

**Frank Williams**

March 15, 2006

Interviewer: Lollie Willis  
Transcribed By: Shirley Fauber  
Frank Williams: Frank Williams

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Tape, Side A (1<sup>st</sup> Side):

Lollie Willis: This is Lollie Willis on March 15, 2006. We are interviewing Mr. Frank Williams who lives in Atlantic, Virginia, for the Chincoteague Island Library Oral History Project.

Lollie Willis: Mr. Williams can you tell me a little bit about where you were born and growing up in this area?

Frank Williams: Well, I was born on Chincoteague and . . .

Lollie Willis: What year was that?

Frank Williams: 1923.

Lollie Willis: Okay.

Frank Williams: And the house I was born in was – sits right in back of Curtis Carpenter's house on Church Street.

Lollie Willis: Oh, okay.

Frank Williams: And I don't remember anything about being there – you know being there as a child, but the first thing I remember was livin' on Piney Island and I just wanted to be on the water you know with my Father. And it was during a time, you know; when the worst part of the depression back in 30's you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And the first thing I remember doin' is going out on the water and catching mussels, one of the worst jobs in the world (laughing) you know. You got muddy and it was just not a nice job see – not a nice thing to do. Not very enjoyable, but that's the first thing I did see. And I – I kind of – lot of things about it I enjoyed. And then doin' different other things you

know. Nobody had any money in those days see, so whatever you had, you know, was – it was just like all Chincoteague people had, you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And I can remember doin' different little things. My job – until I got old enough see to really get on the water, my job was to get the kenneling wood in and help my Mother and do things like that, you know, for her.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And we – we lived right directly across the channel from where her - her parents' lived. My Father used to talk about, you know, when the channel was froze up - he would walk across the channel to see my Mother.

Lollie Willis: Oh my goodness.

Frank Williams: And they were married, my Mother was fourteen years old, my Father was sixteen, when they got married.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And a lot of good memories about those days see, but boy it was tough times, you know. If we could – you know – when I got maybe ten or twelve years old I always enjoyed movies at the Old Powell Theatre and . . .

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And if we were lucky we could get fifteen or twenty cents you know and go to the movies on Saturday on night.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Oh, I thought that was great see.

Lollie Willis: Right.

Frank Williams: Usually see a western show of some kind, Kent Maynard or Buck Jones; they were all big back in them days you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But, like I said, we had a lot of – it was poor – ever body was poor. But we had a lot of good things too about it.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: My Mother was a real angel. She – she was the best cook I thing I ever saw in my lifetime. And my Father was a real hard-working man. Not a real big man, but boy he was a hard worker.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And he was – he was maybe five foot nine but he had a big, you know, thick chest.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And was strong and he was just a hard worker. He had to work hard, you know, to take – at that time we had six children in the family.

Lollie Willis: Wow.

Frank Williams: And later on we had another one. She – she passed away a while back. She was only about sixty-five I think when she passed away. But we had our share of troubles, you know, but we've had a lot to be thankful for too see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And – that's – that's what I did. And the next thing that I can remember doin' is dredgin' oysters with my Father. See, he had a little – Mr. Ira Hudson built this little workboat for him. Three Hundred and Fifty Dollars.

Lollie Willis: Wow.

Frank Williams: He put a little Model-A Ford engine in there. You know which is – a lot of people used those engines in – in those days, you know, either maybe a Model-A Ford or six-cylinder Chevrolet, anything they could buy and put in a boat and make their livin' with.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And – like I say – he was – he was a hard-workin' man and I just – I either wanted to be workin' with my Father - in the back of my mind - I had the Coast Guard in the back of my mind, you know, all this time you see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Because I had an uncle, Norman Jones, was my uncle and he'd always tell us, you know, 'bout the things he did in the Coast Guard. He was one of the old surfman, you know. That was a different rate than – I can't remember, you know, servin' – not as a surfman, but

during World War II, you know, I got to Assateague a little while. And I got to meet some of these surfmen, you know. Some of these surfmen were still in the Coast Guard and they were stationed at Assateague, see.

Lollie Willis: Now what is a surfman?

Frank Williams: It was a kind of a special rate. It was some – it was the people that their main job was to serve at a Life Saving Station, like where the old Life Saving Station is on Assateague.

Lollie Willis: Okay. Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And their main thing they had to do was get out, you know, in bad weather if a boat got disabled.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: We – they had a thirty-six foot lifeboat there that was what they used mainly in rough weather. Had a leaded keel, this boat could turn completely over. It never did do it with me (laughing) but I know the boat could do that. And it would right itself back up see.

Lollie Willis: Um.

Frank Williams: And they had that and what they called a picket boat. The picket boat was thirty-eight foot long and faster, you know, had a little speed with that. And another little workboat, twenty-six foot long. But – it was kind of a nice place to serve I thought.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: I would a stayed there until I retired but the pay was nothin' in those days see. It was terrible, the pay was terrible. But I have a lot a good memories from the Coast Guard and – and goin' up and down the Bays too with my Father see, you know. Maybe – mostly gettin' seed oysters to plant either in Chincoteague Bay or Tom's Cove see. When – when I talk about that it's – you needed a boat that could pull – what we called monitors. They were either maybe five hundred bushel little barges up to maybe a thousand bushels of oysters. That's how many we could carry.

Lollie Willis: Oh, wow.

Frank Williams: I remember tellin' my Father, him and my uncle were goin' down the Bay catchin' seed oysters, and I told him, I said, couldn't you take me down with ya? I said I'd go for Five Dollars a week.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: And – but later on he – he did take me down the Bay with him, you know. And maybe he'd give me a dollar extra you know, somethin' like that, but far as, you know, just enough to come home and go to the movies, you know. And I'd usually give my parents, you know, a couple dollars of that see, to kind a help things along a little bit.

Lollie Willis: Right.

Frank Williams: That, and we - we raked clams. My Father was a great clam tonger see. You know with tongs, you what I'm talkin' 'bout?

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. I've seen pictures.

Frank Williams: He, like I say, was a strong man and he was a hard worker, I don't know how the man ever did as good as he did.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But – and my Mother, she knew just exactly what to do if we had wild ducks or chickens or fish or anything. She knew how to clean 'em and to cook 'em and to get the most out of 'em.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: She was really – oh she was – she was two mothers in one package, you know what I mean.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: She was somethin'! And, like I say, we could look across the channel and see, see my Grandfather's house. He was – he was like me, he wadn't very tall, you know. And he mostly made – he made a little bit a money on the water and he got – he got a contract to take care of Government lights once in a while. I remember one he talked 'bout fishin' for him. He – he took care of the light for free – I mean for one year – for Three Hundred Dollars a year. He had to hitch his old horse up, you know, and take all that ride down to Assateague Point. And I don't know whether that would change the – whatever it was to keep that light goin' at that time, see.

Lollie Willis: Going. Right.

Frank Williams: What he would do, uh-huh. And he had this one little horse that he used. You could put a saddle on it. It worked – it worked real good with a saddle. So he could help penny the ponies you know.

Lollie Willis: Oh, okay.

Frank Williams: And it would work it, of course, you know, one of those big high wheel carts, you know, that's what he had. And he had a little boat about twelve foot long - is all to make his livin' with. And Mom said he never had over a - she can't remember ever having as much as a Hundred Dollars in his lifetime. But due to the fact that they could raise, you know, chickens and guinea birds and ducks and geese and all that - besides a little garden.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: He tended probably about, oh, I don't know, no more than two acres of land at the most. But he - it's surprising, you know, the good vegetables the land would grow on Assateague.

Lollie Willis: Right.

Frank Williams: I remember eatin' things like green lima beans and corn on the cob and it was all delicious I thought.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: You wouldn't think so when you think about Assateague you could hardly grow anything there, but you could.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They used all that plus chickens and eggs and . . .

Lollie Willis: So they were really self-sustaining?

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And they lived next door to a man - his name was Mr. Bill Scott. He had a little store.

Lollie Willis: Now is this on Assateague?

Frank Williams: On Assateague.

Lollie Willis: Okay.

Frank Williams: Yeah. And he mostly made most of his money by supplying the ships, you know, sailboats and ships that came in Tom's Cove.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Due to stormy weather and ever thing. And they would get in touch with him some way, I don't know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And they'd order mostly things like flour and lard, the basic things. Coffee, sugar, cream . . .

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And, of course, tobacco. Ever body loved tobacco back in 'em days.

Lollie Willis: Hum.

Frank Williams: My Grandfather, he chewed tobacco. And Mom would always tell me about if he had a little extra money he would buy, you know, maybe two or three cigars.

Lollie Willis: Mmm.

Frank Williams: But he was – he was a good man. And my Grandmother, she was an angel too, see. She – she was kind a like, I don't know how to describe her hardly – but if any of the kids said any words or anything, and my Grandmother found out about it . . .

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: She would never hit anybody, but she would – she would set 'em down and talk to 'em. She'd say now, Grandmom heard that you said a bad word – smutty word is what she'd call it.

Lollie Willis: Smutty (Laughing)

Frank Williams: Smutty word. And she'd – most times she'd make you a cup of cocoa, see, when she's gettin' ready to tell you things. And she would say, she would look you right in the eye and she'd say now, "Jesus doesn't like it when you use words like that" see. He doesn't want you to have to use bad words. And boy it would really get to you, you know. She would – that was worse than a spankin' or you know . . .

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. You remembered that.

Frank Williams: Yeah, yeah, right. But she was somethin' else. She could – anything that they could pick you know, like blackberries or wild cherries, she would use 'em, you know, to make jelly or – she'd fix 'em up some kind a way so they were – you know, in preserves or things like that. And all my Grandfather's chicken houses and things like that, the outside toilet and things like that, he could find lumber on Assateague Beach see. He could go out with his horse and

wagon and instead of havin' wire fences they would have like a stop, you know, you had to – you had maybe step up this high, you know, to get up on that stop. But whatever it was it kept the horses and I can only remember him havin' one horse, but Mr. Scott had a horse too, you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: I think they would use one another's, you know, grazin' property or whatever it was, you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But Mr. Scott, he was kind of a character. He was – he wadn't too dainty a man to tell you the truth.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: He wore bib overhauls and he had a big thick beard and he smoked a pipe. And he, like I said, they would order chicken houses and coups and all that. They had all the lumber they needed to do the things they needed to do like that. And Mr. Scott, he was just – he was just – he's hard to describe really. Because his bib overhauls, he had patches on all of his clothes. And patches on top of them patches. And I think about more patches on top of them patches.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: And he loved a pipe – he loved – that's the only thing he had for his pleasure see – was his pipe. And I remember one of my uncles tellin' that – his name was Martikie McGee, and one of the Jones men see, but they told me about Mr. Scott got up one night and he had to go out and check his chickens.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And, you know, close 'em up or whatever he had to do. And when he got up he layed his pipe on the counter see, in his little store.

Lollie Willis: Right.

Frank Williams: The store room was – it wasn't much bigger than this room right here. See, I'll say it was five foot wide maybe. A very small place. And when he layed his pipe down one of the boys grabbed his pipe. Took all the – took the lump of tobacco out and took a gun shell . . .

Lollie Willis: Oh no.



Frank Williams: And took that gun powder and put in his pipe and put the tobacco on top. They thought it was fun see, but it was really a dangerous thing to do see. And Mr. Scott come in and, of course, that's the first thing he grabbed was his pipe.

Lollie Willis: His pipe.

Frank Williams: And they said he made about two puffs and it blew the whole ball off his pipe and singed his beard.

Lollie Willis: Oh.

Frank Williams: That was a bad thing to do. They didn't really know what they were doin.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And they took off runnin'.

Lollie Willis: Umm.

Frank Williams: And one of 'em said we better get down, we better get down. And just 'bout the time they got down you know and hid their selves, a load of shot went over top their head. He shot – he shot at 'em really. It was – it was that – it was that – and I can't much blame 'em to tell you the truth.

Lollie Willis: Huh-uh.

Frank Williams: Things like 'at, you know, you hear about people doin' things like 'at and – but a lot of it wadn't too nice.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: And in Mr. Scott's case, he was just – he was just . . .

Lollie Willis: He recovered.

Frank Williams: Yeah, yeah.

Lollie Willis: I bet those guys didn't do that again.

Frank Williams: No, no, that broke that little deal up.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: Anyway, that's the way things were on Chincoteague – I mean on Assateague.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They could cut, you know, get their own wood to burn in the winter months and they mostly cut a – it's called a myrtle. Got a sweet smell to it you know.

Lollie Willis: I'll bet, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Myrtle bushes has. And my Grandmother's kitchen had a special, you know, odor to it see, because that that is the kind a wood she burned. If you had a good solid chopping block to cut it on, you could take a piece that big and with a sharp axe you could make one swipe and cut off little pieces of wood, you know, that would fit in the wood stove. And they cut all the wood and Mom used to always talk about the things they got from the seafood, that my Grandfather had on hand all the time. She talked about oysters and clams that came from Tom's Cove, the best clams in the world. And man those were good.

Lollie Willis: Did you just get 'em fresh or did you store 'em?

Frank Williams: No, she – they could keep a few. A clam will live, you know, if it's kept in the shade, or oyster either.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They'll live a good week see. You keep 'em in the coolest place you could find.

Lollie Willis: Cool, yeah.

Frank Williams: But she always – she – after my Father died, she would tell me a little, you know, about Assateague everyday see during lunchtime. Always had lunch with her. And 'bout how they made a kill - I think they called it – for potatoes. And her Mother would send her out, you know. They used pine shats and things like that for it see and she could – she could reach in there and get all the potatoes out that they needed.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Always had plenty of seafood and fish. All we had you know was that ball of fishin' line, you know, to fish with. No rods. My Grandfather, he didn't know what a rod and reel was.

Lollie Willis: Wow.

Frank Williams: But they could – they could push right off in the channel see, their property was right - right down to Assateague Channel. And just get right out in the channel and catch all the fish they needed back in those days.

Lollie Willis: That's wonderful.

Frank Williams: Yelp. My Mother used to say that whatever they caught, it could be little perch, or little – we called 'em little black wills, you know what I'm talkin' about? Little black bass. Real good eatin' fish, but they're sort a small, but they were good. They were tasty little fish. And you know, most the time catch maybe some nice trout or things like that. They would – they could always get their bait, you know, by walkin' right down the shore with a – with a crab net and dippin' a hard crab see, and that's – that's the kind a bait they used to bait their hook with see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Mom – she could – she was somethin' else, you know. She could always remember these things and her mind was good until, you know, until she got maybe seventy-six, seventy-eight years old you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But that's – and he would – he could – he could take his horse and wagon and go up in the woods and cut, you know, wood ever chance him and my uncle Norman had see. And another one of the yarns I always remembered, my uncle Norman, to me he was special, you know, he was in the Coast Guard and he was one of the surfmans, and he would always have a little story to tell you about different things that happened. And one of the things they did – the cook, he was a big – he was a big strong man see, but they played jokes on 'im. They caught a little live duck in one case and put it in the coffee pot.

Lollie Willis: Oh my gosh!

Frank Williams: And he – he come on down, the cook did, the next mornin' and lit that coffee – you know put the coffee pot on the stove.

Lollie Willis: Oh . . .

Frank Williams: And he – he heard all this scratchin', by and by looked up and found the duck and got it out the big coffee pot see.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: The coffee pot held probably a gallon and a half a coffee.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: But they were – they did some ornery things you know back in those days see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. That was their entertainment.

Frank Williams: That was their entertainment. No radio, no t.v., you know. We didn't know nothin' 'bout things like that back in those days. But he was – he was somebody I always looked up to, my uncle Norman. And my uncle, Mark McGee we called him. His real name was Martikie, but ever body called him Mark. He was a great man. He was a good horseback rider and – well he and Norman both see, our whole family, we always took an active part in the pony roundup and swim and all that.

Lollie Willis: Yeah, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: My Father had a little speaking part in the movie Misty.

Lollie Willis: Oh!

Frank Williams: He – his name – if you ever watch it – think about Lloyd Williams. And he's – his buddy was named Wilbur, he was a great boat builder, Mr. Wilbur was. And they done a real good job you know takin' care of the ponies, roundin' 'em up and workin' with 'em and things like 'at. And anyway, this speakin' part he had with Twentieth Century Fox, my Father, well they kept his name the same, Lloyd Williams, and they changed Wilbur's name to Jess. And my Father said, "Jess, what time is low tide?"

Lollie Willis: Oh.

Frank Williams: That was his speakin' part. And . . .

Lollie Willis: I think I remember that.

Frank Williams: And his answer was, "Ten o'clock or thereabouts." And they each got a Hundred Dollars extra for that. Boy that – that was somethin' big you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: A Hundred Dollars you know. But nobody, think about it, back in those days – nobody, you know - we had no money, we had no clothes. You know, if you were lucky you had maybe two pair a pants and sometimes your shoes were about as cheap as they could be, you could buy.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They were always – the soles were sewed on and when you wore 'em maybe a month, that thread wore out and there was your sole flappin' you know.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: (Laughing) But uh – it was just a lot you know to be thankful for. When you stop and think about the days over there with your grandparents and if – if for some reason you know they were – my – well, we would always ask ‘em – we’d beg to get to go over to Assateague and stay with our grandparents. Because she was – she was just, you know, so nice to us. And – and my Grandfather – was I don’t know how he put up with – sometimes he’d have five or six in the house at one time.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But, you know, no problem. And he would – he would row across the channel maybe oncet a week and buy a few groceries. And when he come back – we’d let – he had to tie up at my Father’s dock most the time.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And when he come back from the store he would always get the kids – in our immediately family – a box of crackerjacks. That was a big treat too!

Lollie Willis: Awe. Okay.

Frank Williams: And another thing we enjoyed was a – my cousin, Roy Jones, used to tell me about – he’d see one of the men from Assateague comin’ back from Chincoteague – and he would go down to meet ‘im, you know. He was tickled to death to get down and meet ‘im. And he – they had big cookies back in ‘em days. I imagine they’re ‘bout as cheap as you could buy, but it was – two of ‘em – one of ‘em had a white icin’ on it, like a gingerbread. They were real, you know, soft.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Real good cookies I thought. And he would meet the people and they’d give him one of them big cookies see.

Lollie Willis: Awe.

Frank Williams: He thought – he thought that was great see. And another thing he said he would do – he’d – he would ramble all around and some of the people would be maybe fryin’ fish and they’d hand ‘im out a little perch, you know, or little black will, you know, fried nice and brown, but boy he said it was good.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing) I bet.

Frank Williams: And just things like that. The things – the only thing I can remember havin’ like a toy of any kind was a little paper cap pistol. Me and my brother, Raymond, had a little roll of paper caps, you know, with a pistol.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Probably cost about, I don't know, seventy-five or eighty cents, just a little paper cap pistol. And we'd have maybe, I don't know, two or three packages of paper caps.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: We – we didn't stop shootin until they were all used up.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: (Laughing) We were just so tickled to have that big cap pistol. And . . .

Lollie Willis: You want to take a little break here? (Pause)

Frank Williams: Well, I don't know if it's almost like a fairyland bein' there, see with 'em. My Goldie, my sister, Goldie, she's still livin'. She's eighty years old. But she – her memory – her memory was better than mine was. She could remember a lot of things – that my Grandmother used to tell little stories and my sister could remember some of 'em. I can't remember hardly anything 'bout those stories she told us. One of 'em was – she'd tell this thing about the witch – somethin' concerning a witch, but the witch would fly through the keyhole. My Grandmother would tell all these things see.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: But I – that's all I can remember about that story. (Laughing)

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: (Laughing) But we did – we had plenty of food to eat due to plenty of seafood. And one of the things she liked to keep in the house, you know, was the buckwheat. She was great on buckwheat cakes.

Lollie Willis: Ooohhh, -uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And – well mostly all the people in those days could make a nice piece of homemade bread see. That – that was a big thing in their diets, you know, homemade bread, real good.

Lollie Willis: Yeah.

Frank Williams: And Mr. Scott he used to raise turkeys and guinea birds. And the turkeys could get almost all their livin' by goin' down to the shore and feedin' off the little fiddler crabs. They were around by the thousands, you know, back in 'em days. And he had guinea birds, they were easy to raise. They could – another little story I remember - my Uncle Norman, was tellin' me

that he – later on he took care of the lighthouse see – and he would always stop in and see Mr. Scott. And this day Mr. Scott had fixed nine guinea bird eggs and give Mr. Scott eight of ‘em – and she fixed one for the little dog. Had a little dog named Lady – I think was the dog’s name. But Mr. Scott ate all of his eight guinea bird eggs and the little dog left a little bit and he finished eatin’ it.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: (Laughing) And Uncle Norman told me that see. Norman’s two daughters, Janet and Norma Faye, they own the Etta’s, you know, the restaurant down along . . .

Lollie Willis: Oh, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Sometime if you are there, stop in and talk to ‘em, yeah.

Lollie Willis: Well, that sounds like a good suggestion.

Frank Williams: They’re both two nice – two nice . . .

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Now Janet, she don’t think – I don’t think she remembered a thing about Assateague. But

Lollie Willis: She was too young?

Frank Williams: Yeah. Yeah, she was a little too young. And then, well I went up and down the bays, you know, with my Father workin’ on the water until about – I was eighteen years old. And I come home on the weekend and my cousin was there and he said, “Frank, I got somethin’ to tell you.” He says, “You’re not gonna like part of it.” He said “but a young man like you is gonna be drafted.” He said, “I’m pretty sure we’re gonna go to war.” He said - they’re takin’ a boat – back in those days they took in some boats from the – they put ‘em in the Coast Guard Reserve they called it. You know, you remember that.

Frank Williams: But they took in fishin’ boats. It was a pretty decent boat.

Lollie Willis: Oh, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They would take the boat in and – they couldn’t – didn’t pay nothin’ for the use of the boat, but whoever owned the boat, they would give them a pretty decent rate, you know, to make up for the loss of, you know, what their boat might make.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And he said “They’re takin’ this boat in.” This boat was named the “Susie B.” And he said “Monday” (this was Friday), he said, “They need two seaman to go aboard that boat.” And he said, “And I was thinkin’ about you and your cousin, Jack.” So anyway, Monday I was down Little Creek see. I think maybe a day or two after it, I - they swore me in on the Coast Guard’s boat.

Lollie Willis: Boat, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: You signed for one year. And they said at the end of the year if nothin’s happening and ever thing is going pretty good, you’ll be discharged. But – before I forget it – Mr. Ira Hudson built this boat. She was – Bob Mears – I don’t whether – whether you remember Bob Mears or not, but he was in the seafood business on Eastside see. That – that was his – that’s what he did for his livin’ see. Real – made a lot a money in it see. But anyway, I ask him, I said, Bob what did that boat cost? He said, “I think it was Seven Hundred and Fifty Dollars.” Mr. Ira Hudson, you know built it.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: You know, the great decoy carver. And pretty little boat, nice little pretty little boat. And they sailed a lot a parties, fishin’ parties in ‘er. She was – you know – she served her purpose really. And - but the thing that was interesting about it, Mr. Ira Hudson had – I don’t know whether it was a flyin’ duck, or maybe it might a been a pair a ducks, but they were auctioned for Eighty Thousand Dollars! His decoys.

Lollie Willis: Wow!

Frank Williams: His decoys today are priceless.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Now boat building, you don’t hear much about ‘im. But he built that boat and – for Bob Mears. And built me – built this other little boat I was tellin’ you about, that we used to dredge oysters, my Father.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: It was just a little dredge scow we called it. And he put a Model-A Ford engine in it and that’s what – that was the biggest help, you know, to makin’ a little bit a money when raisin’ our family.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And . . .

Lollie Willis: Well, did you serve the year in the Coast Guard and then get out?



Frank Williams: No. Well – the first place we went was to Baltimore. We tied up at Pier Four, Pratt Street. That’s right - right where the dolphin tank is today.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: Back in those days it was a big seaport. The harbor was lined with steamers that ran up and down the Chesapeake Bay, a few Navy ships and Coast Guard Cutters and things like ‘at. And – but on the seventh day of – let’s see December 7, is when the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. And one of our men – well I had never heard of Pearl Harbor see. I – I don’t remember ever hearin’ anything about Pearl Harbor. This – he was next to the man in charge on this boat I was on – the Susie B. And he come - he said, “Man Pearl Harbor has just been bombed.” He said, “You might as well say we are at war.”

Frank Williams: Well anyway, we had to – we had to get out of the Coast Guard Reserve and sign in the regular Coast Guard.

Lollie Willis: Oh.

Frank Williams: And if we – they discharged us, give us an honorable discharge. And we re-enlisted in the regular Coast Guard. And later on we did things like patrolin’ all around Norfolk and Newport News and all that in these little reserve boats, what was left of ‘em you see. But – and then I got the boat I was on was caught a fire, burn up. Or she didn’t – it burned the cabin off see, not the whole boat.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Then we had to go on what they called then an eighty-three footer back in those days. See they operated out of Little Creek. And they were a wooden hull boat. The smallest Coast Guard Cutter they had see.

Lollie Willis: Right.

Frank Williams: Had a crew of about fourteen or fifteen men. Usually an ansen if they had one, you know, where they could use, was in charge. And carried eight depth charges, twenty millimeter gun see, and we had to go out about fifty miles out past Cape Henry you know to patrol. We had – we had buoys there that we, you know, we worked in between ‘em, you know, from one buoy to the other.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But anyway, that – on that boat and I forget how long we stayed. Not too long on ‘em, but I really seen more of the war on that boat than I did – because I didn’t go overseas.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But two different times I could remember, you know, seein' em towin' a ship in that was blown right in two, the bow part of it. And they could take it into Newport News see and put it in dry dock and just add right on to it see.

Lollie Willis: Uh.

Frank Williams: Freighters most of 'em were.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Then another time I remember towin' – seein' the stern part of the ship bein' towed in to Newport News and another time I can remember seein' this big lumber barge, she was maybe a Hundred and Twenty-five Foot long. It was riddled with machine gun bullets see.

Lollie Willis: Oh my.

Frank Williams: I asked one of the men – I said what's this? One of the older men, he said well I'm pretty sure he said the Germans used that for target practice. And the only thing that kept – kept this barge afloat was the lumber, you know, it was full of lumber.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And – but – and then one morning one of our men, just about the crack of day, he says he saw – he went out to have a smoke I think outta the engine room, he was workin' in the engine room – he said I saw a sub! We sounded general quarters and we searched for maybe an hour, but we never did make contact with anything.

Lollie Willis: Huh.

Frank Williams: And I – I think the man must a saw a – saw a submarine, but they couldn't - they were just almost as fast as we were see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Because the eighty-three footer could only do I think eighteen or nineteen knots, not a very fast boat.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But then later on I was ridin' my horse on Assateague, I was home on liberty, and I was talkin' to a man, his name was Mr. Harvey Beebe. He was, you know, a great man I thought, nice man. He had – him and another man one time had - had to leave Assateague. Well, they were – they were on the front of Assateague Station, the old Station's that's there now.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And saw this big flash out in the ocean.

Lollie Willis: Oh!

Frank Williams: And one of 'em looked at the other and said we might as well get our self ready. Said we're gonna – we're gonna be called to go to sea to pick up survivors. And that's really what they had to do. And in 'bout twenty minutes or half an hour they got a call from the District Office sayin' that they needed to get underway and go out and bring these people in. And that happened at least two times from Chincoteague, see. They went out and picked up survivors.

Lollie Willis: Huh!

Frank Williams: They were sank – and nobody really, you know, would believe the things that was goin' on out in the ocean at that time. But – to get back to my story again, he told me about one of the men that was servin' at Assateague at that time wanted sea duty. And he wanted to know what my rate was. Well, I told him. He said well you could get a mutual swap, this man wants sea duty in the worst way. I said well I'm the man to swap him.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: (Laughing) So in about a month I got up to Assateague. And one of the things that kind a interested me and made me feel good was – the day that I – they sent me to Assateague it was a cold day, for it was kind a in late fall and this fellar come in, he was one of the old surfman that I was tellin' you about, and his name was Bill Daisey. And he was a great pipe smoker and he come in to pick me up from where Tom's Cove Campground is now. That – we saved a little sail, you know, by comin' in there. When we got to Assateague, man I was gettin' hungry you know. Had nothin' to eat all day.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: It was gettin' chilly and - to Assateague Station see they got a boat house and they would drop this cradle right down in the water like a little – it was like a railroad track in a way, only this – this little cradle – it looked like a little somethin' you would use on a train track see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They could drop that right down in the water and the boat would go up on top of it and pull it right on up in the boathouse. Well, Mr. Bill Daisey come in with a little bit too much speed. And he overshot the cradle and the skipper of the Station was there and his name was Mr. Elmer Lund. Oh a great – fine man see. I found that out later on. And he kind a

quarreled with Bill for comin' in too fast. He says, "You ought to know better." He says, "you've come in here too many times with that boat." Well I thought, I said boy you got your foot in a lion's mouth. See I thought it was gonna be – ever thing by the book.

Lollie Willis: Um.

Frank Williams: I was almost beginnin' to feel sorry for myself. And the second time he come in ever thing was perfect. And it was maybe five or six of the men waitin' there on the pier. The old pier and ever thing there at the boathouse is in good shape right today. And I threw my sea bag on the pier and Mr. Elmer Lund had thirty-three years of service. He was in charge of the Station. He was the Chief. He come up and put his arm around me and he said, "Frank," he says, "I'm so glad to have you here with us." He said, "We really need you here bad." And I thought well I been here before, but anyway . . .

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: Well, you can imagine how that made me feel see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: That's another one of the little stories that I never – you know, I'll always remember it.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Because he was so good to me, so kind to me. He was a man that – like myself – he wasn't too well educated, but he had a yeoman, a yeoman is what was workin' for him, used to be a Chincoteague man, his name was Harry Jester, and he could – all Mr. Lund had to do was sign his name see. They did all the paperwork you know. But otherwise he did a great job, you know. Takin' care of the crew and he told me he said, "Now Frank, we got your supper all ready." Well, that sounded good to me see to start with.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: (Laughing) He says we're gonna put you up in the attic. He said ever thing we got here is full of people see. Even a lot of – a lot of men in the Army spent a little bit a time there see. They would put 'em to these places and if they needed – if they needed men, they knew right where to get 'em at see. They knew where they had some . . .

Lollie Willis: Come in and pick 'em up.

Frank Williams: So many seamen and all of that. But he said we got your supper all ready and we gonna put you up 'ere until we can find a space for you. He was just – he was just a, you know, number one man I thought.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And it's one of the things see that I'll always remember because it made me feel so good, you know, to have somebody like him, you know, be comin' to ya.

Lollie Willis: Oh yeah, uh-huh. Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And that was pretty much – well I stayed there a while and then they had – we really volunteered for this – we told 'em - if they needed us, me and my friend, Miller Jones, would go wherever they – we'd like to go together – but it was this brand new Coast Guard Cutter they built in Curtis Bay. Her name was Mendota (Sp?). And whenever – they were gettin' her ready to go into commission – they sent us – well, to kind a shorten the story a little bit. We hadn't been to Baltimore long see, to Curtis Bay - when we heard Germany had surrendered.

Lollie Willis: Um.

Frank Williams: Well that – that was - made ever body feel great.

Lollie Willis: Um.

Frank Williams: And then after the Coast Guard Cutter, Mendota got built, you know, we were goin' out makin' runs and checkin' this gun and all that see and we had to go to gunnery school to learn how to use the five-inch gun – not real big guns you know like a battleship would have, but – and – ever body said she was gonna take a part in the invasion of Japan.

Lollie Willis: UUmm.

Frank Williams: We – we left – they wanted to take her to D.C. to kind a show her off a little bit. She was a – she was a new Coast Guard Cutter. And when we left from Baltimore we anchored out in the Chesapeake Bay. Beautiful down 'ere, never forget it. Truman come on the air and says that Japan had surrendered. Then in about an hour he come on and he said it wasn't official.

Lollie Willis: Oh.

Frank Williams: And – but we kept goin' up, I'll never forget, you know, goin' up past Mt. Vernon and all that up the Potomac River.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And we got in D. C. about – I don't know, eight o'clock that night. And Truman got on the air and said it was official (sneeze), that Japan had surrendered.

Lollie Willis: Um.

Frank Williams: And boy you could imagine bein' in a place like D.C. and get news like 'at. But we made our – we made the trip to Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, which kept on the same thing. I think one thing – they wanted to get rid of a lot of the ammunition and depth charges and all that they had aboard her and we stayed down 'ere 'bout six weeks and come on home and got discharged.

Lollie Willis: Um.

Frank Williams: And then later on I re-enlisted in the Coast Guard because I just wanted to see what it was like in peacetime. And that is the way I finished out, you know, the things that I can remember, you know, that was a little bit interesting see. And when I re-enlisted I got married. My wife, she's the one that passed away about two years ago.

Lollie Willis: Oh.

Frank Williams: But it was kind a nice bein' back in those Stations because where we're at peace see, no grit.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: We hadn't – we didn't enjoy that too long because we went to war with Korea in Korea. And when they did, of all people to send to train some of the men, I was the one lucky enough. And I hadn't even been to boot-camp see, but what I did when I got 'ere was teach 'em how to row. And, you know, I had enough of that around the Station . . .

Lollie Willis: Right. I was gonna say . . .

Frank Williams: Where we had boats and used to do that. Made out pretty good. Did a four-year hitch and come back and worked on the water again. Mostly due to the pay bein' so bad, you know. No – no pay hardly in those days. And during that time my Grandparents moved over to Chincoteague and my uncle, his name was Ralph, Ralph Jester, real good man. He – he had a little – well if you know where Pension Street is . . .

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: When you make the left to go up on Pension Street from Church Street.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: It was the second house there on Pension Street.

Lollie Willis: Oh, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: You know, an upstairs. So that is where they finished up their days, my Mother – I mean my Grandfather and my Grandmother. And that's about, you know, anything – and I worked – got on the water, back on the water, you know. You know, doin' the same things, fishin', and pottin' crabs, and things like 'at. But it was just – just you know kind of - it was an interesting life in a lot of ways.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And I'll never forget my Grandparents. And – and . . .

Lollie Willis: Now were they there during the '62 storm?

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh. They were on Chincoteague then, yeah.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And they – during the storm they took ever body – had a lot of helicopters you know flyin' back and forth. And my Grandmother went to – my wife was from, well I told you, from Wattsville. And she was one of the first ones to fly off see on the helicopter. And she thought - awe, she thought was great see.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: But then – just the way they lived on Assateague – it was – it was unbelievable how the Lord provided things for people. It was no money around see. But we had plenty of food and plenty of seafood and – like I said, they cut their own wood – and it was just . . .

Lollie Willis: Quite a contrast from today?

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh. And my Grandmother, her house was really – it wadn't – too big - it was bigger than ours was, but . . .

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And that – that just about winds it up, you know, the way I remember ever thing.

(END OF SIDE A OF TAPE – START SIDE B (IN A LITTLE WAYS ON TAPE))

Lollie Willis: This is the second side of the tape interviewing Mr. Williams. He is showing us pictures that he has drawn in his journal and he is gonna talk about this fishing.

Frank Williams: Well this is a picture of the fish pound, you know, the best I can – I am a very poor person to be drawing anything, but you can see, you can get a rough idea of what I'm talkin' about see. Sometimes, you know, well my Father when he first started this as a young

man, all the nets they had was cotton nets. And they had to be tarred. You can imagine what a mess that was.

Lollie Willis: Oh my.

Frank Williams: To dip them in a big pot, you know, full of hot tar.

Lollie Willis: Okay, let's just make sure we've gotcha.

(BLANK TAPE FOR A FEW MINUTES)

Lollie Willis: We are still talking with Frank Williams and he is telling us about trout lining.

Frank Williams: Trout lining crabs.

Lollie Willis: Trout line. (Pause in Tape) This is Mr. Williams, we are at his home in Atlantic and we talking about fishing.

Frank Williams: Well you can see what I was tryin' to tell you about with this little ole rough drawin' there see. It's – this was called a hedge here see. The fish would get in here and if they went this way they'd go in the marsh, but if they went here, they'd go back out and get in the trap see. And my Father was real good, you know, in puttin' down pounds and things like 'at. Fish pound or fish trap see.

Lollie Willis: Okay.

Frank Williams: He always called 'em a fish pound. And . . .

Lollie Willis: Like a dog pound?

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh. (Laughing) That's a little ole rough drawing of what it would look like if you were lookin' at it, you know, from Side Two you could say.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And if you went there and it had a lot a fish in the trap in this part here, the pocket, you had to net it out, you know, with a hand net. As you lightened it up, you could wind up by just puttin' the net over in the boat and pullin' the net . . .

Lollie Willis: The whole thing in?

Frank Williams: Yeah, the whole thing in, uh-huh. And this – I think I told you 'bout the down the bay boat see. That was – that's what . . .

Lollie Willis: Um.



Frank Williams: When you were goin' down the bay you know spendin' some time, you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. And you have a model here.

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh.

Lollie Willis: And you say your son made this?

Frank Williams: My son-in-law.

Lollie Willis: Son-in-law, wow.

Frank Williams: Gary \_\_\_\_\_ (inaudible). But that's – that's exactly the way they looked like see. That's – this is – well that would a been their lights, their sailin' lights here. The tanks. Back here we called this a slide see, you could – if you didn't have a way like this to get down in the cabin, you could – you would have to get down real low see, but this would move forward and you could just step right down in it see. This was called a slide. If you understand what I'm, you know, tryin' to say.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. Uh-huh, yeah.

Frank Williams: Then you just bring this in and you could step right down.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Had a little set of steps here. The food was kept back in here see because it was cooler see. This was – this was settin' in the water, it's part of the boat here. And the water barrels, we had to take our water in barrels and that's the only way we could – we could carry our drinkin' water and water to cook with see, was in these barrels here. And usually in my day they had car – you know – put car engines in there. That's what we used.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They – they did pretty good.

Lollie Willis: Would the engine be here?

Frank Williams: No, the engine set right along here.

Lollie Willis: Oh, okay.

Frank Williams: Uh-huh. See there – there is the propeller and . . .

Lollie Willis: Oh, he did a great job!

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh. And this – this was – that’s where you – in the summer months when you needed to put the clams down to get ‘em out of the sun.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And it was also a little colder see, due to the water, you know, surrounded by water. We called that the hole, you know, where you put your clams at and ever thing.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And this – we called them ass covers. (Laughing)

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But that’s – that was my Father and oh, I thought that boat was great see! (Pause) That’s - that’s just a little ole rough drawin’, the best I can because I wanted my Granddaughter to know – have some little idea of what it looked like you know (Laughing).

Lollie Willis: It’s wonderful.

Frank Williams: All they had see to tie their boats to maybe was a piece of iron pipe you know. Stuck down on – in the marsh and all the people lived near Assateague they didn’t have no piers or things like ‘at to tie their boat to. But you can get – give you a little rough idea of how they tied their boats.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And this was the channel like I say. Off here you could – you could take your little boat, get right out in the channel, catch all the fish you needed. And this – this was a little ole rough drawin’ of how you waded clams see. You – you . . .

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: You felt them with your feet, did you know that?

Lollie Willis: (Laughing) I’ve done that some times.

Frank Williams: Have you done it?

Lollie Willis: (Laughing) Yeah.

Frank Williams: Well you know what I’m talkin’ about.

Lollie Willis: Yeah.

Frank Williams: (Laughing) And I got a picture somewhere of a . . . (pause)

Lollie Willis: Oh!

Frank Williams: This is you know a rough drawin' of a boat that is bringin' up seed oysters see. With the – with the monitor loaded with oysters. That's what they looked like you know. Looked like a hill on top of the monitor see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And they would either be goin' to Chincoteague Bay with 'em to plant 'em, or to Tom's Cove. Now that's what tongin' – did you ever know how to – what you were talkin' about, tongin' . . .

Lollie Willis: Tonging. Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Tongin' clams and oysters, just like rakes on the end of sticks.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: My Father, he was – he was real good at 'at in his day. And this was another – that was a houseboat my Father owned. And it didn't have a motor in but you had to tow it ever where it went you know. We called it a floatin' shan'y.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: Had three rooms in it and - but you could sleep about maybe eight or ten people on board of a boat range like this. Had a little coal stove up here to heat and a little three-burner kerosene stove to cook on.

Lollie Willis: Now when you're talking about going down the bay, are you talking about going down Chincoteague Bay?

Frank Williams: Well . . .

Lollie Willis: Or are you talking about down the bay, the Chesapeake Bay?

Frank Williams: No, we're talkin' about goin' down the Bay, maybe down to Hogg Island Bay.

Lollie Willis: Oh, okay.

Frank Williams: Maybe . . .

Lollie Willis: When you say down the Bay you mean the Bay along . . .

Frank Williams: The Bay, all the inland waters see. I say average, you know, somewhere around Exmore, size of 'at a lot a times.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Depending on different things see.

Lollie Willis: Okay. So you are like going between those Barrier Islands on the way down?

Frank Williams: Yeah, yeah, right, uh-huh, yeah.

Lollie Willis: Okay.

Frank Williams: And to all those islands, I got another book in 'ere that's got some pictures of the Coast Guard Station see.

Lollie Willis: Down on Hogg Island or?

Frank Williams: Yeah, Hogg Island. I'll get that for ya, just take a minute, but that is one of the boats I had – work boat. I made it too long, but it was – it was a pretty nice boat. I could dredge clams with it you know. Sleep three people aboard a boat like 'is.

Lollie Willis: Wow!

Frank Williams: I wished you could meet my Granddaughter. She's – she works at Circuit City and she is a nice . . .

Lollie Willis: Is she up in Salisbury?

Frank Williams: Well she – no, she's - Richmond.

Lollie Willis: Richmond, oh, okay!

Frank Williams: Yeah. And there's a little ole drawin' of how we fished crab pots and you can almost smell the water right?

Lollie Willis: (Laughing) Yeah!

Frank Williams: And this, that's kind a interestin' see, that's – up until maybe '50 – '60 – 1960, a lot a people built little – we called watch houses – back in the marsh and they would – they'd maybe find some oyster ground and they thought, you know, could – they could make some good money. And they'd build a little one-room house on stilts see, just like 'at is.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And – see they caught their water off – off of the roof see.

Lollie Willis: Oh, I see, it's draining down into the water barrel.

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But that's – there was a lot of them down the bay, you know, when goin' down the bay back in my day see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. So they would stay in there and . . .

Frank Williams: Yeah.

Lollie Willis: Do their oystering and then head home?

Frank Williams: Yeah, yeah.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: They could – well they could watch the ground mostly see is what the little house, you know – just a little one-room shack was about all it was.

Lollie Willis: Yeah, they didn't want anybody stealing their oysters?

Frank Williams: Yeah, right. That was the idea.

Lollie Willis: They were watchin' em. (Laughing)

Frank Williams: Yeah, yeah. (Laughing)

Lollie Willis: Yeah. (Long Pause) That's great that you've done some of this for her.

Frank Williams: My handwritin' is terrible.

Lollie Willis: Looks pretty good to me.

Frank Williams: Now there's just a little ole rough drawin' of this boat I was tellin' you about, the Susie B that was . . .

Lollie Willis: Oh, when you were in the Coast Guard?

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Pretty little boat. She had what they called a trunk cabin. You know, that was, the cabin was not raised up above the decks. It was the – it was the top part of the boat. The sides of the boat were – were made high enough so you could – you could live, you know beneath the deck.

Lollie Willis: Beneath deck, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Yeah.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams. But it was a pretty little boat and the thing that interested me as much as anything was the fact that Mr. Ira Hudson built this boat. And his decoys were so much in demand.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. He was quite a craftsman.

Frank Williams: Yeah, he was. Yeah, he was a nice man too. Mr. Hudson was. And that's the boat, you know, I was tellin' you about that caught a fire with me. That's another . . .

Lollie Willis: Oohh!

Frank Williams: You know not even near to what they really looked like.

(All Laughing)

Frank Williams: But again . . .

Lollie Willis: It gives you an idea

Frank Williams: But again, it gives my Granddaughter a little idea, you know.

Lollie Willis: Yeah.

Frank Williams: Of what things were like.

Lollie Willis: It sure will, because it's so different today.

Frank Williams: Yeah. And one other thing I was tryin' to find here (pause). Well, that's just a rough drawin' of the eighty-three footer I was on see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Only very poor.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: The bow is pretty good but I couldn't you know – and it would take so long. See here's the little 20 millimeter gun I was tellin' you about.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing)

Frank Williams: That's depth charges.

Lollie Willis: Looks mighty small to take on all the German army or navy.

Frank Williams: Yeah, yeah, how about that, yeah. And the crew slept up in here. You could operate it from down below or up on the bridge see. And in their day they were pretty nice. I remember tellin' my Father that – how expensive they were. They were Eight – a Thousand Dollars a foot, these boats were.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: My Lord, this day and time that wouldn't be nothin'.

Lollie Willis: Huh-uh. Huh-uh. No.

Frank Williams: There's a picture of an oyster farm here I wanna show you. (Pause)

Lollie Willis: Well, you are so thoughtful to have done this for your grandchildren-Granddaughter.

Frank Williams: There's another picture of the old boat with seed oysters. And this was a drawin' of the down the bay boat. You know the way they would look if you could look right down in 'em see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh. The bunks and everything.

Frank Williams: The bunks here. A bunk here, a bunk here and the pilothouse bunk. Well, I don't think I had that there, but back under the stern see, that's where we had to keep our food. It kept a little better there than it would have – and this is the hold here see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: But it'll be a little help to her, you know.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: Now this – not too many people knew what an oyster pond was see, but back in my Father’s day, they would go like from Piney Island Creek see. This would be the creek right here.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And they would dig a trench inland and dig out this big pond see. I don’t know how they managed to do it hardly because it would a had to been a lot a diggin’. But this little trench would let the amount of salt water in this pond they needed to keep the oysters, you know. They – a little fresh water with an oyster improves the growth and the taste and ever thing see.

Lollie Willis: Um.

Frank Williams: And they would put ‘em in ‘ere and when the weather turned cold or, you know, and the bays frozed up and all that, they would have – they would have a lot of oysters on hand see. And that’s when they would take ‘em down to the freight dock and put ever thing on the boats and they would go to Franklin City. Because the railroad track runs – did you ever go to Franklin City? It’s like a little point that runs right down in the water and it’s – the old railroad tracks still there. But they would back the horse and wagon down here. They put a bucket under the horse’s tail. (Laughing)

Lollie Willis: Oh, okay. (Laughing)

Frank Williams: Anyway, and you know that’s a rough drawin’ of an oyster pond see. Now not many people have heard about that see. But . . .

Lollie Willis: No.

Frank Williams: My Father used to tell me stories. How – and they were real clean with it. He said ever fall they would go in ‘ere with big wide brooms and they would sweep all the silt and ever thing out here to where this drain is and push it all out in the creek to get rid of it. And they would haul in fresh sand and ever – ever year in the fall of the year.

Lollie Willis: Oh.

Frank Williams: And then they would put their oysters in there.

Lollie Willis: So this farming oysters is not a new thing, they – they really had to take care of your beds even in the olden times?

Frank Williams: Yeah. Oh yeah, yeah, they needed to. And you had to – every spring you had to – they put out screw bore pots. See the screw bores is like a little periwinkle. And they would kill the oysters see if they were on your oyster beds. And – they – somebody said they would – they had like an acid in ‘em and they could drill a little hole in an oyster shell. Used – you know, no trouble at all to see the little hole and that would kill the oyster. And it’s – oh, it’s killed



thousands of bushels of oysters, little screw bores. Like a little – like a little periwinkle. And ever year they would scrape the ground, you know, with flat boards and dredges. That was one way of gettin' rid of 'em. And all the shells and things you would bring ashore see. You just put 'em on the – your dock or wherever you needed 'em and they would dry.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And the screw bores would – it would kill the screw bores. The only thing, like a sailboat, that I can remember was somethin' like this here see. It was somethin' like the down the bay boats. Lot a down the bay boats were old sailboats at one time.

Lollie Willis: Hmm.

Frank Williams: But this boat here was – well we call it Die see, she – they moved it up the creek and just left it there until it just sank and it just layed there.

Lollie Willis: Umm.

Frank Williams: But it had a little low cabin see. This was kind of a little drawin' of somethin' like the – the down the bay boat see – but had little bunks down each side, little low bunks. And this – this would be a little small table they ate off of see – was hooked to the stern part of the boat. The table wadn't 'bout one-third the size of this table here see.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: It was just big enough so ever body could set a plate on it, you know, and eat their meal.

Lollie Willis: Hmm.

Frank Williams: And – but I – I don't remember – that's the only thing I remember and I had to guess about a little bit of it.

Lollie Willis: Well, you've really . . .

Frank Williams: Not a very good drawing.

Lollie Willis: I don't know, I think you're pretty good. I wouldn't tell anybody that you're not.

Frank Williams: Hmm.

Lollie Willis: (Laughing) They look good to me. Well . . .

Frank Williams: And that was just a rough – that was a terrible drawin' of the picket boats we used to have see. But it was only 'bout five windows in 'ere and I didn't think about it until . . .

Lollie Willis: That's at the Life Boat Station?

Frank Williams: Yeah, uh-huh.

Lollie Willis: Picket boat?

Frank Williams: Um-huh. And, of course, they had a light ship off of – that was a picture of me down to Cobb Island.

Lollie Willis: Aawwe.

Frank Williams: And this guy here and him was from Pittsburgh.

Lollie Willis: Hmmm!

Frank Williams: They – they went to school together and went through boot camp together, and they were all stationed together at one time.

Lollie Willis: Wow. You've really had a very interesting life.

Frank Williams: Yeah, I did. It has been, uh-huh. And 'at – we had a light ship see for a while. A light ship – well if you would go up now to Assateague and go where the office is and all that and where most of the bathin' and all that's done - and you stood duty for about maybe – I'll say an hour, I forgot how long it would take to go to her.

Lollie Willis: Uh-huh.

Frank Williams: And it was a big sand shoal off 'ere and that – the Winter Quarter Light Ship stayed there. And, of course, she had a light and . . .

Lollie Willis: Wow, neat. But – did anybody stay on her?

Frank Williams: Oh yeah!

Lollie Willis: Oh yeah, they did?

Frank Williams: Oh yeah, she had a crew on her all the time. Yeah, back in those days they'd stay there in hurricanes and all kinds a bad weather see, on those light ships. That's . . .

Lollie Willis: Okay. Well, I think we've learned a lot here.

Frank Williams: Well, that's about it so far as I can tell ya, you know.

END OF TAPE.