?

[01:02:01]

MW: Oh, yes.

[01:02:03]

JT: Okay.

[01:02:04]

MW: But we had a priest one time, he had come up for this idea for something for the parish council to study, and he said he was going to lead it. Each person on the parish council had a booklet, and you were supposed to read the chapter first, and then you were going to discuss it. And after he did the first presentation, sometimes he could be very abrupt. He turned to me and he said, "You're leading it from now on." So, I said, "Okay." So, before the next parish council, I had him—we sat down together and we both read the chapter, and then we discussed it, and then I led the discussion. And so, I did okay.

[01:02:49]

CW: He was a big priest.

[01:02:51]

MW: Big.

[01:02:51]

CW: He was over six foot, two hundred fifty pounds. And some people called him a bear. But if you push back against him, very quickly you'll find out he's a teddy bear. He's all bluff and he would turn some people off because of that, but if you push back, he was really a nice guy, you know. And we would both push back. [Laughter]

[01:03:15]

MW: When he had the Christmas midnight mass, he one time had this beautiful reading, and I was asked to do it. It was not one of the normal, it was a reading from Pope Leo the Great. And he suddenly, one year, wasn't going to do it. I said, "Oh, Father John, it's so beautiful. I love doing it." And when we got to midnight mass, he was sitting out in the commons area. "You're going to do it. I've decided to do it." So, you know, you could approach him, but a lot of people didn't.

[01:03:54]

CW: Yeah. And he's like most priests, he doesn't want to offend anybody, so he doesn't compliment anybody. [Laughter] But one day, from the altar during mass, he looked at it—Mary Alice and I—and he said, "I don't usually compliment people," he said, "Charlie, that potato salad was the absolute best potato salad I've ever eaten in my life." [Laughter]

[01:04:22]

JT: Oh. I did want to close with the food bank, 'cause I understand that's more of a recent thing?

[01:04:27]

CW: Um-hm.

[01:04:27]

MW: Um-hm.

[01:04:28]

JT: So, what is the need like Gloucester, and how are you addressing it with what you do specifically?

[01:04:36]

CW: Well, we thought in the old days that we remembered one homeless person walking down the streets of Gloucester, and we really weren't aware of, you know, anybody else. Eventually, that evolved into where they wanted to start a food ministry here where they would have a fully-stocked pantry, almost like a regular grocery store. And before long, it was a hundred families a week coming here to pick up food. Well, then we had a young couple move down—I say young, maybe they had just retired—from New Jersey. They were travelling south, and they said that they were looking for a place to live, and when they got to Gloucester, they said, "This is it." Well, they had not done any volunteer work in their early life, so now they really wanted to get in the middle of it, so they took over the food pantry. Well, I told him he was out of his mind, because he was working. Here he is retired, sixty hours a week, sometime eighty hours a week, and this is all for nothing pay-wise, but only for the pleasure of knowing he's helping somebody. He built the pantry up to where it's four hundred families a week now. We had no idea there was that many people in Gloucester that needed help. And there's another one at Union Baptist down at the south end that does something similar.

[01:06:05]

MW: But I think it's like the world is changing and what we've heard on programs is, people used—families took care of each other. Where it's— there are more and more people homeless and on the streets than there used to be.

[01:06:24]

CW: So, anyway, we wanted to contribute in working with the food pantry, but we didn't want to staff and be in there, so we would work on things that would help 'em raise money for that.

When we came up with the idea of doing the pig roast for them, and we were generating about sixty-five hundred dollars every year. That was probably their biggest fundraiser they had. And so, we were contributing on that. Then we, of course, contributed regularly as members from this parish. So, that was the way that we knew we were helping other people, and we became good friends with a couple that was managing the food pantry, so we knew about the need and everything. So, we felt like, "Yeah, this is what we want to do," is food-wise. That's something we do, do well, that'll be our vocation to help the pantry, which then in turn helps people.

[01:07:24]

MW: And then we started something in our church called Small Christian Communities, and we started that in [19]93, I think it was.

[01:07:36]

CW: [19]95.

[01:07:37]

MW: Well, I went to the first meeting in [19]93, because our pastor looked at me, and he said, "I want you, Mary Alice, to go to this seminar in Hampton," at another Catholic church. And we were still working. And that was our time to be alone. So, I said, "Charlie, would you like to

go?" You know, with me? And he said, "Yes." So, we went. We thought we'd be together. Well, we had assigned tables to sit at, so we weren't at the same table. We didn't even see each other for lunch. But coming home from the seminar, we were just talking and talking about it, because we had breakout sessions and I went to some different ones than he went to. And we were just talking, telling what we had learned. And the couple that took over the food pantry said we were the couple they wanted to meet when they came to Gloucester, that they heard so much about us.

[01:08:43]

CW: Yeah, and so we had a door prize at one of the functions that it was for two couples for dinner at the Woerners' for a sit-down dinner, and they won it, and they didn't invite anybody. They said they wanted us to be their other two. So, we ended up eating with them at our house for the meal.

[01:09:09]

MW: Because they wanted to meet us.

[01:09:10]

CW: They wanted to meet us. And after we started these Small Christian Communities, of which we had, like, five or six, there were groups of ten or twelve people, and they meet outside of church. And they discuss church a little more in-depth than you can at a church service, but that wasn't the idea. The idea was for these ten to twelve people to mold together and care about each other, and when one's sick or one dies that you're there for each other, and that's the ultimate purpose of 'em. But still, we get together at a home for meal and prayer and discussion.

[01:09:48]

MW: We're going to one at five o'clock.

[01:09:52]

CW: Yeah. So those groups then became the backbone of all of our supporters who helped with the pig roast to support the pantry. A lot of them worked in the pantry, because one of the things we would tell them is, "Hey, this is not a social club. Number one, you've got to be active in your church. Number two, you've got to be active in the community." So, all of them do volunteer work somewhere in the community as well as in the church.

[01:10:24]

JT: Wow. Those are all my questions. I wanted to leave it off to see if you had anything you wanted to add or anything that we missed, or . . .

[01:10:32.21]

CW: No, can't think of anything.

[01:10:33]

MW: I don't think so.

[01:10:33]

JT: Okay. I know this is weird, but we have to wait for thirty seconds to shut it off to get some ambient noise. So, I'll just count it down, if that's okay.

[01:10:45]

CW: Oh, uh-huh. Um-hm.

[*END OF INTERVIEW*]