

CATHERINE VIA
Payne's Crab House – Urbanna, Virginia

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Interviewer: Sara Wood
Transcription: Shelley Chance, ProDocs
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Project: Women, Work & Food in Richmond, Virginia

00:00:00

Sara Wood: Okay Catherine I just have to introduce you on the tape and then we'll start talking.

00:00:04

Catherine Via: Okay.

00:00:05

SW: Sound okay? So my name is Sara Wood and I'm with the Southern Foodways Alliance and it's March 8, 2013. And I'm sitting here with Catherine Via and we're in Urbanna on Taylor Street. And so Catherine I'm wondering if you could introduce yourself and say hi to everyone and – and tell me what we're doing right now.

00:00:25

CV: Well we're – we're trying to find out the – the work that I do, which is very interesting and hopefully I can hang in there and – and get to tell you a lot of things.

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SW: And can you introduce yourself and tell us your name?

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CV: My name is Catherine – Catherine Via – V-i-a, and I live here in Urbanna in my home. My granddaughter lives with me. And I have a lot of relatives and – lives close around so we're all really close and I'm – I'm blessed for that. It's really good.

00:01:06

SW: And for the record Catherine could you state your birth date for the record?

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CV: Wait a minute now; see, this is where I lose it.

00:01:15

SW: That's okay. We'll just forget that.

00:01:21

CV: February – you're going to – if you say it I'm not – I mean I'm not going to get it all in.

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SW: That's okay. We'll just skip over that.

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CV: Huh?

00:01:29

SW: Okay; we'll just move on.

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CV: I know I can say February 16th but I can't go any further. [Interview's note: She was born February 16, 1928.]

00:01:35

SW: But you just turned 85 you said?

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CV: Yeah.

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SW: Okay; well I can do the math. I'll do the math for you.

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CV: Okay; all right.

00:01:41

SW: I'll get out some pencils and do the math.

00:01:42

CV: Okay.

00:01:43

SW: Can you start by talking about how you and your sister started crabbing? How did that start?

00:01:52

CV: Well we helped my father [Avery Payne]. I used to work at the drugstore, Marshall's Drugstore and whenever daddy went crabbing Dr. Marshall would give me my summer off to help my grandfather, no help my father. I'm sorry. And – and that's – see, I forget.

00:02:22

SW: So it was in the summertime? Were you a teenager?

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CV: No; I was married.

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SW: Married.

00:02:28

CV: I was married; yes.

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SW: And was Bea [Beatrice Taylor, Catherine's younger sister] helping your father too?

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CV: Not then. She lived in Richmond then. But after her husband passed away she moved back to Urbanna and – and she – she helped. We all got together, she and I and we had our own floats – floats like the – they put the crabs in – tanks.

00:03:00

SW: Like little – ?

00:03:01

CV: Some people call them tanks. We had that and then Beatrice would go crabbing, get in the boat and she'd go out on the river and pull these pots every morning. She would keep circling around and around and she'd pull all the pots. And I stayed in to tend to the – the crabs that were already shedding 'cause when they shed you got to – you got to move them. So you have to get them out of the water or you'll have not a soft crab but you'll have a paper shell. And you don't like paper shells. They're good to eat, but you don't get much money for them. And let's see –

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00:03:49

SW: You know what Catherine; I'm not in a hurry so just don't – if it's – .

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CV: Yeah; but what do you do with these breaks when they come and I don't know what to say?

00:03:56

SW: Nothing is going to happen. We're going to edit them out you know. Like right now when I'm talking you're not going to – not going to get all this –

00:04:03

CV: Okay; all right. Tell – let me – tell me where I stopped.

00:04:06

SW: So you were talking about how the paper shells you don't want those 'cause you don't get much money for those.

00:04:12

CV: That's right but they are good eating. I tell you we take all those paper shells now and we clean them, take all the legs off, everything off, all you got is a hunk of white meat. And Oyster Festival [Urbanna Oyster Festival] people are lined up to come to get the – the – the paper shells. They weren't – they don't call them paper shells when you – you know are going to give them to eat though. But they're – it's a – it's a soft crab that's getting ready to go back to a hard crab.

00:04:51

SW: How does – can you – do you know how that works like so when you go out and catch the crabs their shells kind of change is that what happens? They go from hard to soft and then back hard again?

00:05:02

CV: Well no; you get your hard crabs and you – you use them for steaming, the hard crabs. And then the soft crabs that's what you get to make your sandwiches and all with. And that's what you sell. That's what people want when they come down to the crab house. I want a dozen soft crabs or something like that they'll say.

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So you – you have the soft crabs for them. And you just have all kinds.

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SW: Wow.

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CV: Yeah.

00:05:35

SW: And so are these blue crabs that you pick?

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CV: Blue crabs.

00:05:39

SW: Blue crabs?

00:05:40

CV: Uh-huh.

00:05:41

SW: And so can you talk about a typical day? So Bea would go out on the river and what would you do? How would that work?

00:05:46

CV: She would go out on the river. Now I get up early in the morning. Beatrice, she never got up quite as early as I did but she had to get out there and pull all them pots. So she had to work

harder really. I was just back there moving things where they're supposed to go and walking around where she was pulling the pots and that's hard on a person – on a girl.

00:06:16

And men it's hard – it's hard enough on men. And she would pull them pots. And pull up them traps and then she'd come in. I'd have to watch for her. She'd come in with her baskets. She'd have one basket with peelers in it. A peeler is something you have to put back in your tank until they shed their shell. And then the hard crabs she put in the baskets. And we'd put them in the cooler. We kind of had – we have a big walk-in cooler which is still down there. And that's where we would put the hard crabs. And then people would come and want a bushel of hard crabs, half a bushel, two dozen, whatever, so that's what we'd do with the hard crabs.

00:07:06

SW: But what you did I mean you had to really pay attention to everything because you – their shells you have only a matter of time, like is it a matter of hours before things happen with the shell?

00:07:15

CV: With the soft crab? No; if it's a nice soft crab you got longer than that especially if it's in the water. So you have to go around and take them out and take the good ones out and the other ones that's not quite ready you have to leave them and go around and get them later, so it's a lot of work to it – a lot of work. And I don't know; it was – it was – it's just good. It's fun to – to be there and work with them, but it wears you out, you know. The older you get [*Laughs*] the less you can do.

00:07:53

SW: But you were doing it up until last year, right?

00:07:55

CV: I was doing it up until last year [2012]. That's when we finished. We – let's see; last year now. I don't know exactly what time that – . No, Beatrice wasn't crabbing I don't think then; no. No; she was – she had this problem [Beatrice is fighting cancer]. She had to give that up. And – and anyway with – with me, I was fine then. I wasn't like I am now [Catherine is in the early stages of dementia]. I was just gung-ho you know. Get it all done. And – and she – she was – she was okay when she was working the boat and crabbing herself. Everything was fine. And we'd buy crabs from different people and I don't know; we just – we just enjoyed doing it. It was a lot of hard work, but so what?

00:09:16

SW: Now I heard that – that both of you – both you and Bea took over the business after your father passed away to keep his memory going; is that true?

00:09:25

CV: Yeah; we – we felt like if we did that we'd feel closer to him. Yeah; yeah now I helped daddy. I worked at Marshall's Drugstore and Dr. Marshall would let me have – have my summers off when the crabbing was good. Then I – I did that and helped daddy, so it wouldn't be so much on him. And Beatrice helped and did the same thing when she was closer.

00:10:02

And we enjoyed that, yeah. Yeah. Daddy would go out and he – he'd get everything done that he had to do out on – oops excuse me [hits the microphone with her hand] – on the water and I'd stay in there and tend to things 'til he came in. So along about I'd say twelve o'clock [PM] daddy was ready to go home 'cause he got – he got in about two in the morning. So he'd go home and then I'd stay there and tend to the crab house. It's not the same crab house that's down there now.

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SW: Where was the first one?

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CV: The – well it's – it was demolished. It was an old crab house. That's where daddy was.

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SW: Was it down on the creek?

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CV: This is daddy. [pointing up to a photograph of her father, Avery Payne, on the wall behind her]

00:10:55

SW: And his name was Avery Payne?

00:10:58

CV: Avery Payne; yeah. He's looking at peelers right now. See him with them in his hand? He's getting the peelers out of the hard crabs; yeah. Yeah; it's a lot of work to it – a lot of work to it and you got to love it to do it – you do. Yeah; and – and all of – all of my boys, they ended up doing it. They all had college degrees. But they wanted to get on that water.

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SW: How come? Why did they – ?

00:11:35

CV: That – 'cause everybody – their grandparents all always did it. It was in their blood. I think the one, Scott; did you get to meet Scott? All right; Scott – Scott knows all about crabs now. But five years ago he didn't. 'Cause his main thing was to – he had a special place he – he wanted to go and learn. But that never happened. It all fell through. So he knew he had to make money, so he started helping his dad, Thomas Lee. Did you meet Thomas Lee?

00:12:21

SW: I didn't get to meet Thomas.

00:12:23

CV: How about Thomas Lee – I can't even think of my grandson's name, Lee?

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SW: Oh yeah, Lee.

00:12:37

CV: Lee, okay; Lee and Scott – Lee was working other – oh excuse me [hits microphone with hand].

00:12:45

SW: You know I'm going to hold this down here. I keep hitting you with it; I'm sorry.

00:12:48

CV: No; you won't hit me. It's me throwing my hands. [*Laughs*] But I forgot what I was saying.

00:12:56

SW: Oh you were talking about Lee.

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CV: Lee, yeah; now he was working – not working with Thomas Lee for a while and I don't know. He – he saw all the watermen you know and he had that in his blood. So he soon gave up his other jobs and – and started helping his dad. And so they – they really went together you know and Scott, too and made a bigger business than what – what he had.

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SW: And that's the Walton's Seafood?

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CV: That's the Walton's yeah. Good boys – that they are, sometimes they're full of devil but you can't help that. [*Laughs*]

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SW: Boys will be boys.

00:13:52

CV: Yeah; yeah, so that's the way it is and of course now Beatrice, like I told you, her husband passed away so Beatrice remarried and that's who she is living with now – Dale [Taylor]. And Dale has been a godsend to her, waits on her hand and foot, day and night. If he hears her trying to go upstairs he's out of his bed and goes to the stairway where she is. I mean he's a good man. So – so that's the way it is now. They're – they're just fighting this [cancer] and it's so pitiful, you know. Yeah.

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SW: Have you and Bea always been really close?

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CV: Yeah; yeah, always been close, yeah. “Sissy” she called me. “Sissy” and she still calls me Sissy. “Sissy,” sometimes – I was expecting her to say that when we were trying to get in the door but she didn't hear us [Interviewer's note: Catherine and I went over to Bea's house in an attempt to see if she'd be feeling up for an interview, but she was upstairs sleeping.] “Is that you Sissy?” you know? And but she's – for three years now she's been suffering and trying to keep going with this chemo and all. And it's taking a toll on her big-time. But the cancer hasn't spread, so it's not all wrong, you know. She's – some good is happening somewhere, because the cancer is still what it was three years ago. Usually they spread and all that; well see, hers hasn't.

If it has I don't know about it. And but she's forevermore going back and forth and getting treated by the doctors and all. And she gets down pretty bad and she can't help it you know.

00:16:01

That's just like me sometimes, I sit here you know and I – I'm 85 and I know I ain't got too much longer. And I just try to get the best of it – out of it. If I could take all my children with me [*Laughs*]; I don't – wouldn't do that; no.

00:16:24

SW: So you have – you have four children?

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CV: Oh Lord; I don't know how many grandchildren.

00:16:31

SW: I think it was six and eight, so you said either six or eight grandchildren and six great-grandkids or eight great – I can't remember – lots of kids.

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CV: I'm going tomorrow to one of my grandchildren's birthday. I try to go to each one of them when they have a birthday. And I don't even know how many it is. I used to know.

00:16:59

SW: After a while there's so many. [*Laughs*]

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CV: Yeah; but they'll all be here for Easter.

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SW: For your Easter egg hunt?

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CV: Uh-huh and to have dinner; yeah all the girls come tend to the food and I'm going to try to do a little something.

00:17:17

SW: Catherine when you used to throw that big feast here you were talking about that before I turned the tape on, can you talk about those – like those days where you would throw a big feast for everyone and what you would make and what that would be like here?

00:17:28

CV: Well yeah. They loved I used to always have crab cakes or – or crab casserole. They'd always like seafood. But it always would be something like that – not fish or nothing but crab casserole, soft crabs, stuff like that. Yeah. They loved to come to it but I had to have all the other kind of food too 'cause you had some children that didn't like the seafood. So I had to have it all [*Laughs*]; yeah that was a good time – it was. And the girls used to always help and bring their – their dish yeah; and now they're just about to do all of it. Stop cleaning yourself. You're so clean now you're white. [*Speaking to her cat, sitting next to her.*]

00:18:32

SW: Can you talk a little bit about – from what I understand, you – your parents are from – you're from – you grew up in Tangier Island and then you moved here?

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CV: I was – I was five years old when I left Tangier. Or four years old. I'd say five years old when I left Tangier.

00:18:56

SW: And there was a flood that happened and – ?

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CV: Right; my grandmother picked me up and carried me to the house next door to us – was higher off of the ground. And I was holding on around grandma's neck and – and I could kick the water, so it was right up on my feet. And she took each – well it was only two of us then and she took us to this building that was higher off the ground. Yeah; I remember that well. That I remember but I don't remember a whole lot more about being on Tangier when I was little, but I do remember that. My – my brother Melvin and Ed, us three were there a lot you know. Ed was the youngest, Melvin was a year older than me, but yet we were all lined up on that – those going upstairs, the stairways; yeah.

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And then we watched the water come up to about five steps and we'd go up with it. And it finally started to come back down. And right after that is when we moved down here to Urbanna.

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SW: Was your father crabbing on Tangier Island before – do you know?

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CV: You know I don't remember that, no, no, but – but he knew about crabbing I'm sure. And they used to go off on another island crabbing 'cause it was good. You'd catch a lot and sometimes he was gone – sometimes he was gone two or three days at a time. But then he got so you know he crabbed right around here. Yeah; it was – it was hard. And I never remember of going hungry. We always had food. As long as you had seafood you had something to eat, you know. I don't ever remember being hungry. 'Cause grandma, she used to do all this canning in the summertime when you had all the vegetables. And grandpop had pigs and he'd kill them. And they'd fix that meat. We always had plenty of meat to eat. Chickens, go out in the barn and get chickens; you'd have fried chicken. We never went hungry. You know if you know what you're doing. And don't ever remember being hungry, and a lot of children didn't even get food. But grandpop was old, daddy was old, and they were smart enough to know that you had to get it ahead of time and that's what they did. And see, we all lived together.

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SW: The whole family?

00:22:44

CV: Uh-hm; yeah. Right in this same house Beatrice is in now 'cause that's the one she wanted to live in when she moved from Richmond. And she had a beautiful home in Richmond. But no,

she wanted to be right there where grandma and grandpop lived. Yeah. And we lived with them too but we lived upstairs.

00:23:09

SW: A lot of people in the house?

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CV: Yeah; yeah, oh yeah and grandma and grandpop – Martha was in the little house – one house which it's all been changed now though. No, we all – everybody looked out for each other.

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SW: So Catherine you – so there's Melvin and Ed and you and Beatrice; it's the four of you for brothers and sisters?

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CV: Uh-huh.

00:23:37

SW: How – did Ed and Melvin help your father with the crabbing or how – I mean how did you and – how did they not end up helping and you and Beatrice did? Did they help with the crabbing?

00:23:44

CV: They did their own; yeah. Now Melvin, he was the sick one. He had a real bad heart. And sometimes he'd do things and he'd have to sit down and [Catherine makes a sound to mimick

Melvin's labored breathing] and he'd be going like that and he died young. He did. And but Ed – Ed helped with it and Jonesy was younger. Everything was – was doing better when Jonesy grew up.

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SW: Who is Jonesy?

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CV: That's my other brother.

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SW: Oh so there's five of you?

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CV: Let's see; Melvin – Melvin died, so we ain't going to count that. All right; so I'll go down the line. All right; I was the next oldest then Ed, I'm going to put Beatrice next, then Jonesy, and – and the youngest – no, Beatrice is the youngest. Next to Beatrice is – I can't even call his name.

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SW: Another boy?

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CV: Yeah.

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SW: So you and Beatrice were the – ?

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CV: Kerry.

00:25:21

SW: Kerry?

00:25:23

CV: Kerry; yeah, yeah.

00:25:27

SW: Were there any other women out there like you guys? I mean were you the only women out there crabbing?

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CV: Nobody else did it. Now there were – I had – I have heard that there was women crabbing. Some of them did it for fun. Darling, no; *[Laughs]* – *[Speaking to her cat]* –

00:25:52

SW: I think he wants to be in the interview.

00:25:54

CV: [Speaking to her cat.] No Darling; get down – get down. That's a nice boy – oh gosh that hurts. His feet is so heavy. No; down. You got to go out? He wants to get in my lap. You ain't no good.

00:26:18

SW: Does he have anything to say?

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CV: No; please get down man. No; he just wants to get in the way. Go ahead, lay down; lay down. Lay down. He has to be told. No, no, no, no –

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SW: He'll be okay.

00:26:46

CV: If you say a dozen no(s) he'll understand it. Okay; now where were we?

00:26:52

SW: Oh you were talking about other women did it but they helped their husbands. They were helping their husbands out.

00:26:57

CV: Yeah.

00:26:58

SW: Out on the river.

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CV: Yeah; there was a few who done that down the river that they would help but not many, no. No, not many, but I enjoyed it. We just loved the water, yeah; sure did. I still love it but I can't do nothing with it anymore.

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SW: Well you can see it from here.

00:27:23

CV: Yeah; I can see it. [*Laughs*] Yeah.

00:27:28

SW: Now is it true that Bea was the Mayor of Urbanna for a while?

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CV: Oh yes; that she was.

00:27:33

SW: I read that somewhere.

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CV: Yeah; yeah she was mayor and done a good job at it and they all wanted her to stay but I don't know. For some reason after she got out of it she said she was glad she was out of it. I don't know. Things weren't going just – just well you know and all. She did good though, she did the best she could. Everybody said she did. Yeah.

00:28:06

SW: Can you talk a little bit about for – for people who are – who can't see it right now but the – the crab shack, I mean in the summertime and during the Oyster Festival what was it like with all the people and how busy were you? Could you kind of talk about – ?

00:28:20

CV: Were we busy? We were busy all the time. [*Emphasis Added*] And it was good 'cause we were making money [*Laughs*] but it was about to kill us. But we had so many friends that just loved to get there, wait on the people, joke with the people, and my – my son, Ricky, I think he stayed at one – no, Thomas – I've got one son now that didn't fool with crabbing. He could crab. He loved the water but he had a – he had a job at Phillip Morris, good job and made good money. And but his vacations he would be crabbing and doing all this that he liked to do. And I was telling – I forgot what I was going to say. What were we talking about?

00:29:28

SW: Oh during the crab – or sorry during the Oyster Festival and all the people.

00:29:32

CV: Oyster Festival, yeah; he took that – he took over that morning waiting on the window and he stayed there the whole day and he had never done it before. And everybody he – every person he waited on he put the money like it was supposed to go and then he says – he'd always thank them – always. He did a fantastic job for – for being the first time. And now Ricky – took it one day and he loves to joke. You know so he's got everybody cracked the whole time and he's waiting on them and doing the money good but he's got to – he's always saying something funny to them. And that's the way he is. And the two of them just took over for us. They really did; yeah.

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SW: So you didn't have to wait on the window so much; you could tend to the crabs more?

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CV: Well no, because we'd have the crabs all fried and the – all ready to make sandwiches. And we'd keep them going. And then they'd turn around you know when they got ordered and they'd come and get – we'd have to get some more and do that and we had – we had cousins here from abroad. They'd always come to help us. And we just had plenty of time that we – Beatrice and myself could just sit down and watch it. And they loved to do it. They just said this is the best day; we've had more fun today than I've had in a lifetime. That's – that's exactly what they'd say, the different ones that was helping us.

00:31:32

And everything it was just joking with the people at the window and just laugh and – and we couldn't have done it without them. We really couldn't. And that was three days of it.

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SW: And it's crazy busy in Urbanna during that time, right?

00:31:52

CV: Yes; you can't hardly – well, we don't even leave until – we can't even get out of town until all the people that were in town get out. So we have to stay there parked waiting hour, two hours, sometimes three hours before we can get home and we're already closed. But you got to let all that traffic out first, yeah. But it's a money maker for the whole town – it is.

00:32:28

SW: Was it – was the crab shack and the business basically a sense of a livelihood for both you and Bea, like is that how you made a living after a while like solely on the crabs?

00:32:41

CV: No; well no that was – that was our little thing that we did, the crabbing, you know. Our husbands took care of the, you know tending to us, see.

00:32:58

SW: Did your husband help you crab?

00:33:01

CV: No; no, the – my second husband [James Via] – my first husband passed away. My second husband he didn't know a whole lot about crabbing. But he was a lot of help but now he was not living this past Oyster Festival we had. No, he passed away. In fact he passed away two years ago.

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SW: What was his name?

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CV: James.

00:33:31

SW: James Via?

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CV: Uh-hm; yeah I got two pictures up there of him.

00:33:35

SW: Was he from Urbanna?

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CV: No.

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SW: Where was he from?

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CV: He was from up in the mountains.

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SW: So he – so he didn't really know about the crabs?

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CV: No; no.

00:33:43

SW: He's a mountain guy.

00:33:46

CV: Uh-huh; no, he didn't. But he was – he was a school teacher when I met him. And he was – he was teaching at the elementary school and taught at the high school also. And then my husband had passed away, my first husband [Thomas Walton].

00:34:07

SW: And what was his name?

00:34:08

CV: James, no, no; that was James. Thomas –

00:34:14

SW: Thomas and was his last name Walton?

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CV: Uh-huh; yeah. That was Thomas Lee and them – that was their daddy, yeah.

00:34:22

SW: What did you love most about crabbing when you were out there?

00:34:30

CV: Uh I don't know what I really loved. I guess just being out on the water, but see, I didn't go crabbing. I stayed in to tend to everything. All those floats, I had to fish them up. When we say fish them up you got to get the soft crabs out, you know every so often and that's what I did 'til Beatrice got in. And then after she got in she'd rest up and get something to eat and then she'd pitch in and we'd both do it. You're always doing something, always; you're – you got a pile of soft crabs and we wanted to get them cleaned and wrapped and ready for serving. So we'd have to clean the soft crabs and wrap them. I don't know.

00:35:25

SW: Would – would Bea come back from the river and kind of throw the traps down on you and you'd have to take care of all that? Is that how that would work?

00:35:34

CV: No; well she'd come back with the basket of crabs and I would have a float all ready for them because we'd put them in a new float every day. And when she came – I'd watch for her, so when I could see her coming in I had a float all ready for her to put her peelers in and now hard crabs, the jimmy crabs, we'd put them in bushel baskets and put them in the cooler. We had a big walk-in cooler. And so that if anybody wanted them you know you'd have them ready. But all the peelers went into floats where I was putting water in them all the time. And I'd tend to that and when we'd say we're going to "fish up" that means we're going to get the soft crabs out and I would tend to it and then when we'd go home Beatrice – . Okay; Beatrice didn't get up early like I did. And but she – you know she did pretty good. But I'd have everything pretty well ready to go.

00:36:51

All right let me get my story straight now.

00:36:57

SW: So Beatrice would get up kind of – you'd get up early?

00:37:00

CV: I'd get up, yeah; I'd get up like four or five o'clock in the morning and take the soft crabs out. If you don't you're going to have what they call paper shells. They're not going to be any good.

00:37:10

SW: And what is it? What is it, just like they literally feel like paper?

00:37:13

CV: Yeah; yeah. So I'd get up early and get all that done. And she'd come down about I don't know to say for sure. It would – it differed; it just depends on how she was feeling. And then she would start cleaning the crabs 'cause we had calls for a lot of people you know wanting them all cleaned and wrapped. So she'd start with that cleaning or I'd clean and she'd wrap. We'd do – we'd just take turns. But we stayed busy; yeah.

00:37:55

SW: And the town really loved – before you guys decided to stop doing it I just heard that it was – you were just the centerpiece of the town here in Urbanna.

00:38:05

CV: Yeah; they – they hated that. Well I tell you; when we left, the guys that's taken over, they're going to try to do what we were doing and they wanted to – us to leave the signs like they were. And but I don't think we were allowed to do that. But they really wanted them some kind of bad. And one of them is sitting out there somewhere now, a white one.

00:38:42

SW: Yeah; I saw it. It's on the bench out – on the porch.

00:38:43

CV: Yeah; yeah, yeah. Yeah –

00:38:50

SW: Well Catherine I don't have any more – I've taken up a lot of your time, but I'm wondering is there anything else you want to talk about in terms of the – the crabbing business or the river or just Urbanna or Bea?

00:39:01

CV: I don't know but it's nothing like being close to that river. This is where I sit looking out on that river. But now I never stayed in the river. Beatrice used to go in the river and pull the pots. And I – I just couldn't do that. She was younger and you know spry and she'd still be that way if she hadn't had that chemo or. I don't know.

00:39:45

Now she's – she don't have many happy days. Get a laugh out of her once in a while, but. I'll tell her you know to perk up. I said, "You're young yet Beatrice." I said, "Look at me." I said, "I'm 80-some years old." I said, "You know, I ain't got much time left." Try to keep her you know spirits up, but I feel all right. I can't get around good. And I can't do a whole lot, but I do my work in the morning when I first get up. I feel better 'cause later in the day is when it starts – I start going downhill.

00:40:35

SW: What time do you get up in the morning Catherine?

00:40:37

CV: Six; yeah.

00:40:42

SW: Do you come sit out here and watch the river or – ?

00:40:43

CV: Well no; not in – well yeah sometimes I'll sit out here with a cup of coffee. Yeah; but not every morning – after I get everything done then I'll – then I'll come out here and sit down with a cup of coffee or something. Yeah; I been trying to get all this stuff together for – to give away you know. Now I got upstairs to do. I got clothes upstairs that I haven't had on my back in ages. And they're going to help somebody else, so that's what I've been doing.

00:41:24

SW: That takes a lot of energy sometimes to round up all that stuff though.

00:41:27

CV: Yeah; I – well I take a certain day and do a certain amount. I can't do it all. Nope. Yeah, I – I keep wanting to say Hands across Middlesex 'cause that's who we give some things too. It's a –

00:41:46

SW: Is it the Salvation Army?

00:41:47

CV: Salvation Army. Yeah I gave – I give them a huge bunch of clothes and now everything I come across that I don't want and none of the family wants I give it to them.

00:42:02

SW: That's nice.

00:42:03

CV: Yeah.

00:42:03

SW: It's nice to do that.

00:42:04

CV: And sometimes my children will come in and say, "Mama, what are you doing all that for?" I said, "Well, it's just less for you all to do when I'm gone." *[Laughs]* And he says "What?" I guess it's all right as long as you can joke about it. *[Laughs]*

00:42:22

SW: Have you always had a pretty good sense of humor though? You sound like you talk about making jokes with Bea and – .

00:42:28

CV: Yeah; I've always – I really have. Yeah, because my children is like that. They're forever cracking jokes and things. And I guess they took it after me. Yeah, I try to stay happy if I can, yeah.

00:42:50

SW: Well Catherine is there anything else you want to add about the – the business?

00:42:55

CV: I don't know. Can you think – know of anything I ought to say?

00:43:00

SW: Well, I think we covered a lot of it.

00:43:04

CV: I think so too.

00:43:04

SW: So you guys started in 1977, just after – did your dad pass away in 1977 or was it – ? I read it in a magazine or something and I just wanted to get the date, but I can –

00:43:19

CV: I don't know.

00:43:20

SW: – look it up.

00:43:20

CV: I used to know all that.

00:43:22

SW: Now Tangier Island is – now there are people like I've heard and read that Tangier has – there's like a certain – it's almost like a British accent there. Do you remember any of that?

00:43:34

CV: Yeah; uh-huh, they – they do. Of course I didn't live there long enough I guess to pick that up. I guess mine sometimes now and then will be a little slurred, but over there "Gosh almighty," they'd say you know [*Laughs*] and things like that. And – and I like to go over there, but I doubt if I'll get back again. The last time I wanted to go is when – I had to go to the doctor and he – I don't know. I had some heart problem and he suggested that I not go.

00:44:19

SW: Do you still have family living on Tangier Island?

00:44:22

CV: I have cousins, lots of cousin. Yeah.

00:44:27

SW: Both – oh sorry; go ahead.

00:44:29

CV: And then a lot of them has moved from Tangier onto the Eastern Shore, too but yet it's – it's away from the water. But I don't know; I know a lot of it is washing away. But I think your older people is going to stay there 'til they're gone. They ain't going to leave. Some of the younger ones now have decided to leave and instead of doing – a lot of them like to work on the water though. And they do good. They make a good living working on the water. But some more are wanting to get away from there. Yeah, I got lots of cousins there.

00:45:15

SW: Did both of your parents grow up on Tangier Island? Are they from the Island?

00:45:19

CV: Yeah, yeah. They grew up on Tangier.

00:45:22

SW: What was your mother's name?

00:45:24

CV: Dora. Dora Lee Parks – well Parks was before she was married and then she married daddy so it was Payne. She died young. She did. She had six children though before she died. I don't know; maybe that's what took her away was so many children.

00:45:55

SW: How old were you when she passed away do you remember?

00:45:58

CV: I was twelve. Uh-hm, yeah.

00:46:06

SW: So Beatrice would have been just a little kid huh, little baby?

00:46:09

CV: She wasn't even born then. Oh no. Yeah she was – let's see. I got that wrong. When mama died – oh, how old was Beatrice? I think she was five 'cause I know grandma raised her. I – we lived next door to grandma – daddy and mama and then when mama died it was just me and daddy and then it looked like all the children wanted to go and live with grandma. So I stayed with daddy and tried to help him out. And then sometimes the children would leave grandma's – well we're right next door, you know where we went. Well what – what was I saying now?

00:47:16

SW: You were talking about your grandma and taking care of Beatrice and – .

00:47:21

CV: Yeah; yeah, now she raised – you just might say she raised all of them – all of them really 'cause they were all young and she had never had a child. But what they do – they'd ask grandma what she had for supper and if they didn't like it they'd say "I'm going over daddy's."

[Laughs] And they'd come over to see what we had, you know so that's the way that went.

[Laughs] Yeah. We were poor but we had love, yeah. And we weren't poor though. I think any – any time you get all you want to eat and – and all and some clothes to wear, you ain't poor.

You're rich and don't know it. You know it? So remember that; yeah.

00:48:19

SW: I think –

00:48:26

CV: Well I don't know of anything else darling.

00:48:28

SW: Well I think that's a good place to stop. I think that's a really good place to stop. Thank you for doing this Catherine, I really appreciate it and I know that I've been a pest. *[Laughs]*

00:48:36

CV: I know but Beatrice could have done it for you so much better.

00:48:41

SW: You know I think though this has been wonderful though. I'm just so glad to be sitting with you in person and talking to you and it not be on the phone. *[Laughs]*

00:48:48

CV: Yeah; well she – she's kind of – she knows things and all so much better than I do.

00:48:54

SW: That's okay. I think this was great. We talked for about fifty minutes.

00:49:00

CV: Did we?

00:49:00

SW: That's a long time.

00:49:02

CV: Okay; well maybe you can get that straight – throw out the things that's no good.

00:49:07

SW: I'm going to stop the tape now; how's that?

00:49:08

[End Catherine Via-March 8, 2013]