

EDWARD BOWDEN
August 1, 2006

Interviewer: Anne Whealton
Interviewee: Edward Bowden
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(TAPE SIDE A – 1st Side):

Anne Whealton: Hello. My name is Anne Whealton and I am here today which is August 1, 2006, and I am interviewing Edward Bowden. And by coincidence today is his birthday and he's gonna – he is turning seventy-five (75) today. So I am here in their lovely home on Beebe Road and they just happen to be my neighbors. And I really appreciate them as neighbors. So – how are you doing today Ed?

Edward Bowden: Just fine.

Anne Whealton: Good. Well, I'm excited about doing this interview and I'd like you to start out with talking about your childhood. When you were born, your birthday, who your parents were, how many kids were in the family, and where you lived.

Edward Bowden: I was born in 19 - August, 1931, August 1, 1931 at Beebe Road. My father was named Paul Bowden and my mother was named Lori Bowden. I had a brother named Donald Bowden. I had a brother named Larry Bowden and a sister named Shirley Bowden. But I spent most of my time probably twelve years livin' with my Grandmother and Grandfather's from the time I was born.

Anne Whealton: Okay, so from the time you were born you lived with your grandparents, and where did they live Ed?

Edward Bowden: They lived right behind my Father on Beebe Road.

Anne Whealton: Oh they did? Okay.

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: Good. All right, can you tell me some stories about being a kid here on Beebe Road? What was life like?

Edward Bowden: Well, bein' a kid on Beebe Road at the time there was – it was a good time in one way and another way there was days – times – that you couldn't buy anything like bicycles.

We had one bicycle between three of us – the whole time bein’ together. Goin’ fishin’ and bein’ able to crab in this pond out here and more or less playin’ up and down the road and goin’ to movies and that sort of thing. Just about more or less our everyday thing.

Anne Whealton: And do you remember any funny stories when you were a kid?

Edward Bowden: (Laughing) Yeah. Funny stories.

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: Well, not at this time I can’t remember many. I’m sure there was a plenty but I can’t remember at this time.

Anne Whealton: Okay. You had told me that you went and lived on Assateague Island at one time?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, in let’s see – 19 – it was ’34, ’35 and ’36 I lived at Assateague with my Grandfather and Grandmother, which he worked over there.

Anne Whealton: What did he do over there?

Edward Bowden: He worked in that – down on the – in the oysters and also . . .

Anne Whealton: Was he watchman or was he . . .

Edward Bowden: No, he worked on – in the oysters – for people with – had oyster beds over there. And also worked with the Menhaden Company I believe that was over there at the time.

Anne Whealton: Okay. So what did he do?

Edward Bowden: More or less would make fish oil and things like that.

Anne Whealton: Okay. So it was a factory?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, with the fish factory, right.

Anne Whealton: Oh he did, he worked for the fish factory, I didn’t know that.

Edward Bowden: Evidently, yeah.

Anne Whealton: Okay. And where did they live on Assateague?

Edward Bowden: We lived about – right across from the old Coast Guard Station.

Anne Whealton: Okay. All right. And you were there for three years?

Edward Bowden: Yes. We'd go over on Monday morning and come back on a Friday afternoon late. Stay over the weekend at home and pick up groceries and go back over on Monday morning. Stay a weeks time.

Anne Whealton: Do you have any memories of Assateague?

Edward Bowden: Assateague – well, yeah, I have. Assateague – playin' up in what we called the white hills. Used to be big white hills of sand and used to play in and different places. And watchin' some of the older people that come by days that lived on the Island also. Like Ben Scott, Bill Scott. Then we had a lot – quite a few Chincoteaguers, older guys that worked over, that came over the same we did every week. Every week we'd come over and we'd stay over there and go to work. So at that particular time there was quite a few families that lived over there.

Anne Whealton: And you went up the white hills to play?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: What did you do up there? I used to go up there.

Edward Bowden: Well, we just run up and down the hills and play around. Play hide and go seek, beat 'em home, beat 'em home.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Yeah. And then in 1937 I had to come back to the Island to go to school, so that's when my Grandfather decided to raise chickens for Jess Watson, where the Sea Shell Motel is on Willow Street.

Anne Whealton: Okay, so your Grandfather. Now which Grandfather? Is this your paternal or your maternal?

Edward Bowden: That was E. Birch, my Mother's grandfather.

Anne Whealton: Your Mother's, okay.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: And this is the same one you lived with over on Assateague?

Edward Bowden: Right, right, yeah.

Anne Whealton: Okay. His name was E. Birch?

Edward Bowden: Right.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Grandmother was – my grandmother's name was Ollie Birch.

Anne Whealton: Ollie, okay.

Edward Bowden: Zeola rather, Zeola Birch.

Anne Whealton: Zeola, okay.

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: And they lived over on Willow Street where Sea Shell Motel is right now?

Edward Bowden: Right, right.

Anne Whealton: Okay. And so they moved from Assateague to over there?

Edward Bowden: Well, no. They had a original home here on Beebe Road.

Anne Whealton: So the original home was on Beebe Road, okay?

Edward Bowden: Yes. That's where they came back on weekends and stayed.

Anne Whealton: Okay, but they still had a house on Assateague too?

Edward Bowden: Well yeah, they rented a home over there.

Anne Whealton: You rented a home, okay, that's good. All right.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, they rented a home.

Anne Whealton: And then they ended up having a chicken place on Willow Street.

Edward Bowden: That's right.

Anne Whealton: But they kept this house here?

Edward Bowden: Right.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: All right, what can you remember about the chicken place – chicken house?

Edward Bowden: Well the chickens, I used to help to raise ‘em, feed ‘em and that sort of thing. We’d keep ‘em for sixteen weeks, have to turn ‘em out in the runs during the summertime and then run ‘em back in nights, and that sort of thing. So spent most of the time right around the chicken house and meetin’ other people that had chicken houses down in the same area. So I remember one time that we had a store down on Willow Street, its name was Franco Davies and we got a couple pennies and they were tarring the road at the time that day and I wanted to go over and get a piece of candy. So I went over and tried to figure out how to get across the road. So I found a board, layed the board down and I jumped on the board and the board slid and I slid down in the tar.

Anne Whealton: Oh my lands! (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: I went home . . . (laughing)

Anne Whealton: I bet your Mom was happy.

Edward Bowden: Well, my Grandfather was – when I went home he had to wash me up with kerosene.

Anne Whealton: Oh my!

Edward Bowden: Of course, I paid for the rest of it – I couldn’t quit burnin’.

Anne Whealton: I imagine you did, I bet you were burned some place else.

Edward Bowden: And then my aunt’s girlfriend which was Gloria Davis, lived up, right on Crawford Street, she would come over ever day and they’d get together and play so they always sent me for water, get me a glass a water, glass of water. Well, I finally got tired of it.

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: So one day I put some chicken salts into their water.

Anne Whealton: Some chicken what?

Edward Bowden: Chicken salts.

Anne Whealton: Chicken salts?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, they used to put some in their feed.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So I put it into their water. Well, for about three weeks they didn't need no water. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: Oh my lands!

Edward Bowden: Yeah. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: You were always playing tricks weren't you?

Edward Bowden: Yeah. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh. I know that's why I want to hear some of those stories. I know – didn't you do something with a cow or something? Somebody's cow?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Barnie . . .

Unknown: Barnie Beebe.

Edward Bowden: Oh that's, oh Barnie. Well, I don't know if you want to get in that discussion or not. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: Oh well, I'll put it in this way. His father was named Rob Beebe, lived down on Main Street, we all played together.

Anne Whealton: His name was Rob Beebe?

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh. We always played together as kids. And we'd watch a lot of the movies, what went on in the movies we'd come home and try it out here.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So next door to me, right over here by my Father's here, was all these big trees during that time. So Weldon . . .

Anne Whealton: Okay, that's Weldon Bowden.

Edward Bowden: Right. Weldon Bowden was up the tree one time.

Anne Whealton: And he was your cousin right?

Edward Bowden: Right.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So I was bein' a cowboy, I shot 'im and I told 'im, I says, "If you don't jump outta the tree we're not playin' any more." So Weldon jumped out with a rope around his neck . . .

Anne Whealton: Oh no!

Edward Bowden: And lucky enough the rope was long enough where it didn't choke 'im.

Anne Whealton: Oh my lands!

Edward Bowden: Then we also played up in the trees quite a lot and we would go take the tomatoes out of my Grandfather's garden and try to hit the cars. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: Oh my goodness. (Laughing) Ed!

Edward Bowden: Then I got the idea of makin' a baby outta some old clothes and I made it and I put a sailor hat on its head and put it out in the road. We'd put a string on it and when the cars would go by we'd pull it out and pull it back like the baby was a crawlin'.

Anne Whealton: Oh my lands.

Edward Bowden: And we'd create a big problem with that also.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh, traffic jam. (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: Yeah, yeah! One guy went out in the ditch.

Anne Whealton: Oh no.

Edward Bowden: So, yeah we were doin' – did quite a bit a things. Matter of fact they went – out on Main Street we used to ride the bicycles and we used to skate on the sidewalk. Well the people got mad and wouldn't let us skate on the sidewalk; they called the law on us. So to get back at 'em, they had them old big street lights, so we'd ride under 'em with a BB gun and shoot the lights out.

Anne Whealton: Oh my.

Edward Bowden: So we put 'em all in the dark. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing) Uh-huh. How about the little stores that they had around here, do you remember any of the little stores?

Edward Bowden: Oh . . .

Anne Whealton: Do you remember any of those little store stories?

Edward Bowden: Oh yeah! One Sunday – my brother, Weldon and myself, took a stroll in Bunker’s Hill, after World War II. At the time we – we found several capsules, glass capsules, and we didn’t know what was in ‘em.

Anne Whealton: You found glass what?

Edward Bowden: Glass capsules, like they had yellow pattern on ‘em.

Anne Whealton: Capsules, okay.

Edward Bowden: And – so we decided to put some in a fire and see what they would do. What we found out by puttin’ ‘em in a fire it blowed all the fire away.

Anne Whealton: Awe . . .!!!

Edward Bowden: So we loaded our pockets up and we’d go to this little country store which was Dave Beebe’s store. In the store he had a great big stove.

Anne Whealton: And that’s at the end of Beacon Street right?

Edward Bowden: Right, right.

Anne Whealton: That was at the end of Beacon Street?

Edward Bowden: End of Beacon Street, yes. At the store we – the people would always hang – the old people would hang out there every day, tellin’ stories and smokin’ their cigars, cigarettes, and so forth. So I walked into the – Mr. Beebe and I said, “Sir,” I said, “I’d like to have three pieces of candy.” And he said, “Boys, be quiet, when I get through this conversation I’ll give you some candy.” I said, “Yes sir.” So we drifted on back by the stove, the old heads just talkin’ up a streak. So we empty our pockets of these capsules in the stove. And we rushed back up to the counter and said, “Sir, can we get our candy?” And he said, “Yes.” So he give us three pieces of candy, we in turn go outdoors, and we hold the door too and the explosion went off and it blew the lid off the stove and the stovepipe down.

Anne Whealton: Oh my goodness.

Edward Bowden: It created so much soot in the place they’re all a coughin’, tryin’ to get out to the door, well they couldn’t get out, we were holdin’ the door too. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing) You’re a mess.

Edward Bowden: So one guy, I don't remember who it was, said that I've heard that stove backfire a lot but I never seen it do nothin' like 'at before. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing) Awe, that's great. Nobody got hurt.

Edward Bowden: Oh no!

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So, you know, I guess it's a part of bein' boys.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Growin' up.

Anne Whealton: Yeah, you all were mischievous.

Edward Bowden: And then they give us a little problem another time so everybody had a small boat that they went clammin' with, out there everyday of their life, livelihood, most the people around here.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So durin' the night to get back to 'em we changed all their boats. We tied one to one pole and one to another pole. Next mornin' they got up to go to work and one says, "this aint my boat" and another, "this aint my boat."

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: (Laughing) It took 'em about two hours to find their boat. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing) You guys spent a lot of time on your tricks.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: You never told me that one that's a good one.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Uh – now tell me a little bit about your Grandfather because I know sometimes you've told me stories about – didn't he have a stroke or something?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, in later years.

Anne Whealton: And he had a really nice garden or something. Tell me that story.

Edward Bowden: Well, my Grandfather, during the winter he would go out and cut about three loads – truck loads of wood a year for the winter. And this one particular day he fell out with a bad stroke. So I went and started workin' on 'im right away, started workin' on his arms and so forth, and . . .

Anne Whealton: What did you do, you mean workin' on, what were you doing?

Edward Bowden: Rubbin' his arms and different things and given 'im a ball to squeeze.

Anne Whealton: For circulation? Okay.

Edward Bowden: And I got the use of his arm back and I got use of his leg back later on.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Where he was able to go out with a hoe and a rake and he dug his whole garden up and planted a beautiful garden and he also had two cancers. With that and the stroke itself and what he did, he lived five years like that.

Anne Whealton: He did live five years. That's pretty neat. So he was able to be determined enough and with help from you to be able to go back to at least doing his garden? He was retired from work by then right?

Edward Bowden: Yes.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: But another thing, determination created that problem. He wanted to move forward, he wadn't gonna let this bother him and it didn't.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So I guess that's where I took my determination from.

Anne Whealton: What were you saying Margaret?

Margaret Bowden: (inaudible)

Anne Whealton: Something about going to the carnival with your Grandfather?

Margaret Bowden: No, Grandfather used to take care of the carnival grounds.

Anne Whealton: Oh he used to take care of the carnival grounds. What about your Grandfather taking care of the carnival grounds?

Edward Bowden: Oh, well, he had these banks that he made out of clam shells. And he wanted to sell 'em to make extra money, he wanted to sell 'em at the carnival grounds. Well the carnival ground told him that if he would stay out all night long, out to the carnival grounds, be a guard, that they'd let him sell the banks.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So that's – that's how he got to sell the banks out there.

Anne Whealton: And they were made out of conch shells?

Edward Bowden: No, clam shells.

Anne Whealton: Clam.

Edward Bowden: Big clam shells.

Anne Whealton: How did he make them?

Edward Bowden: Well, he takes these – back in them days clam shells were that big all over the beach.

Anne Whealton: Okay, they were really rather large, probably about seven-eight inches?

Edward Bowden: Right good size.

Anne Whealton: If more.

Edward Bowden: Well in the back in the hinge – he would steam the clam itself, glue it back together.

Anne Whealton: Okay, uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Cut this hinge out and put the money in it.

Anne Whealton: Oh, that's so neat. I never saw any of them. Did you save some of them?

Edward Bowden: No. But then he would varnish 'em and put Chincoteague, Virginia on 'em.

Anne Whealton: Oh, that is so neat. Did he sell 'em?

Edward Bowden: Oh yes!

Anne Whealton: Did they sell really well?

Edward Bowden: Oh yes, yes, sure did!

Anne Whealton: So he had his own little tourist industry?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Project going on?

Edward Bowden: I guess we take after 'im.

Anne Whealton: And he cleaned the grounds all night for free in order to be able to sell them there?

Edward Bowden: Yes.

Anne Whealton: Wow!

Edward Bowden: That's the only way they'd let 'im sell 'em, work for 'em.

Anne Whealton: Wow. Now let me ask you too about the carnival. The carnival was not always where it is on Main Street. Do you remember the carnival when it was any of the other places?

Edward Bowden: Oh yeah.

Anne Whealton: And do you remember any of the different entertainment that they had?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, the carnival ground used to be on Mumford Street. Right behind the Meatland – the Meatland I would say.

Anne Whealton: Oh, right behind Meatland, okay.

Edward Bowden: That's where it used to be.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Then, it also – the carnival ground used to be where Mac Homes' dock is, where the Chincoteague Inn is.

Anne Whealton: Where the Chincoteague Inn is, that's where I heard about that it was.

Edward Bowden: It used to be there, yeah.

Anne Whealton: Didn't they used to have races, swimming races?

Edward Bowden: Uh . . .

Anne Whealton: Or something where people would jump off the bridge and swim?

Edward Bowden: Possible, I don't remember . . .

Anne Whealton: You don't remember that? Okay.

Edward Bowden: No, I don't remember, never heard of it.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Of course, I stayed in town a lot 'cause my aunt lived there.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: But I do know that – now we also had big – Coast Guard would come in and put big shows on from Assateague on pony penning day. That was always a big thing.

Anne Whealton: Oh really? What kind of shows?

Edward Bowden: Well they'd do different things with their boats and so forth. And I used to sit up on the old clam house and watch 'em all come up.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And then in later years the Navy would come over and fly over and then we had a kayak – wire acts – you know, what they call 'em, trapeze?

Anne Whealton: Trapeze, yeah, okay.

Edward Bowden: Used to have all that and I think we had several – several different big bands come here and . . .

Anne Whealton: Do you remember any of them?

Edward Bowden: Well yeah, we had a lot a westerns here. We used to have Joe Hawkins, uh – can't remember, it was a lot of 'em that came here, I can't remember all of 'em now.

Margaret Bowden: Flash Larue.

Edward Bowden: Huh?

Margaret Bowden: Flash Larue.

Edward Bowden: Flash Larue came here, well that came to the theatre. Uh – Paul Ritter came here.

Anne Whealton: Wow, that's neat.

Edward Bowden: He came here with his horse one time.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Margaret Bowden: Little Beaver.

Edward Bowden: Huh?

Margaret Bowden: Little Beaver.

Anne Whealton: Beaver from the – Little Beaver?

Edward Bowden: We had a –

(pause)

Anne Whealton: Um – Bob?

Margaret Bowden: Robert Blake.

Anne Whealton: Robert who?

Margaret Bowden: Robert Blake.

Anne Whealton: Robert Blake. He came here too?

Margaret Bowden: When he was a little boy.

Anne Whealton: Oh really? Okay, yeah. Yeah because he was a famous child actor, you're right.

Edward Bowden: I told her – I told a lot a people about Robert Blake bein' the Little Beaver and they – “oh no he wadn't,” “no he wadn't.” I said, “Yes, he was.”

Margaret Bowden: (inaudible)

Anne Whealton: Yeah, uh-huh, isn't that neat. Okay, well now what did you do for work once you became a teenager, what kind of work did you do?

Edward Bowden: Well, for a while back in 19 – World War II – I worked with my Grandfather – musseling. Gettin' mussels out of the marsh.

Anne Whealton: Getting mussels out of the what – out of the marshes?

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: They used mussels around here?

Edward Bowden: They sold 'em, yeah.

Anne Whealton: For what?

Edward Bowden: That was a big thing, they did something with 'em in World War II and they'd get like Seventy-five Cents a bushel. Which . . .

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: Was a lot a money back then. But it was kind a muddy goin' and gettin' em.

Anne Whealton: So it wasn't for food though?

Edward Bowden: No. I don't know what they used 'em for. But outside of that I worked with my Father.

Anne Whealton: What did your Father do?

Edward Bowden: Haul dirt.

Anne Whealton: So when did he start hauling dirt?

Edward Bowden: Back – we – I started in 1946. Just a young boy.

Anne Whealton: Did he work in the canning factory, your Father?

Edward Bowden: No. No, my Father was always started out with trucks.

Anne Whealton: Did you work in the canning factory?

Edward Bowden: I worked at the one at – yeah- where Russell Fish’s dock is.

Anne Whealton: Oh, there was a canning factory on the Island?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Oh, I didn’t know that.

Edward Bowden: Tomato factory.

Anne Whealton: Tomato factory, okay. Tell me about that because I haven’t heard anyone talk about that.

Edward Bowden: I got a job workin’ there and the first day I worked out on the dock standing boxes. And I think the second – third day I was goin’ to work – for the second or third day I worked for the boiler, where the boiler, where they steamed these tomatoes.

Anne Whealton: Right.

Edward Bowden: And as they came out with cans I was takin’ the cans and puttin’ ‘em in the boxes.

Anne Whealton: Okay. Was it a big building, was this a big place?

Edward Bowden: Well it wadn’t that big but employed – it did employ quite a few people that was steamin’ the tomatoes and puttin’ em cans.

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: And over on one side is where the trucks would bring all the tomatoes in.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So anyhow, on the third day a work it was a hot day just like this, 1947, I had a bicycle I rode to work and when I got out at the end of Beebe Road my chain kept comin’ off and I said this is nice, I been at work three days and here I’m late already. So I kind a got aggravated. Well, I didn’t know it at the time; God was fixin’ it where I couldn’t be there. I didn’t know this at the time but I found out later.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: When I got there I was late and it was people ever where and I said what’s goin’ on here. The two guys that run the boiler that went in that mornin’ and someway turned cold water on that boiler and blew the whole place up!

Anne Whealton: Oh my land!

Edward Bowden: Blew it up.

Anne Whealton: This was 1947?

Edward Bowden: The guys that I worked with, they had one of 'em in the ambulance. And the other guy when I went down and looked – when I went and looked at the place, I went over and here's all these tomatoes they'd just brought in . . .

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: To be steamed, and the guy I had worked with that day prior to that was sittin' there with his whole head blew off.

Anne Whealton: Oh my lands! Did he survive?

Edward Bowden: Oh no! Blew his whole head off.

Anne Whealton: Oh my goodness! I never heard anybody tell about that story. How long was that canning place there?

Edward Bowden: Well it had been there quite some time.

Anne Whealton: Like ten, twenty years?

Edward Bowden: Probably, probably some – somewhere in that category I guess. Fellow named Earl Watson is the one that run it.

Anne Whealton: He's the one who owned it?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, so that took care of that job.

Anne Whealton: Wow. Three days on the job. That's an interesting story.

Edward Bowden: Well . . .

Anne Whealton: You're right; God did take care of you.

Edward Bowden: That's what I'm sayin', that's what the inference was, I didn't suppose to be there.

Anne Whealton: Right.

Edward Bowden: And I didn't know why and I was aggravated because I was late. I've always thought about that.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: But he fixed it where I couldn't be there.

Anne Whealton: That's great.

Edward Bowden: In other words, if I'd been there on time I'd a been blowed up too.

Anne Whealton: Wow!

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: That's quite a story.

Edward Bowden: So that's . . .

Anne Whealton: Yeah. Do you remember anything – about World War II? Do you remember what it was like on the Island during World War II?

Edward Bowden: Yeah! There was . . .

Anne Whealton: Can you tell me anything about that?

Edward Bowden: World War II we had blackouts.

Anne Whealton: What's a blackout?

Edward Bowden: Couldn't, you know, we had to put shades to the window show no light.

Anne Whealton: Did they provide them, the government, or did you?

Edward Bowden: Oh no! You did it yourself.

Anne Whealton: So you just got black . . .

Edward Bowden: We had blackouts, we had food stamps, had to get stamps for fuel and so forth. And . . .

Anne Whealton: And everything was rationed here too?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Sugar. You'd get sugar; you'd get little blocks of sugar about this big. That's all you could get, little squares.

Anne Whealton: Yeah, I remember them when I was growin' up, okay.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, that's all you'd get. Couldn't get no butter. You got margarine you know. Like we get now – nobody likes butter.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: But that's all it was, you couldn't buy no butter. And we had a lot a stuff rationed here.

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: You couldn't get, yeah.

Anne Whealton: Well a lot of people around here had gardens and animals, so didn't people share what they had?

Edward Bowden: Oh yeah! Yeah! That's the trouble, ever body was had a lot of love and respect back in them days for ever body. Ever body helped ever body. If you needed someone to help you do somethin', you had ten people there.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: To help you. Like the turn the boat over, help you do anything. Ever body was willing to help each other.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Not like we live today, like we live here.

Anne Whealton: Right, okay.

Edward Bowden: But that's the way it was and that made it much easier.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Nobody did without because other people would give. And you talk about gardens. I would say pretty – maybe not everyone - I couldn't say everyone, but it was a big percentage of the people that had gardens on this Island. That was the way of life. If you didn't

have a garden, you didn't eat. You know what I mean, you didn't have a car to go here or – there wadn't – you couldn't get it.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So that – that – and another thing back there, you had hogs, you raised hogs. And garden and chicken . . .

Anne Whealton: Did you have a hog?

Edward Bowden: My Grandfather used to kill three ever year.

Anne Whealton: Your Grandfather did do the hog thing?

Edward Bowden: Ever year.

Anne Whealton: And did they get – what happened on the day when they slaughtered the hog, what was that like?

Edward Bowden: Oh that was a big day!

Anne Whealton: What happened, what was it like?

Edward Bowden: Well, ever body came, you got people would come down and get the fires goin' and they'd slaughter the hogs and then they'd take the bladder and we'd blow it up and we'd use it for a football and then . . .

Anne Whealton: That's called a pig skin. (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: Nothin' – nothin' was wasted. Then, of course, they had the smokehouses, you'd let – smoke the meat in.

Anne Whealton: So did you all have a smokehouse here on this piece of property?

Edward Bowden: My Grandfather did.

Anne Whealton: Your Grandfather did, okay.

Edward Bowden: So – and, of course, like the Island provided a lot, back in those days, a lot a blackberry bushes and different types of trees. Persimmon trees. You could find - get a lot a berries on this Island then back in them days.

Anne Whealton: You could – I know I've heard a lot of people around here – I remember Anna Lee, Elvie's mom, talked about goin' blackberry pickin'. What happened to all the blackberry bushes? I mean they just . . .

Edward Bowden: Well . . .

Anne Whealton: Because there seems like there were a lot of people that used to do that then?

Edward Bowden: I think there was – the main thing was when you started building things, like where Tom’s Cove is.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: That whole side of Tom’s Cove except – I’ll tell you somethin’ about that in a little bit – pretty well that whole side was nothin’ but blackberry bushes.

Anne Whealton: Oh really, so there were a ton of ‘em down here then?

Edward Bowden: Oh yeah! They were all over the Island. Guys used to come here. A fellow by the name of Will Hill used to come by here – today, if he had been livin’ today – they’d just about like you’d see today – he would come by with two eight quart buckets of strawberries, blackberries, pardon me. He’d get ten cents a . . .

Anne Whealton: A quart?

Edward Bowden: A quart. He would have all black clothes on. Black coats and ever thing.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So we never could figure why does this man wear all this clothes. Later years we found out why he wears ‘em. Jiggers. (Laughing) They would eat you up. So . . .

Anne Whealton: So black kept jiggers off?

Edward Bowden: Wouldn’t get ‘em, they couldn’t bite ‘em. I guess that’s all the clothes he had, wearin’ black . . .

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Now he used to live at D. J. Whealton’s house, the old big house on the corner.

Anne Whealton: Yeah.

Edward Bowden: He used to stay there. I don’t know if he was related to ‘im or what, but that’s where he stayed.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: But I've seen 'em come by here many times. But like I say there was blackberry bushes everywhere back in them days!

Anne Whealton: And what did the women do with blackberries, what kind of recipes did they use . . .

Edward Bowden: Well, they made blackberry cobblers and they'd just cook 'em up and serve 'em like for dessert.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And so forth.

Anne Whealton: So that was a big treat then for the kids?

Edward Bowden: Oh! It was a big treat yeah. Yeah, well back in 'em days pretty well anything you got was a treat you know. You just didn't go out and buy it. First of all, a lot of it we didn't have and a lot of it you didn't have the money to get it.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So – but . . .

Anne Whealton: So pretty much you grew everything yourself, you had a lot of garden stuff.

Edward Bowden: Right.

Anne Whealton: You had blackberries you'd go pick and did you fish?

Edward Bowden: No. Well, yeah . . .

Anne Whealton: Did you all have seafood?

Edward Bowden: I put – fished, well we only did it with a hand line, but we had plenty of fish we caught. We'd go right there along this road and catch big fish.

Anne Whealton: You did, uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: But kind of like that you know. Other words, food wadn't actually a problem for in them days we had plenty of fish here. And fish was a thing that was eaten probably sometimes four or five times a week.

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Wow. So I guess your Grandfather brought home a lot of fish too, right?

Edward Bowden: Well, he'd fish – another thing, right across from that – from – down from, well the guy's son that owned Dave Beebe's store, his son.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: He had fish pounds down at the – in the county.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: That was his livin'. Every day he would . . .

Anne Whealton: What was a fish pound?

Edward Bowden: That's – a fish pound traps the fish and brings 'em into a great big net like.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Where they pull 'em up and take 'em and put 'em in his boat. And that was the – that was his livin'. Every day he would go down and fish those traps.

Anne Whealton: What happened to the fish pounds, why did they go out, what happened to them?

Edward Bowden: Well, they went out for one thing, for one thing the man got older and nobody fooled with 'em and another people tried 'em and they – and, of course, it was gettin' to the point then that the fish wadn't comin' in here like they used to. So it just dissolved puttin' em in.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And, of course, then they had these big fishin' boats.

Anne Whealton: This was before the big fishing boats though?

Edward Bowden: Well, these were double-winders. They had fishin' pounds in the ocean and up where the Legion is now - they used to come in ever day and put out there. And you could get about any type – any type of fish you want. Like I kept sayin' about Beebe here, people would run him down, the ladies – women would be comin' down with their aprons on and their basins, and ever day they would buy fish.

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: From Dave Beebe's store?

Edward Bowden: From his son with the boat.

Anne Whealton: Oh from his son with the boat and he would – oh, that's pretty neat.

Edward Bowden: Ever day they would come in and I mean they would be a lot a women would come out and come down 'ere and buy fish ever day. And then we had another guy who lived right across from J&B.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Named Will – uh – what the heck is his name Margaret – Will (Laughing), I'll think of it in a minute. Anyhow – Will Clark – that was his name.

Anne Whealton: Will Clark, okay.

Edward Bowden: He had a cart on two wheels and he would fill that cart up with fish and roll it all over this Island sellin' fish ever day.

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: Door to door.

Anne Whealton: I was wondering because I remember when I first came here there were people I know that came by with different like trucks and would sell stuff.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, right.

Anne Whealton: Out here in the streets and whatever . . .

Edward Bowden: Had a lot a trucks was on here.

Anne Whealton: But they kind of have all disappeared.

Edward Bowden: Well, the stores took care of that.

Anne Whealton: Right. So this guy, Will Clark, came around with a two-wheeled cart, did he walk it or did he have a horse?

Edward Bowden: No, he pushed it.

Anne Whealton: He pushed it.

Edward Bowden: By hand.

Anne Whealton: Oh my lands, that's . . .

Edward Bowden: Ever day and he was just a short guy.

Anne Whealton: Really?

Edward Bowden: Pushed it ever day. I can see 'im right now.

Anne Whealton: And how did he keep all the fish cold?

Edward Bowden: Well he put – get some ice on 'em. He'd get – see back in 'em days you had a ice plant there in town.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And this guy would come around and supply the ice, we used to run the ice truck down. My Grandmother and ever body here had these little wooden ice boxes.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And what they used it for, more or less, for to keep some of the meats or keep butter. And if we had ice tea, you'd get a piece of that and put it in 'ere. Wadn't a big thing 'cause it would cost Ten or Fifteen Cents for a piece about this big.

Anne Whealton: For a big cake of ice, okay.

Edward Bowden: So what – when he would break it off – when he would chop it and some would fly on the road we'd run over there and get it, he would give it to us and that's what we used to suck on (laughing).

Anne Whealton: Awe, that's neat.

Edward Bowden: Stay cool.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh. That's neat.

Edward Bowden: Yeah. But it was – it was happy times in those days.

Anne Whealton: Yeah, you know I've heard people say too that the depression came late to the Island; it didn't hit the Island the same time as it hit like the city areas. And I'm wondering if where the people on the Island were so self-sufficient, you know, people here pretty much you could get your own food and different things like that.

Edward Bowden: Well, that's it . . .

Anne Whealton: There – so you didn't really – weren't as reliant on other places to provide for you.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, it was much – much different in 'em days. Like I say the food wadn't a big deal.

Anne Whealton: No, and you all – seemed like there was a lot more bartering that took place here where people would barter for things rather than exchanging monies sometimes too.

Edward Bowden: Right, right. Well, another thing – another thing Anne, was ever body on here canned ever thing. They had their cupboards solid full of preserves and beans outta the garden and, like I said, nothin' was ever wasted. It was all – food actually was the main source of survival of which, what I'm sayin' is, they didn't need nothin' else.

Anne Whealton: Right, so you - you never were really poor because you always had food. God always provided food . . .

Edward Bowden: We had – we had . . .

Anne Whealton: You could hunt, you could fish.

Edward Bowden: Right, right. Had plenty of food . . .

Anne Whealton: And you had vegetables in your . . .

Edward Bowden: Yes.

Anne Whealton: Yeah.

Edward Bowden: All the . . .

Anne Whealton: So how did the depression affect the Island then, what did it?

Edward Bowden: Well, it cleaned all the banks out, took all the people's money.

Anne Whealton: Okay. And how did people react to that?

Edward Bowden: They didn't like it. Nothin' they could do about it. My Grandfather lost money and he never could get it back.

Anne Whealton: Your Grandmother?

Edward Bowden: My Grandfather.

Anne Whealton: Your Grandfather. That's E. Birch?

Edward Bowden: Yes. A lot a people lost money.

Anne Whealton: So how did they come back after losing all the money?

Edward Bowden: Well, they just picked up where they left off, they just did. In other words that was like a security, you know what I mean, they only used it when they needed it, what little bit they had in there. But they – ever – well it got to the point where they thought that was the way of life you know. I'd put my savin's in 'ere but they lost it all.

Anne Whealton: And did they trust banks after that time?

Edward Bowden: No! Not until they turned the system around.

Anne Whealton: Not until - so what did they do with their money after that because I know a lot of people used to keep their money . . .

Edward Bowden: See when the bank's turned the system around where they insured your money.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Then they knowed they could get it back, but at that particular time it just become a place to put your money for safe keeping.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: But there was no guarantee that if anything happened you were gonna get it.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So no one knowed this was gonna happen.

Anne Whealton: So they didn't even conceive that this could possibly happen?

Edward Bowden: Nope.

Anne Whealton: So they trusted it . . .

Edward Bowden: No – they would cleaned their banks – you know pay 'em out first, their account, but it didn't happen. So I'm sure that was a big down – well it would a been a downfall

for anybody, knowin' that somebody took what little bit a money you had and you never get it – well, I think it – in some terms you look at it - it's about like the stock market today.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: You put a Hundred or Two or Three Hundred Thousand Dollars in the stock market and then tomorrow it's gone and that's just about the way it worked, you know, and it aint no gettin' it back either!

Anne Whealton: Right.

Edward Bowden: So – but it had a different meanin'.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: You go in now with the stock market you go in to make money and they put their money in it for safe keeping see. That's just the way it worked.

Anne Whealton: So do you think it helped usher in other businesses too to the Island after that time?

Edward Bowden: Well, it might. I guess, well . . .

Anne Whealton: Didn't the poultry industry come in during that time?

Edward Bowden: I was just gettin' ready to say that the biggest business we had in World War II when, well, chickens made a big part in every day, everybody's life food-wise.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: You know what I mean, back in World War II and, or course, we had all these troops to feed and overseas and this country itself, so then the value of chickens got pretty, you know, got where it become pretty popular - so that's when ever body started gettin' into the chicken business.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And a lot a people, this – this was actually a lot a people's start on this Island. They made good money, made fast money!

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And that's why they progressed in other businesses and land and nice homes and ever thing. 'Cause they were makin' the money to do it. But then a lot a people worked on the water. So that's been 'bout the way of life until, you know . . .

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: 1962. I often wondered if we didn't have a 1962 storm would the chicken houses still be here.

Anne Whealton: So the '62 storm was what knocked out a lot of the chicken houses?

Edward Bowden: Knocked 'em all out!

Anne Whealton: It knocked 'em all out?

Edward Bowden: They wouldn't let us build no more back no more.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: And that's when it became tourists.

Anne Whealton: Right, tourism. Okay, go back to World War II for a minute, I haven't asked anybody this but what were people's attitudes towards their – their men or their boys goin' off to war in World War II? What were the people of the Island, what was their attitude toward soldiers and fightin' for the country and what was the attitude around here?

Edward Bowden: Well just about like you see today, nobody wants to see their sons go, nobody, because back then they drafted you like a - just like that (snapping his fingers)! Nothin' you could do about it.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Like you said today, a lot of 'em – a lot of 'em went – said well, my son's raisin' chickens and this and that and they did ever thing they could to keep from goin', you know.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Well you know I told you before in '41 – '42, that's when we had this army base up here, Camp Fletcher. We had a lot a soldiers stationed there.

Anne Whealton: Camp Fletcher's soldier station where?

Edward Bowden: Right at the end of Ridge Road. Right there where Dr. Amron's house is.

Anne Whealton: And that was during World War II?

Edward Bowden: Right.

Anne Whealton: That was also, wasn't that a camp during the Civil War too?

Edward Bowden: No. No, that was . . .

Anne Whealton: Wasn't there another camp there at that time, no?

Edward Bowden: No, wadn't nothin' there.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Ridge Road had nothin' there.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Uh – they put that camp there and they – what they used that camp for was to control the reserver post we had here. Reserver towers off here, right down at Beebe's Ranch, over here where we had that old clam house used to be at the end of the road, they had 'em there, they would come there, and we had 'em stationed all over the Island.

Anne Whealton: Oh you did? Okay.

Edward Bowden: Yeah. That's how Jimmy Lyons got here, he come here with 'em.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And I used to go there to the cafeteria, or when I was real small, I used to go down there and they'd give me Pepsi-Colas and different things.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: But the base itself was named after Hallem Birch's brother, he's the first sailor that got killed in World War II, Charlie Fletcher.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So they named it Camp Fletcher.

Anne Whealton: Oh, okay, that's where that came from. That's good, I've never heard that.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, yeah.

Anne Whealton: All right. Now going back to your Dad, why did he get into the hauling dirt business, how did that happen? Where – when his father, what did his father do?

Edward Bowden: Worked on the water all . . .

Anne Whealton: They all worked on the water?

Edward Bowden: All the family. Well . . .

Anne Whealton: So how did your Father get into that business?

Edward Bowden: Well, it worked out this way. My Father went to school. He didn't like school. Never had no education.

Anne Whealton: What grade did he go up to?

Edward Bowden: Fourth grade all he ever had.

Anne Whealton: Fourth. That was common in those times though.

Edward Bowden: So he – yeah sure. So he, in fact, in them times they didn't bother you a whole lot. So he took, he was twelve year old.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And he took off, went home, and went and got a job workin' for John Winder. The one that owns The Channel Bass Hotel, or did own it.

Anne Whealton: What was his name?

Edward Bowden: John Wimper, Windler, Winder.

Anne Whealton: Winder, okay.

Edward Bowden: So he hauled – all that coal and ever thing was shipped in here on barges from Greenback, Franklin City.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And right in town is where they unloaded it and he got a job haulin' coal. And he worked night and day haulin' coal. Baggin' it off and getting ready for sellers at night, you know and so forth. That's how the coal got – matter of fact that was our nerve system for the whole Island, Franklin City. That's where we got all our food and ever thing else.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: That's where we got food until they put these bridges in and so forth. That's where we got – a lot of it was brought in by barges - like the feed for the chicken houses.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh. I'm gonna stop right there and turn this over, okay. Hold on a second.

Edward Bowden: Okay.

Anne Whealton: Because I don't want to lose this.

(TAPE SIDE B, 2nd Side)

Anne Whealton: Don't start yet. Today is Tuesday, August 1, and I am here at Ed Bowden and Margaret Bowden's house interviewing Ed Bowden and when we stopped the tape on the other side we were talking about Paul Bowden who is Ed Bowden's father and how he started getting into the hauling dirt industry. Okay Ed.

Edward Bowden: Well, he got . . .

Anne Whealton: He was hauling coal.

Edward Bowden: Right. Later years when he quit that job and went to work for hisself of haulin' fill dirt from the Island. Couldn't get any from the mainland. We hauled it from the Island.

Anne Whealton: You hauled it from the Island?

Edward Bowden: Yes!

Anne Whealton: What do you mean?

Edward Bowden: From Ridge Road and Piney Island.

Anne Whealton: Oh – really?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Ridge Road and Piney Island, where at?

Edward Bowden: Well we'd take it out of the glades or anywhere for puttin' in chicken houses. Couldn't haul any dirt from the mainland in them days.

Anne Whealton: Oh you couldn't?

Edward Bowden: Huh-uh.

Anne Whealton: So you took 'em off of Ridge Road and Piney Island and . . .

Edward Bowden: At different places and we hauled it and sold it and put it in chicken houses.

Anne Whealton: You put it in chicken houses?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: For what?

Edward Bowden: For to fill it in for chickens.

Anne Whealton: Oh really???

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: And that's how he started?

Edward Bowden: That's how he started out.

Anne Whealton: Was he the first one?

Edward Bowden: Well yeah I would say. And then Harvey Mears, which was his brother-in-law, he got involved into it. He had about eighteen trucks he used to haul off Piney Island – he used to own Piney Island.

Anne Whealton: Now this is old Piney Island or new Piney Island?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, the old one, the old one up where Wayne and them live.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Uh – then . . .

Anne Whealton: This is up by the traffic circle?

Edward Bowden: Right. It had a lot a high hills in it. So in later years we got off into the mainland. And then it was – I don't know if it was '40 – maybe '40 – sometime in '42 – '43, one – it would have to be probably '42, my Father went in the Navy.

Anne Whealton: Your Father was in the Navy?

Edward Bowden: Three years.

Anne Whealton: I didn't know that.

Edward Bowden: Yeah. He was in the Navy. George Taylor was in the Navy with 'im and several other ones.

Anne Whealton: What did they do?

Edward Bowden: He was stationed in Norfolk.

Anne Whealton: Oh really?

Edward Bowden: He was yeah – with a fire fightin' crew down 'ere.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And when he came out of the Navy in later years we went – he got trucks and went back to haulin' dirt and so forth. And then when I was fifteen year old, when I could drive, I started drivin' a truck, clean out chicken houses and ever thing by myself. And, of course, he got a job with the NASA – not NASA – with the Navy, crash crew on the base and he stayed there for sixteen years. And, of course, on his days off he would haul dirt and so forth.

Anne Whealton: So your Father worked at the base that long?

Edward Bowden: Sixteen years.

Anne Whealton: And he was with the crash crew?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: What's that?

Edward Bowden: Like the fire department.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: When they had all them planes flyin' in here.

Anne Whealton: Tell me a little bit about that because I don't . . .

Edward Bowden: Well, we had B-24 liberators, bombers, flew in here a lot. They'd crash a lot, a lot a people got killed and he'd have to go to them and put them out. And a lot a fighter jets would hang around here, so that's what he did. So uh – and when he got over that job then we went to work doin' construction work at about that time. But in the meantime, we didn't do any construction work. I worked from 4 to 6 up to 1949 and then I . . .

Anne Whealton: Four in the morning?

Edward Bowden: Pardon?

Anne Whealton: Four in the morning?

Edward Bowden: I didn't hear you.

Anne Whealton: Four in the morning?

Edward Bowden: Awe, yeah, we'd – yeah we'd go four in the morning, go out and move chicken manure at four o'clock in the morning, load the truck, come home, wash up and go to school. Then about 3:00 o'clock, 3:30, he'd – we'd come home and he'd be waitin' for us to go again.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: And then 1949, that's when I went and joined the Army and left . . .

Anne Whealton: In 1949, that's when you joined the Army, okay. Now tell us that story because this is gonna be good.

Edward Bowden: Well, I went and joined the Army. I was stationed at Ft. Locks, Kentucky, where I took basic training and when I got basic training over I went to Ft. Sill, Oklahoma, which was an artillery school. And I left the artillery school in 1950. I went to airborne school in Ft. Benning, Georgia. And then I – later on I got in this company that sent replacements for – well, matter of fact, I didn't know at the time, but what we were doin' was formin' a engineer outfit, company.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So after that I got transferred to England which I stayed three years with the engineers redoing air bases.

Anne Whealton: Okay. What did you do there?

Edward Bowden: Redoing World War II air bases, tearin' 'em out and puttin' new ones in.

Anne Whealton: Okay. And what were your responsibilities?

Edward Bowden: My responsibility – I was over the equipment. I was the Sergeant over the - heavy equipment. I run the heavy equipment for a year or so and then when I made Sergeant they put me over the head of equipment, see that the equipment was maintained and ever thing was on the job and these sort of things.

Anne Whealton: So that probably came pretty easy to you since you had always worked with trucks with your Dad.

Edward Bowden: Yes, yes, that – it did, it did. It - in other words I had that way – foolin’ with that type of job, I’d been doin’ it pretty well all my life.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh, it prepared you.

Edward Bowden: So yeah, it did come simple, very easy, yeah.

Anne Whealton: All right, now what war was taking place at this time?

Edward Bowden: The Korean War.

Anne Whealton: Okay, so the Korean War, all right.

Edward Bowden: Yelp, yelp.

Anne Whealton: And you were stationed in England, where were you stationed in England?

Edward Bowden: Fairford.

Anne Whealton: What was it?

Edward Bowden: Fairford, England.

Anne Whealton: Fairford?

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Then I was stationed in Chelvest (?) until about – on a B-17 base outside of London. That was the last base I was on.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Before I come back home.

Anne Whealton: Okay. And you want to tell us about your bride that you met in England?

Edward Bowden: Oh yeah! Yes. I had the opportunity to meet my bride in England when she was fifteen years old. I married her when she was seventeen years old. And as of today, I’d say I married a sweet young lady.

Anne Whealton: Awe – that’s so sweet. You robbed the cradle?

Edward Bowden: I robbed the cradle. I robbed the cradle, but I paid the troop.

Anne Whealton: You've got to tell us the story of how you met Margaret.

Edward Bowden: Oh gees.

Anne Whealton: Margaret Rose.

Edward Bowden: Well, I met Margaret during the New Year's Eve, 1951. I was in her town in a snow storm and by walkin' the streets I met her brother.

Anne Whealton: And what was her brother's name?

Edward Bowden: Ronald Phillips.

Anne Whealton: Ronald Phillips, okay.

Edward Bowden: So we got – yeah, so we got – I don't understand that. So we got to talkin' . . .

Margaret Bowden: (inaudible)

Edward Bowden: So we got to talkin' and I told 'im that, you know, I said well, I guess we'll have to walk back to the base, I had a buddy a mine with me. And . . .

Anne Whealton: And how far was the base?

Edward Bowden: Twenty-five mile.

Anne Whealton: Twenty-five miles???

Edward Bowden: Which I had walked on a Christmas Eve.

Anne Whealton: You walked twenty-five miles on Christmas Eve?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, I walked fifteen miles and got a truck back to the base.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: Through ice and snow in 1951 on Christmas Eve.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: We walked from eleven o'clock 'til six o'clock that mornin'. That's when I went and – went to that house that mornin' at six o'clock on Christmas mornin', knocked on the door and I said to – lady came to the door – and I said "Mam," I said, We've been walkin' from

Seinsester to here since eleven o'clock last night and I wonder if you'd let us come in and warm up." So she said, "You're Americans aren't you?" I said, "Yes, we are." She said, "Yes, by all means come in." So we were sittin' by the fireplace and her husband hollered downstairs and says, "Was someone to the door?" She said, "Yes, there are two Americans want to get warmed." So he comes down and we introduced ourself and he says, "I'll fix breakfast for these Americans." And I said, "No sir." I said, "We don't want to take your food, you're on rations." I said, "We can get all the food we want when we get back to base." And so he said, "I insist you have breakfast with us." So he fixed us eggs and tea and bacon and so forth and from that day to this day it was one of the best breakfasts I ever eat!

Anne Whealton: Oh. Now where was that, what town was that in?

Edward Bowden: Seinsester.

Anne Whealton: Seinsester, okay.

Edward Bowden: So we caught another truck and rode the other ten mile, went back to the base, got Christmas dinner and ever thing was shut down, no one was in the barracks, so I decided well, we'll go back to Chellam. So my buddy and I hitchhiked right back to Chellam. So that's where I met Margaret's brother that evening. And I told him that we were gonna walk back to base and he said come go home with me. So we went on with 'im, but we went home . . .

Anne Whealton: And this was a snow storm?

Edward Bowden: We got home to his house, walked in, and he said, "I brought two Yanks home with me." And their mother came over took my jacket off and hung it up and at that particular time they were gettin' ready to have dinner and she had the whole table laid out with different foods and so forth and she invited us to have dinner which was great! And I thought it was really good on – in the snow storm on a New Year's Eve bein' in an English home.

Anne Whealton: New Year's Eve or Christmas Day?

Edward Bowden: I mean New Year's Eve.

Anne Whealton: New Year's Eve, okay.

Edward Bowden: When I went back see, Margaret – so anyhow I thought well I said this is great bein' in an English home here nice and warm in here and Margaret was sittin' by the fireplace. Well, there was mistletoe all over the house, I said I aint gettin' throwed out a here to night. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing) Okay.

Edward Bowden: So anyhow, they took a little bed they had and put it in a room (coughing). Excuse me.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And they gave me Margaret's bedroom. My buddy slept with Ronald. So the next mornin' I got up and I said Ronald, I said, "Where's your sister?" He said, "Oh," he said, "she's gone to work." Well I said to him I said do you have any iron around here I want to iron my clothes. So they came out with them old irons you put on the stove - you had to heat.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And I ironed, I pressed my uniform, shined my brass, shined my shoes. So about that time we went walkin' in town lookin' the town over. Came back at lunchtime and Margaret came home for lunch. I think she run home. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: So anyhow . . .

Anne Whealton: She was workin' – where was she workin' at, she was workin' at a dress shop or something?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, a big clothing store.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So that evenin' I had to go back to the base, we didn't have any money, so for ten shillings of their money from her Father, which was \$1.40.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So I caught a bus and I went the fifteen miles back to Seinsester and I knew we had a military truck comin' in to pick us up. So with that \$1.40 I went and had a spaghetti dinner and all this and that and I still had money left. So I made it back to base and I told 'em that I would be back and bring 'em some stuff and he handed me the \$1.40. Anyhow, Corporal come to me and said, "I want you to drive me down to the railroad station I got to pick us a package up." I said, "Okay." Well this was January 1, 1951.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And it was snowin' just as hard as it could snow. We were leavin' the station and an English truck slid over in front of us and hit us head-on.

Anne Whealton: Oh my!

Edward Bowden: So the guy that was with me it threw him out of the jeep down in the ditch and I remember, I guess I hit the steering wheel, because I went – ended up out in the road.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So they took us down to the infirmary and I messed this arm up and this leg up.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So that day was payday so when I got outta there I went down, got my check, cashed it, and I went to PX and I bought Hershey bars, I could buy twenty-four Hershey bars for a dollar.

Anne Whealton: Wow!

Edward Bowden: And I bought cigarettes, ten cents a pack, was only allowed a carton, I didn't smoke no how.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Got it for her Father. So then they had this fruit cocktail in cans down 'ere so I bought what I could of that. Anything I could find, I'd find and put in a bag.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And I took it in and I was walkin', I couldn't – didn't know if I remembered where the house was or not, but here we go again, snowin' again!

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: So I came around the corner and all these snowballs was hittin' me on the side the head. I was carryin' my leg, I couldn't go to fast.

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: So it was Margaret, it was a girlfriend says, "Here comes that Yank, let's snowball him."

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: Mean girl.

Margaret Bowden: She was (inaudible).

Anne Whealton: Yeah.

Edward Bowden: So I got in the house and I give ‘em all the stuff and the paper bag off and ever thing. And I thanked ‘em and ever thing and I left and I never tended to go back no more. But I was downtown one night and Margaret and her brother came down at the post office and so he said, “Do you want to stroll around with Margaret?” I said, “Yeah, I might as well.” So that’s what started it all and then we never left each other’s side. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: Oh, that’s so neat.

Edward Bowden: But I think – trouble is, I think Margaret must wrote the letter and never did mail it, she just wanted to get downtown to see if I was there, that was all luck! (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: Yeah, worked out all right though.

Anne Whealton: Now how old, she was seventeen?

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh.

Anne Whealton: Now how did you get her away from her mother?

Edward Bowden: Oh, that’s another one! You’ll like this one. I always told her mother, I always kid with her mother. And I told her I said . . .

Anne Whealton: What was her mother’s name by the way?

Edward Bowden: Beatrice.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: She had a big round table in the dining room and that’s where we eat a lot. And I always told her mother, I said, “Mom when I marry your daughter I’m gonna get a wedding cake to reach up to that chandelier.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And she laughed. I never did ask her to marry her – ever thing – once we’d been through all the things we had to go through so when the marrying date came when I went down ‘ere, I was down ‘ere about two weeks, about a week I believe. So I went out and ordered this wedding cake. And the first layer was about this big. It was about that thick and had horseshoes all the way around it.

Anne Whealton: It had horseshoes all around it?

Edward Bowden: Yeah. And the next layer had the same thing.

Anne Whealton: Horseshoes?

Edward Bowden: Yeah. It had . . .

Margaret Bowden: For luck.

Anne Whealton: Oh, for luck, okay.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, yeah.

Margaret Bowden: He was big on horseshoes.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And then on top of that it had another layer and I tell you it lacked about that much a hittin' the light!

Anne Whealton: Oh my!

Edward Bowden: Cost me Twenty-eight Dollars!

Anne Whealton: That's all?

Edward Bowden: That's all . . .

Anne Whealton: Now you got married over in England?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Okay. How long did you guys court before you got married?

Edward Bowden: Oh – from – about two years.

Anne Whealton: Two years.

Edward Bowden: Well, it took me a year to get – took me a year from the time I got started, all the rig-a-ma-roar I had to go through.

Anne Whealton: Oh, okay. What the paperwork and stuff like that?

Margaret Bowden: Red tape.

Anne Whealton: Red tape.

Edward Bowden: I had to send home and get permission from my Father and Mother.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: I had to get permission from the company commander.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Then I had to take her to the base. Her and her Mother to see the Chaplain. Then I had to take her down to the infirmary and get all the shots I had.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Then the first thing I ever had to do was put so much money in the soldier deposit in case I brought her here and she didn't like it, she – they'd take that money and send her back home.

Anne Whealton: Oh – what's it called, a soldier deposit?

Edward Bowden: A soldier's deposit, yeah.

Anne Whealton: Oh, they did that, that's pretty cool. So . . .

Edward Bowden: Well, the City got licked during World War II. Them boys brought all these women home, they didn't like it over here and the government had to fund the money to send 'em back.

Anne Whealton: Oh really, okay.

Edward Bowden: So this was why I had to put this money up front before I did anything.

Anne Whealton: Okay, uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So I put the money up and then once I put the papers in, then they started an OSI check. See if 'ere's any communists in her family.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Six months!

Anne Whealton: What's an OSI?

Edward Bowden: Overseas Investigation.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So they went through her family to see if there was any communists in her family. They were very strict on communists back in 'em days.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: They don't care now, you can come over here when you want.

Anne Whealton: Right.

Edward Bowden: But anyhow . . .

Anne Whealton: I didn't know that.

Edward Bowden: Yeah they had that. So then after I got all the paperwork done that took six more months, took one year.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And then this had to be sent to London to the American Embassy to be approved. So from the time that I started until I got my papers it took one year.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Then I went in – went in and took two weeks leave, went down to Chellum and got my marriage license and we got set up with the church. We was gonna get married . . .

Anne Whealton: Do you remember the name of the church?

Edward Bowden: No, Margaret does I think.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: But what we had – they had it set up where I didn't have any relatives so the English people – part – half of 'em sat on my side. So – uh – it was a nice little church. Then I went down I hired three brand new cabs for the drivers. In fact, one for her and I, one for my best man and his wife, and I had another one go out and pick up the people and bring 'em to the house. So . . .

Anne Whealton: So what kind of cabs, like a taxi cab?

Edward Bowden: Taxi's, yeah, brand new taxi's.

Anne Whealton: Margaret, do you remember the name of the church where you were married?

Margaret Bowden: St. Michael's.

Anne Whealton: St. Michael's. Was it Lutheran?

Edward Bowden: I know it was . . .

Anne Whealton: Or Episcopalian?

Margaret Bowden: No, I think it was Presbyterian.

Anne Whealton: Methodist.

Margaret Bowden: Or Presbyterian.

Anne Whealton: Oh, Presbyterian, okay.

Margaret Bowden: I just know it was St. Michael's.

Anne Whealton: St. Michael's, okay. That is so neat. So half of 'em sat on your side and half of 'em sat on her side. Did she have a wedding gown?

Edward Bowden: Oh yeah!!! Got the wedding picture right up there, idn't it?

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Where's the wedding picture? Got 'em somewhere around here.

Anne Whealton: Did she get it from the dress shop where she worked?

Margaret Bowden: No!

Anne Whealton: No.

Edward Bowden: Too expensive. Yeah, yeah, we had a good – well, I tell you what . . .

Anne Whealton: Did you have a reception and stuff?

Edward Bowden: Oh yeah!!!

Margaret Bowden: Oh yeah.

Anne Whealton: Where was that at?

Edward Bowden: At the – at her Mom’s home.

Anne Whealton: Wow!

Edward Bowden: And at the base I got a lot a cigarettes since they liked ‘em so good ‘cause their cigarettes was rolled so tight that you couldn’t even hardly draw through ‘em.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: They loved American cigarettes but they couldn’t get ‘em.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So I got all that and like a ham and bought different things and anything I could buy. But the whole – you know how much the whole wedding cost?

Anne Whealton: How much?

Edward Bowden: Three Hundred Dollars.

Anne Whealton: Three Hundred Dollars! How many people?

Edward Bowden: Forty-five. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: Wow, that’s good!

Edward Bowden: That included renting the cabs and the big old cake.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So . . .

Anne Whealton: So how did your Mom and Dad feel about it since they weren’t able to be present?

Edward Bowden: Okay I guess. We sent – we sent them the second layer of the cake home.

Anne Whealton: You did? That’s neat!

Edward Bowden: Yeah, yeah. Shipped it back here.

Margaret Bowden: (inaudible)

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Margaret Bowden: And (inaudible)

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Margaret Bowden: (all inaudible!)

Anne Whealton: I don't know if you can hear it on the tape, but Larry was little, his brother, he was, can you tell me about Larry. Margaret was talkin' about Larry, how when you sent the second layer of the cake back you said it was so hard that he needed a hacksaw?

Edward Bowden: Yeah. (Laughing) Yeah.

Margaret Bowden: Larry was little then.

Edward Bowden: Larry was small when I left and – but we had a lot a fun. Had a lot a fun. Well – well, I don't know I really didn't like it either. I went two ways on troop ships. And I brought Margaret back on a troop ship.

Anne Whealton: Oh, she came back on a troop ship?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Wow!

Edward Bowden: See it took us like they did in World War II. They took us, we left the base, they came and took us to like a holding camp down at Ft. – down at Hampton. They kept us there for about two weeks until the troops had come in from Germany.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And picked us up and had four thousand troops, four hundred and two families onboard.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: And Margaret was seasick for ever day – ever day!

Anne Whealton: Oh no.

Edward Bowden: Margaret slept on B deck with all the women and stuff. I slept down in the hole with the troops.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh. Oh, so they had different decks?

Edward Bowden: Yeah. So I picked her up ever mornin' – I would pick her up and take her down and spend all day with her and then I'd take her back up there at night time.

Anne Whealton: Awe, that was nice.

Edward Bowden: But Margaret - had a beautiful mess hall. I paid for – cost me Eleven Dollars for the food. And she didn't eat nothin', she was sick! Seasick all the time.

Anne Whealton: You should a got your money back.

Edward Bowden: Yeah. She . . .

Anne Whealton: How many days did it take?

Edward Bowden: Seven.

Anne Whealton: Seven days and you landed where?

Edward Bowden: New York, down on the . . .

Anne Whealton: New York, okay.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Oh, so you came in at Ellis Island?

Margaret Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Oh, that's neat.

Edward Bowden: So then we – then I had to take her to – I took her to Brooklyn, New York to the big St. George Hotel. And I left her there – and a bunch a women, a bunch a people. And I told her I said, “Margaret you stay here, don't go nowhere, I'll be back and getcha.” Well we loaded up – four of us loaded up in a limousine and I went to Ft. Hampton, New York to find out where – to get my orders where I was supposed to go at.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So I was supposed to go to Ft. Meade, Maryland and get discharged.

Anne Whealton: Ft. Meade, Maryland, okay.

Edward Bowden: So I came back and got Margaret and Margaret said, “I'm glad of it.”
(Laughing)

Anne Whealton: It's a good thing. I bet that was scary. Wow.

Margaret Bowden: (inaudible)

Edward Bowden: Now Margaret . . .

Anne Whealton: What was she like when she came to the Island?

Edward Bowden: Oh, that's a good one. I'm glad you brought that up. (Laughing) The city she lived in there was a hundred thousand people livin' there.

Anne Whealton: A hundred thousand?

Edward Bowden: A hundred thousand people.

Anne Whealton: In those days?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: You can't walk for people. Uh – it's a big place and then just fifteen miles away there's another eighty-ninety, and nine miles there's another eighty-nine thousand people.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: They all come in these towns, you can't walk for people. Their sidewalks are about as wide as our streets.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: It's just waves and waves of people comin' all the time.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And I brought her over here, we got over here at three o'clock in the mornin'. And I – the old man had built that house then, when I left they were in the blue house.

Anne Whealton: The old man he is referring to is his father, Paul, had built a house next door to his house here.

Edward Bowden: Right, yeah. So anyhow, the next mornin' Margaret got up, Margaret, she was lookin' around, Margaret says, "Where's the town?" I says, "You come through it last night." "Oh my lands," she said, "What am I gonna do?" I said, "I don't know honey." 'Cause, well it was a big letdown. And I tell you the truth Anne . . .

Anne Whealton: How many people were on the Island then probably, maybe a thousand?

Edward Bowden: Probably three thousand or so.

Anne Whealton: Three thousand, okay.

Edward Bowden: Mostly all Chincoteaguers though.

Anne Whealton: Yeah.

Edward Bowden: But that was a mistake. I wished I would a stayed overseas. I loved it – I loved it. It was so much to do, so much to see, I should a stayed. I – when you're young you don't think. You don't think.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: But – when I look back and see what I have been through to try to make a livin' and the first mistake I made was gettin' out of the service. I should a never got out of the service. I was doin' great.

Anne Whealton: Yeah, what was your ranking?

Edward Bowden: Sergeant.

Anne Whealton: Oh Sergeant, okay.

Edward Bowden: But I got out – I was a Sergeant and I was goin' for Sergeant First Class in December and I could a made 'at. I was ratin', I made Corporal, and in six months they wanted to make me Staff Sergeant and the guy said man we can't do it, you gotta have nine months in _____(?). So right to the day of nine months, when I went aboard to make Sergeant.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And in December I would a made Sergeant First Class.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: And I – if I had a went ahead and re-enlisted I put four years in and if I'd a re-enlisted in two years I could a been a Master Sergeant.

Anne Whealton: Um.

Edward Bowden: And I liked what I was doin'. That's stupid, I don't – I really don't know why I got out.

Anne Whealton: Well, it must a been a reason.

Edward Bowden: Well . . .

Anne Whealton: Now what happened after you came back. Now what happened with your life after you guys came back to the Island, both you and Margaret, what was – then what happened?

Edward Bowden: Well I had a hard time tryin' to get started. Couldn't find the work. I worked with my Father a little bit but he – he was still with NASA – no, not NASA, Navy.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: And he was just doin' the work on the sides and it just wadn't no work around here. I started workin' on the road, travelin' around the country on air bases, and then we – we – a little while in Shreveport, Louisiana, at the Marksley Air Force Base and I was all over the place.

Anne Whealton: So I thought you had come out of the military at that time though, I thought you had retired?

Edward Bowden: No, I was workin' for the contractors.

Anne Whealton: Oh, contractors, okay.

Edward Bowden: Re-doing these runways.

Anne Whealton: Re-doing the runways, oh good, okay. So you traveled around and Margaret traveled with you?

Edward Bowden: I took her to Louisiana with me.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Most the time she stayed at home. I was . . .

Anne Whealton: Now where were you livin' here?

Edward Bowden: In that little blue house right here, used to be right here.

Anne Whealton: In the little blue house right here where the . . .

Edward Bowden: The old blue house that he burned down back 'ere.

Anne Whealton: Right.

Edward Bowden: That's the one, right down the street right here.

Anne Whealton: It used to be up here towards the front of the – towards Beebe Road?

Edward Bowden: Yes.

Anne Whealton: And you lived there by yourselves or your grandparents, were they still alive, or?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, at that time they were, yeah, yeah.

Anne Whealton: But they lived – so it was your own place then?

Edward Bowden: Yeah, it was our own place, yeah.

Anne Whealton: How many bedrooms, what was it like?

Edward Bowden: One.

Margaret Bowden: It was the house that he lived in, grew up in (?).

Anne Whealton: Oh okay, all right. So when your Father built that house he gave you the old house?

Edward Bowden: Right.

Anne Whealton: It was one bedroom and . . .

Edward Bowden: One bedroom and a kitchen and a little livin' room and that was it.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Margaret Bowden: And a bathroom.

Anne Whealton: And a bathroom?

Edward Bowden: Yes!

Anne Whealton: You had an inside bathroom?

Edward Bowden: Right.

Anne Whealton: Wow, that's nice.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: And so you got that place and then what happened?

Edward Bowden: Well in 1966 I decided we needed somethin' better to live in. Well, another thing we wanted to go back home. Well another thing that messed me up, in 1956 I was gonna make plans - makin' plans, was gonna build me a home. And that's when I lost this eye.

Anne Whealton: Oh yeah, tell the story about your eye too.

Edward Bowden: So . . .

Anne Whealton: That's in 1956?

Edward Bowden: Yes. So when I did that then I knew – I had to let ever thing go 'cause then I said – looked back, I said, well, that's another thing that worked out for me.

Anne Whealton: Well tell us what happened with your eye. Tell us the story.

Edward Bowden: Well, I went to work and I was takin' staples out, I had one staple to take out.

Anne Whealton: Where were you workin' at?

Edward Bowden: Over at Home School, over at the Navy base. Called it Housing Area.

Anne Whealton: The Housing Area?

Edward Bowden: Uh-huh. Outside the base there.

Anne Whealton: Over at the base?

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: So anyhow, a staple flew up and went through the side of it. So I spent time in Nassawadox Hospital. I spent twenty-one days in a Louisville hospital and then I spent about ten months on the street, just doin' nothin', couldn't do nothin'.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: One day I could see and the next day I couldn't see.

Anne Whealton: I can't imagine that with you.

Edward Bowden: So I always said if I had went – if it had been a little later and I had had the house built, I would a definitely lost it ‘cause I couldn’t work and I couldn’t pay for it.

Anne Whealton: Right, right. So it actually worked out better?

Edward Bowden: Yeah. So in ’66 I decided that we needed somethin’ different but I didn’t want – kind a – goin’ back to the house – ‘cause you know back in ‘em days you’d take about thirty years to pay for ‘em.

Anne Whealton: Right.

Edward Bowden: And I thought – I was awful scared of gettin’ involved with that much money and knowin’ that somethin’ like that could happen again and then I lose ever thing.

Anne Whealton: Right.

Edward Bowden: So that’s why I turned to a mobile home. I didn’t have time, didn’t plan any more children and I bought this new mobile home then and actually it was like the Holiday Inn for us.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: ‘Cause, you know, so I thought well, I could pay for that mobile home, you know. So we, one day - you want to hear all of it?

Anne Whealton: Yeah!

Edward Bowden: Well, I started lookin’ at mobile homes; I got very interested in ‘em. And I thought and I said – so I was in Fruitland and this preacher had mobile homes for sale. So I was tellin’ Margaret about this one, I said we’ll go look at this skyliner. So it was nice. So they had it on – the full price was Eighty-four Hundred Dollars. Well back in ‘em days money was – couldn’t ever afford it. I was doin’ eighty hours a work ever day, couldn’t make but Thirty-three –Thirty-two – Thirty some Dollars a day was all I could make.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: A dollar an hour.

Anne Whealton: And that was where you workin’ for your Dad?

Edward Bowden: No, this was when I was workin for – I worked for a contractor – when I lost my eye.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: Paintin' houses, that's all I made. A dollar an hour is all I could make.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: Uh – anyway, I – we went and looked at that mobile home in - I guess it was in November or sometime, I know it was cold. But a lot a people in this place. Ever body wanted it.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: It was built nice. So anyhow, we stayed there and looked over and over and I thought let's go up the road and look around a little while and I told the preacher, the guy that owned it, I says, "Sir," I says, "I'm gonna look around a little, I'll be back to see you later on." And he says, "okay." So we go up to Delaware to look at all these mobile homes up there, but we never found another one like this one. So we came back and I took Margaret over to Roses down in Salisbury or Fruitland.

Margaret Bowden: (inaudible)

Edward Bowden: Well, anyway, I said you stay here. I'm goin' down 'ere and buy that mobile home. She says, "You can't buy that mobile home." I said, "I can." So I go down 'ere and I walked in 'ere and the guy was behind his desk and I said – he looked at me – he says, I said, "Sir," I says, "Here I am." He says, "You're a man of your word, you said you'd be back." I said, "Yeah." He said, "Well, that mobile home we were talkin' about, what mobile home did you want?" I said, "I was lookin' at that gold and white one 'ere, that skyliner." Well, he says, "You know," he said, "I'll tell you what," he said, "I got it on sale for Seventy-some Hundred Dollars today." I think it was Seventy-nine Hundred or somethin'. He says, "Where did you say you live at?" I said, "Chincoteague, Virginia." Yeah, he said, "I don't have any mobile homes in Chincoteague." He said, "I'll tell you what I'm gonna do." He said, "I'm gonna give you a deal today." I said, "Yes sir, what would that be?" He said, "I'm gonna let you have that house – that home for Fifty-nine Ninety-five."

Anne Whealton: Wow that was a good bunch of savings.

Edward Bowden: I said, "I'll take her."

Anne Whealton: Great.

Edward Bowden: I said, "I'll take her sir." So he filled a contract out and I said, "I'll tell you what, you just pull the contract, I'll be back Monday mornin' and I'll pay you Two Thousand Dollars down."

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: He said, “No problem, no problem.” So I went back to the store for Margaret and I said, “Well Margaret, I bought the mobile home.” She said, “You didn’t buy that mobile home.” I said, “What do you think these papers are?” (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: So anyhow, the guy says, “Well Sir, it will be a week before I can get it down ‘ere, I gotta get permits and ever thing.” I said, “That’ll be all right.” So me and my Father came in and put a hundred and fifty blocks, set the tank in, put the water in, we had ever thing all set up. On a Thursday here come the man with it. And I tell you, it looked like an airplane hangar sittin’ ‘ere after that little house.

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: And we got ever thing hooked up. That Sunday mornin’ I was layin’ ‘ere and I go out ‘ere and, you know, ever thing smelt – it was brand new you know.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And I looked down the hallway and it was like bein’ in a Holiday Inn. Ever thing was all paneled and . . .

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So this is how we started out with this mobile home. But it – through the years I think it worked out all right because it give me –but - why we paid for this mobile home, never missed no payments or nothin’, Margaret had a letter, the other day she was readin’ it. We got a nice letter from Chase Manhattan Bank.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: The way we had handled our account. If we ever needed anything, just call ‘em, no problem.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: They wrote us a nice letter. I still got that letter. She had it out the other day readin’ it.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And then we got money back from Panama for that time and then in the meantime the preacher says, “Sir,” he says, “if you get a registration card for Virginia on that mobile home, you bring it up here and I’ll give you a Two Hundred and Eighty-five Dollar check.”

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: I said, "All right." So one day I opened up – opened up the mail and here's a registration card on this skyliner.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: I said didn't that man tell me he would give me that money back? She said, "I think so." So I drove down 'ere and he was in his office and I says, "Sir," I said, "the skyliner I bought from you, didn't you tell me if I got a registration card from Virginia you'd give me Two Hundred and Eighty-five Dollars?" And he said, "Yes sir, that's what I told you." I said, "Here's the registration card." He said, "Just a minute." He opened up and wrote me out a check.

Anne Whealton: Wow.

Edward Bowden: So I stopped in Pocomoke and I bought quite a bit a meats from the butcher shop and I came home, we made two payments on the trailer and I filled up the freezer with meats! (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: Wow, that's fantastic. What a story, what a story.

Edward Bowden: So it worked out all right.

Anne Whealton: That's great.

Edward Bowden: You know when you – when I survey my life back it seemed like ever thing was done in phases. Ever thing has worked out, you know. But I'll put it this way . . .

Anne Whealton: That's good.

Edward Bowden: I'm thankful, very thankful for what I have got. I sit here nights and I think, I mean we got all we need actually, you know what I mean - for our age.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And I'm glad I have it. A lot a people don't have it.

Anne Whealton: Absolutely.

Edward Bowden: So I got I think what I've supposed to have got so why not take and enjoy it.

Anne Whealton: Absolutely!

Edward Bowden: And here's another one Anne. It's got – it's all got to do with how you take care of it. Take this mobile home, forty years, she's never been painted. Try some homes forty years and don't paint it.

Anne Whealton: That's a long time.

Edward Bowden: She never was painted. Of course, I painted her with that – latex that came out, she's like brand new.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: All I painted – she's all aluminum see, which is good.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: But – like I say – I bought this in 1966. So – but it's the way I've kept her up.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh, you take good care of her.

Edward Bowden: Some of these mobile homes you see today, three or four years they look like they're twenty-five years old.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: They don't care.

Anne Whealton: All right. Now go back to when Sharon was born. I want to hear a little bit about Sharon.

Edward Bowden: Oh, Sharon?

Anne Whealton: Yeah, you're daughter.

Edward Bowden: Well, when Sharon was born I was on my way to New York. (Laughing) I found out about it when I got back home.

Anne Whealton: Okay.

Edward Bowden: I had a job goin' with a guy, with Hallem, he'd take me to New York. He'd pay me so much money to go with 'im, so I went with 'im. When I came home Sharon had, Margaret had went to the hospital.

Anne Whealton: Where did she have Sharon, Nassawadox or Salisbury?

Edward Bowden: Nassawadox. I think she cost A Hundred and Sixty-five Dollars wadn't it?

Anne Whealton: That was a good deal, good price. (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: (Laughing) Yeah, it was.

Unknown: Yeah.

Edward Bowden: Pretty expensive though . . .

Anne Whealton: So who was with Margaret when she had Sharon?

Edward Bowden: Margaret. . .

Anne Whealton: Well Margaret, I know she was there.

Edward Bowden: Was Mom with you?

Anne Whealton: Roy? She went down with your Mom, okay. Your Mom went down and was with her.

Margaret Bowden: Mother and Father.

Anne Whealton: Mother and Father, okay. So they took her down. All right. And you had gone to New York and when you got back you had a baby girl?

Edward Bowden: Yeah! Had a baby girl. Best thing we ever had.

Anne Whealton: Yeah, talk about that, bein' a dad.

Edward Bowden: Yeah, that - I told Margaret the other day, I says one thing about Sharon and Jan. . . .

Anne Whealton: Jan is your granddaughter, okay.

Edward Bowden: Well, we got somethin' a lot a people don't have. We have an excellent relationship.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: We've always loved each other and we've always sit down and discussed different things. And no hate in between us or nothin' like that. And we are what a family should be, you know.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh, that's great.

Edward Bowden: And I'm very thankful of that because Margaret was talkin' about it the other day. Jan - Sharon's always doin' somethin' for me and her Mother.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And if Jan was close by she'll do the same thing.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: So I'm very thankful of that. 'Cause there's a lot a people out here can't say that.

Anne Whealton: That's right.

Edward Bowden: A lot a people had a lot a problems.

Anne Whealton: That's right. And where is Jan now, you know?

Edward Bowden: Nicaragua.

Anne Whealton: Nicaragua. What does she have – she has a bed and . . .

Edward Bowden: Bed and breakfast.

Anne Whealton: Bed and breakfast.

Edward Bowden: She called yesterday.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: She's gonna call tonight.

Anne Whealton: Good. Good.

Edward Bowden: She said that – she told her Mother that the lights went out over there this week.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: I said, whoa, I bet that's a hot time.

Anne Whealton: If that was out.

Margaret Bowden: (Inaudible)

Anne Whealton: Yeah, that's always goin' out.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Margaret Bowden: (Inaudible)

Anne Whealton: Yeah, that's just part of being there. Now go back to the staple in your eye. Can you tell us what happened to your eye this past year? You'd had that for fifty years, right?

Edward Bowden: Yelp, forty-eight years.

Anne Whealton: Forty-eight years.

Edward Bowden: Forty-eight years and after this year I had the opportunity of havin' it fixed. My transplanted new lens which I'm very thankful to be able to see out of it again.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And I'm very thankful for three weeks ago when I had a cataract removed which removed the floaters from my eye and I've got clear vision now.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Which that was great! I was comin' down the road just this mornin' and I took my sunglasses off and it was just like lookin' through a picture window.

Anne Whealton: Idn't that something to be able to see so well at seventy-five?

Edward Bowden: Yes, yes, indeed.

Anne Whealton: So you have vision in both eyes?

Edward Bowden: Yeah. Before that I had, it was like lookin' through a plastic jug.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Couldn't see, you could see things but you couldn't see it clear. And well it would be like takin' a – just like I'd take you right now and put a piece of plastic over you and you try to vision through it.

Anne Whealton: Wow! I . . .

Edward Bowden: It would drive you crazy.

Anne Whealton: I don't know you did all those years on your trucks. Tell me some truck stories; tell me one of your best truck stories.

Edward Bowden: Well, I can tell you one of 'em. (Laughing)

Anne Whealton: I think there's a funny one you told me about a lady with a . . .

Edward Bowden: Uh – I don't – this has been thirty-five years ago I guess Margaret hadn't it?

Margaret Bowden: Wig.

Edward Bowden: Huh?

Anne Whealton: Wig.

Margaret Bowden: Wig.

Edward Bowden: A what?

Anne Whealton: Wig! With a wig!

Edward Bowden: Oh, what about the wig? Maybe I forgot. (Tape stopped). I was goin' . . .

Anne Whealton: This is the lady with the wig story. Go ahead.

Edward Bowden: Right. I was goin' back over to Queen Sound Bridge and they were doin' construction work at that time. I stopped and then I was routed around the equipment site and in front of me was a lady with a – with a Mercedes I think it was. Anyway, when the flagman flagged the other cars down to me before I got around the truck; I give the truck more speed to get out of the way, to get out of the way. In the meantime the lady thought that when she seen me stop – flagman – meant for her to stop. She stopped and I skidded right in the back of her. Well, when I got out and when I got up to the car, in the meantime before that I was lookin' and when I hit her her hair fell off. And I said gee, I said I got problems now, I knocked the head right off that woman!

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: So when I got to the car she had had the wig on sideways.

Anne Whealton: (Laughing)

Edward Bowden: And then we called the law and the law came down and then we started discussin' different things and then she told her, she had told me when I was talkin' to her that her husband had passed away three months prior to that. She told the State – well the State Trooper told her, he said, "Lady, tell your husband to drive carefully because accidents comes in

threes.” “Oh,” she said, “I will sir.” So anyhow, she left and I was still sittin’ there with the State Trooper and I said, “Sir,” I said, “Did you tell this lady to tell her husband to drive carefully accidents come in threes?” “Yes sir, that’s what I told her.” I said you aint got to worry about him gettin’ in no accidents. He said, “What do you mean?” I said, “He’s been dead three months.” He said, “He’s been dead?” I said, “She told me that before you got here.”

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: “What did she tell me that for?” I said, “I guess to get on the good side of you.”

Anne Whealton: Oh lands. All right. All right, now when did your – your Father pass away, how old was he when he passed away?

Edward Bowden: Seventy-eight.

Anne Whealton: Seventy-eight. And can you tell me that story, that’s probably the last story. When – how did he die, what happened?

Edward Bowden: Well, you know the old man had Alzheimer’s. Couldn’t even remember how to get the tractor started. So one evening out here I spent some time with him showin’ him how to start that tractor with the bush hog behind it. And never thought that he would figure out how to do it after showin’ him. So that evening went - after – next day when I went to work I didn’t get home that day when I came home my son-in-law came out and says, “I got bad news.” I said, “Yeah, I know what it is.” Which I didn’t know but . . .

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: He said, “You’re Father died.” I said, “Oh yeah?” So at the time he was back here in ninety degree weather cuttin’ them weeds in back of the garage.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: And he felt this heart attack comin’ on, so he drove the tractor wide open. _____ Berry said he’d never seen a tractor go like that.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: He drove her wide open up by the – I don’t know why he didn’t get all the way, but he got by the garage and fell off of her and he walked in the house and Mom says, “What you been doin’?” He said, “Cuttin’ weeds.” And he fell dead with a massive heart attack.

Anne Whealton: How about that.

Edward Bowden: So . . .

Anne Whealton: He was somethin'.

Edward Bowden: But I've always – it was, I tell you I look at this away, I hated to lose him, but he wasn't happy. He'd worked all his life and he didn't like sittin' in 'ere under that tree but he never had the mind to do anything else.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: Another thing I was always glad about that he didn't fall off that tractor when he had that out, that bush hog would a cut 'im all to pieces.

Anne Whealton: Uh-huh.

Edward Bowden: That would a been one heck of a scene.

Anne Whealton: That's right.

Edward Bowden: So if he had to go, it worked out right. It could a been, like you said, it could a been the other way.

Anne Whealton: And how did your Mom pass away?

Edward Bowden: Mom – Mom, I guess Mom, well Mom got Alzheimer's and so forth. I guess her heart just went up mostly.

Anne Whealton: And how old was she when she passed away?

Edward Bowden: She was eighty-eight.

Anne Whealton: Eighty-eight. You have some long livers in your family.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: You got heart people and then you got a long livers.

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Margaret Bowden: (Inaudible)

Edward Bowden: Yeah.

Anne Whealton: (Laughing) Well, I just want to thank you. We're at the end of the tape and I thank you for sharing your birthday with me and all these great stories. This is truly a treasurer and a keepsake.

Edward Bowden: Thank you Anne. And I want to say it's a pleasure havin' you and Elvie to live next to me.

Anne Whealton: Awe, thank you.

Edward Bowden: We love ya!

Anne Whealton: Love you too!

END OF TAPE.