

CIGAR DAISEY AND NEWMAN MERRITT
WITH DAVE HALL MARCH 1989

[There are two other gentleman present. They are not identified, other than the fact that one of them is referred to as "Pete". They are from North Carolina.]

MR. HALL: Newman, where did your people come from?

MR. MERRITT: I guess they washed ashore up the beach. My Daddy said my Great granddaddy washed ashore up on the beach around Green Run. They were named Mallick, and then they changed it to Merritt. I think that's who my paternal side come from. The rest of them were always here on the island as far as I know.

MR. HALL: Where did you live when you were a boy?

MR. MERRITT: I lived up on the north end of the island. I've lived here all my life.

MR. HALL: You never lived on Assateague then?

MR. MERRITT: No. I lived right here on Chincoteague.

MR. HALL: Where there people living on Assateague when you were a little boy?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, there was people over there. When did they abandon that village?

MR. DAISEY: Scott was the last man left Newman. I used to drink water out of his pump. That was 1946 when he left, I think. He was the last man to leave. They hauled them houses off of there and put them on Ocean Blvd.

MR. MERRITT: My wife's people lived over there; the Joneses. My wife's Great grandfather and Great grandmother are buried over there I think, in that graveyard right up above the road.

MR. DAISEY: Jones you said?

MR. MERRITT: They were her Great grandparents.

MR. DAISEY: Jones is an old family around here. I told him about Green Run where a lot of them come up the beach. There's a lot of old families out here come from up the beach.

MR. MERRITT: I guess up until the war, this was a pretty isolated place here on this island. They had the causeway over here and everything but you just didn't see no people hardly.

MR. DAISEY: If you want the real truth of it, we wasn't nothing but knots. That's why me and this man [referring to Mr. Merritt]. See, people inbred and messed up and got small. It was when the boys from the Service [military] started coming here and marrying these girls. Didn't they Newman?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah.

MR. DAISEY: They bred them up.

MR. MERRITT: They put a new infusion of blood in.

MR. DAISEY: That's right. They put a new deal in for them and then Chincoteaguers started to get about like normal people. See, they didn't get a damn thing to eat during the great Depression noways. They raised up small, most of them. And you'd better believe it, there's a lot to that too.

MR. MERRITT: They lived of seafood.

MR. HALL: I know when I was here that they had some problems with kids that were mentally retarded probably from inbreeding.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah. There's a lot of that.

MR. HALL: They had a school here, I remember. That was one of the reasons they said it was necessary. I was surprised to learn that there were people on this island who had never been to the mainland when I was here.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, I don't think my Grandmother, once she moved here ever left the island except for one time after she moved here that I ever knew. That was to go to her sister's funeral. That was up around Scotland or something like that. I think that was the only time she ever left the island to my knowledge.

MR. HALL: There was a feeling here that particularly the fish and wildlife resources and anything that you wanted to use out there; it was your right to use it.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, that's right.

MR. DAISEY: Well, you have to realize that these people made a living on Assateague beach; along the shores at Assateague Beach and Tom's Cove. The clams were so thick

you could get right down and dig them. Oysters were all along there. When Fish and Wildlife came along and took it over, oh no, John Buckley would drive you off. He'd come right to you and say, "You can't work here." And the next they done to it is that they subleased it to the Collins boys. Lloyd and Roland Collins. And then they'd drive you off. See? You took away a livelihood. And you took away a hunting place. You just didn't do nothing to make yourself stand out big in the community.

MR. MERRITT: Wasn't that on of the main reasons why the village over there at Assateague collapsed? Because Sam Fields wouldn't let them work over at the Cove?

MR. DAISEY: Sam Fields didn't want them to go to the Cove. There's always been a conflict over Assateague Beach just as far back as you can go you can find it. [There was] Old Man Alford. I want you to get them pictures from Petrosey. He had a great big old gun. It went clear down below his knees. They had him in the paper and people didn't know who he was. I said, "I know who the somebitch was!" I didn't know him. I had never seen him before in my life, but I know it was Old Man Alford because I heard Mom and them talk about him all their life you know. He had this old, big butt line pistol on him, didn't he?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah.

MR. DAISEY: He had a horse named Metom. A big old black horse he bought from old man Ed McGee where I lived in that pink house, remember? That's where he bought the horse from. I listened to the people talk about him nights out to the store you know, all my life. They all kinds of problems with him. They shot him and everything in the world. They'd go along at nights and cut his barbed wire fence. He'd put up a fence in the day, and they'd go along at night and cut it up in pieces about that big when it come dark. There's always been a conflict over that refuge, and there always will be! Sometimes I wished it was washed away, not a damn piece of it left! You know what I mean?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: What would be there if the refuge hadn't come?

MR. DAISEY: It would be a town. You wouldn't see the sunrise till about now. It would be built up that high.

MR. MERRITT: When the government first took it over, people used to go over there and hunt whenever they wanted to. Of course there wasn't that many deer in them days when they first took it over. But if you wanted a duck or a goose or something you went there and hunted, you know. You resented it when you found out you couldn't do it.

MR. DAISEY: That was the whole deal. You just took something away from people that they were used to using.

MR. MERRITT: They didn't really destroy that much stuff, as far as that goes. They just got what they wanted to eat, more or less.

MR. DAISEY: I'll tell you what it done; it made a paradise around here for a number of years for ducks, because it give them a place to go rest during the day. In the nights, they'd come. We'd have flights of ducks coming in these marshes wouldn't we Newman?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah.

MR. DAISEY: At about ten minutes of five to five-fifteen at nights is watching time in the wintertime. At ten minutes of five they'd start and you'd see just drove after drove of ducks going in the marshes.

MR. HALL: You could advantage of that though didn't you?

MR. DAISEY: You better believe we did. You went where you thought they were going.

MR. MERRITT: When they were flying like that you could hear them pacing.

MR. DAISEY: They were chuckling and talking to each other, they knew just right where they were going.

MR. MERRITT: Well Dave, I believe right now with the hunting pressure; you talk about the pressure on the commercial fishing and everything else; the hunting pressure is too. If it wasn't for that refuge, I don't think we'd have any ducks!

MR. HALL: You compare now to when I was here in the early 1960's. I came here right after the March 1962 storm. I wasn't impressed with the number of ducks I saw anywhere. I've never seen what I call a lot of ducks in Chesapeake Bay country. Never, I mean not even close to what I've seen in Louisiana.

MR. DAISEY: I've seen a hundred thousand or so Black ducks here. I've seen that many.

MR. HALL: In the last few years, as short as they are, I've been on a farm in Arkansas that a friend of my owns; there's two hundred and fifty thousand ducks on his farm, in that last few years. I mean, that's the last of them. But I've seen a million ducks in one place in my life.

MR. DAISEY: Is Ralph Harris still in Arkansas?

MR. HALL: No, he's dead.

MR. DAISEY: He dead?

MR. HALL: Ralph died about nine months or a year ago.

UNIDENTIFIED MAKE: Where'd you see all them ducks, in Lake Pontchartrain?

MR. HALL: No, I saw a million ducks in Claypool Reservoir in Arkansas.

MR. DAISEY: How old was he?

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Where they mostly Mallards?

MR. HALL: Umhum. Ralph was I guess seventy.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, I guess he was close to it.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Was he the man that snatched you off your feet?

MR. DAISEY: That man got me by the back of the neck and snatched the living hell out of me! He said, "He said, if I wasn't an officer of the law, I'd stop this car and beat the goddamned hell out of you!" I never said a word to him! I'll tell you what he did say; He said, "What do you do for a living?" I said, "I hunt and fish and trap." And I told the man the truth as much as anything. That's all in the world I was doing.

MR. HALL: Ralph had a bad habit of that. Boy, he was a big, tough man.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, he was a big, tough man! I didn't want to get hold of me again.

MR. HALL: There was few people that ever handled that man! He was overbearing when he shouldn't have been.

MR. DAISEY: He was an overbearing man like there never was before.

MR. HALL: He was bad, but he was a big, tough man.

MR. DAISEY: You better believe it. He was about six foot, four.

MR. HALL: He and I didn't get along real well.

MR. DAISEY: They tell me that nobody didn't like him! They tell me that everybody disliked him.

MR. HALL: There was only one way to handle Ralph Harris, that's a bullet between the eyes; because you couldn't physically subdue him. He was just too big and tough. He was a hell of a man. When the Lord made him....

MR. DAISEY: Son, he picked me right up off of the shell pile. He grabbed me by the back of the neck and picked me right up off the shell pile. No, he grabbed me by the arm. The shells flew out from under my feet as far as from here to that door! He just slung me!

MR. HALL: He didn't realize his strength. His hands were three times the size of a normal mans. He was from Missouri. That's where he was from originally.

UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Who was that other big feller that was over here?

MR. DAISEY: Jack Valentine.

MR. HALL: Jack Valentine is still living. I see him all of the time. He's retired in Louisiana.

MR. DAISEY: He's a nice man. Goddamnit, he was a nice man!

MR. HALL: Yeah, but he let you guys get away with a little too much! He was so damn naive. Old Jake, he said, "Oh, I don't believe old Tom Reed would steal any ducks out of our duck trap!"

MR. DAISEY: He was the nicest guy in the world! I liked the other guy from North Carolina, what was his name?

MR. HALL: Charlie Noble, he'd dead. He had a heart attack several years ago.

UNIDENTIFIED MAKE: I remember he used to chew tobacco.

MR. HALL: Boy, his wife was a hellcat.

MR. DAISEY: Boy she was wasn't she? [Whistling sounds, all around]

MR. MERRITT: He used to go over there dove hunting with us, Charlie did. On the mainland, didn't he?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, Charlie was a nice guy. Everybody liked him.

MR. HALL: When he died he was the Manager at St. Vincent Island Refuge in Florida. He had a heart attack. That was a good many years ago. Dorothy was his wife.

MR. DAISEY: How about Tom Martin? Is he still around?

MR. HALL: No, Tom retired years ago. I haven't heard from Tom in a long time.

MR. DAISEY: And the Eskimo retired. I remember he called me up one time.

MR. HALL: Yep, he's retired in California.

MR. DAISEY: He could stop them from law violating couldn't he? He could break up more....

MR. MERRITT: He was around, see? He was out in the marshes, being seen.

MR. HALL: Did the people ever....?

MR. MERRITT: He didn't really catch that many people, he didn't have to.

MR. DAISEY: But he was like a dog, he was everywhere! Everywhere you went, there he was.

MR. HALL: Did the people town here ever realize that he was crawling under them oyster houses and clam houses at night and listening to what yall were saying?

MR. DAISEY: It looked like he would do anything!

MR. HALL: That's what he was doing! That's why he knew what was going on. You know how they sit in there and tell all of that stuff? Well he was under the damn house listening.

MR. MERRITT: He come within inches of catching me up there. I was gunning on the refuge too. I was shooting Black ducks. I wanted some geese, but no geese would come out there. And was on the next point below me. I heard that out board motor start and just about dusky dark. I said, "Well, that's somebody gunning down there", but I didn't hear no shooting. So I might have killed fifteen or twenty or something like that. I wasn't too far away from my boat anyway, and I run and jumped in my boat and started it. I was going along right slow and he pulled out on me. He had a little aluminum boat with about a 15 horse on her. He had come for me. But I had a 25 horse and I just left him. I stayed away from him. The moonshine was bright as day.

MR. DAISEY: Dave, one day he liked to get me. I'll tell you what happened. I was up...

MR. MERRITT: Oh he was always out. You could expect to see him any time! We called him “the Eskimo”.

MR. DAISEY: You better believe it! It was at Oyster Gut goes through and comes out in [unintelligible] Bay don’t it Newman?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah.

MR. DAISEY: I went up to the next thoroughfare and come down. I was trapping ducks in that gut and nobody in the world could tell that gut was there. It was a deep gut and I could sail right up it. I had plenty ducks there, but I had never trapped none. I was going to set a trap that night. I had a piece of wire up there just to get them used to it. I was there chopping this grass down. I’d chop it down and stomp it with my feet and get it just as nice and pretty as I could, you know. All of a sudden I seen the man then didn’t I! I looked right to my right, like this here, and he was to the next gut to me. But he couldn’t get to me. There was a piece of marsh between me and him. He couldn’t sail to me, he had to go all the way around about a mile to get where I was at, see. But he was within forty or fifty yards of me. So, down I went. I get to work and keep my head down and then I’ll turn around and maybe I’ll catch him up. That’s what I done. That’s what I done. He went down in the reeds because he knowd I had seen him. Well I jumped in there and give her hell like you wouldn’t believe. I went on up through [unintelligible] Creek and come on out to Queens Sound. I met brother Gary coming there at the Dog’s Head Point. Gary had a fast little boat. It wasn’t a very big boat but she was real fast. I said, “Gary, that damn Game Warden is right over there, and he come up on me up the gut!” I said, “I imagine he’ll go there and find my traps.” But you know, he never went there and found them traps!/? So what happened when we come out from the point from the south of the creek, here he comes. And he went on up one of them guts. I said, “Let’s go see if it’s him, for sure.” So we sailed up the gut on him. When I sailed up the gut, he laid down in the bottom. I sailed right up to him and looked over on the other side. He was lying right flat on the bottom of the boat. We turned right around and come on right back out. We went on down below the bank and set there and watched him. Then he went on up to Miss Judges where that launching place is where you launch your boat. He put on the trailer and went away. I went down there and set them traps. The next morning I think it had about eighty-something in there. I set two traps there. No, I had three traps there. That’s where the Old Man Grayson paid Mark Daisey some liquor money; he didn’t have no money, for telling him where my traps was. He wanted to know where Cigar’s traps were, and them boys told him. George come right home and told me. He said, “Cig, don’t go back there. I think Mark told him. He went out on the deck with him and I don’t trust him.” See, they were drinking and this Game Warden was looking for duck traps. So he told him. They were up Oakey’s gut stealing Oakey’s oysters and that’s how they knowd where I was trapping. I wouldn’t let them know nothing I done. They seen me. They were up there oystering and seen me go in there. That’s how they knew where I was trapping. We went there and got my traps. I moved

up there about a thousand yards below the causeway. That's where they found them the next time. I had three right there beside that thoroughfare. That when they had it in the newspaper that time. Them traps were sitting right there. I knew just as soon as I laid my eyes on them. See? What we used to do is we'd sail right up to the boat. They had an old big boat named Bluebill. She was about fifty feet long or thereabouts. Her cabin would be lined up with ducks; we'd have seventy-five or eighty ducks laying up there. We'd sail there right close to them. The Game Warden would come out and look out and say, "See anything there that belongs to ya?!" We'd say, "Nope!", and go on our way. I'd shake my head like that, you know.

MR. MERRITT: That was that State boat wasn't it?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, it was a State Boat. Old Man Grayson was with them. I was trapping right in the mouth of the last gut down as you go into Beau's Bay. I went there that day and the boat was up there. I never seen no outboards. I said, "I believe this far down, they won't be able to see me no way." And I wanted to set them traps bad, that night. So, I sailed up the gut and the tide was up high enough so I turned my boat around. I just backed her right up until I got right up off to the traps. When I raised up; the marsh was a little bit high right on the other side; there was that little outboard motor boat. Grayson was laying right down there on the bottom. I said, "You wait there, you sonofabitch!" And I get the hell out of there right quick! I used to make him madder... He wouldn't even speak to me.

MR. MERRITT: Listen, that Grayson Chessler, he was State. Was he ever on the payroll or just part time?

MR. HALL: He was part time. He was actually the Dog Catcher for the County. He caught more duck trappers than any man that ever lived. I knew Grayson real well.

MR. MERRITT: See, they were right there in his back yard, you might say. He lived there at Assawoman.

MR. DAISEY: And he'd hunt you! He'd hunt you! He caught Newman. He caught him twice in one week didn't he?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah.

MR. DAISEY: He caught him once and went back and caught him again in one week's time!

MR. HALL: Did you guys ever hear of old man Herbert Simpson?

MR. DAISEY: You'd better believe I know Herbert! He come to my house a many of times!

MR. HALL: I caught him!

MR. DAISEY: Yeah. He was the biggest old man there ever was. I was real tall, and skinny.

MR. HALL. He was the last of the duck trappers.

MR. DAISEY: He wore an old slouch hat and looked like a mountain man. He used to drown them. He used to like to drown his ducks. I don't think he never was a good trapper.

MR. HALL: He was from

MR. DAISEY: Right down there on the point where Lucy was raised; where my wife was raised. He was in charge of it.

MR. HALL: I'll tell you what he did. He kept his traps overboard and he'd go out and check out all of the guts before he'd ever go off shore. I watched his damn procedure; how he did it. He went out there and when he'd finally set his trap just before dark he'd go out there and drag them up and set them. And he'd be back before daylight. He never run nothing, or do nothing when it was daylight. I liked to froze to death that night laying on that damn trap! The salt water froze around me. I was shaking so bad.

MR. MERRITT: That makes a long night don't it!

MR. HALL: S---! I'll tell you another thing; for the next three or four days, it felt like somebody had beat me to death with a baseball bat! I shook so bad that I couldn't....

MR. MERRITT: I went hunting one day this year. I went on the coldest day we had. And like I said, I've had trouble with this asthma. And son, when I got up to get out of bed the next morning; if you had beat me with a chunk, I couldn't have been more sore! I said, "Goddamnit, I've got to quit going!"

MR. HALL: Old Bill Kentsinger was with me that night. He'd dead. Bill had a heart attack.

MR. DAISEY: He was all right. But that Wright, I didn't have no use for him. But that Wright, goddamn, I didn't have no use for him!

MR. HALL: He was too hard on people.

MR. DAISEY: You better believe it! I believe he'd make a case on you. He told them boys over there one day, over there to the beach; they told me about it, the [unintelligible name] boys. "I guess I'll go out there and catch me somebody!" And they said, "Well how about if they ain't doing nothing?" And he said, "Well, I'll make something!" You can't do nothing with a man like him. Kentsinger was a right decent guy.

MR. HALL: Bill Kentsinger was a gentleman.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, he was. He come to me one time. But he knew how to talk to you.

MR. DAISEY: He was a short, chunky fellow.

MR. HALL: Yeah, Bill was a nice guy. I was with him when he died. He had a heart attack. We were at a meeting. Goddamn, he was one of my best friends!

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, everybody liked him.

MR. MERRITT: He was up to Cambridge the last I heard.

MR. HALL: Yeah, well he was stationed up there.

MR. DAISEY: He died in Richmond I think.

MR. HALL: Down in Norfolk. Yeah, we were at a meeting down there.

MR. MERRITT: He wasn't very old was he Dave?

MR. HALL: No, he wasn't! And Jerry, his boy, was the same age as mine. Same month and everything. Jerry went to college after his Dad died. He went to Salisbury State. The last time I was up here, I went to see Jerry while he was in college. Bill was a fine man. He had a good family and he was a reasonable man. He'd never try to pinch anybody.

It was tough times up here. It was hard on my family when we lived here.

MR. DAISEY: I think any family that comes in like that is going to have a few problems.

MR. HALL: Not many people realize what a tough job it is to do that job right; and to be fair.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, I imagine it is. Of course, the climate has changed a lot now. People has changed or something. I think the climate has changed.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, it has.

MR. MERRITT: With conservation and all.

MR. HALL: I love to come back to this island. Hell, I always tried to get along with people as best I could.

MR. MERRITT: The people that used to be the violators are the conservationists now, the way I see it!

MR. HALL: Absolutely! That's exactly what's going on.

MR. MERRITT: It sounds paradoxical, but it's that way.

MR. HALL: It boils down to those are the people who care the most.

MR. MERRITT: I can tell you that I am a lot more interested in it now than I was when I was younger. I didn't know any better to start with, I guess.

MR. DAISEY: No.

MR. HALL: And see, I'm trying to understand this. This is the reason I'm doing what I'm doing with these cameras and everything. I'm trying to put it all back together the way it really is. The people that violated game laws; they did it because there was no social pressure not to do it. They didn't feel it was wrong. They were basically the people who didn't violate other laws. There was a lot of game. There were a lot of ducks and they didn't feel in their minds that they were abusing it because they were taking it home and eating it. They really couldn't see what was going to happen in the future.

MR. DAISEY: No, most of the people would eat it or make use of it in some kind of way.

MR. HALL: But the double standard I am interested in is the same thing we were talking about with this fishing. I got Cigar, he told me. See? It was bad if you shot ducks or trapped them and sold them. That was bad. The sportsmen would jump on you. The Congressmen would jump on you. Society would jump on you. Because that was the first law they made that was a felony. But if you went out and shot about a sack full as a sport, that was okay. Nobody ever said much about that.

MR. DAISEY: No.

MR. HALL: But the guy that caught them, or shot them commercially and sold them was the bad guy. But there's really no difference!

MR. MERRITT: No.

MR. HALL: Because in the long run, the sportsmen were killing more illegal, over all, than the trappers were taking!

MR. MERRITT: That's right!

MR. DAISEY: Me and him [referring to Mr. Merritt], and one of our best friends; he'd dead now, he died with the cancer; every time this man would sail up that bay close to him; he'd be worried to death wouldn't he?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah. Orville.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, Orville. And we worried him to death, see? He run the [unintelligible] organization. I didn't want to mention people's names or nothing like that, but that's the club that we were alluding to. They could shoot all the Bluebills there was in the world and that was super great! But if I trapped the little Black ducks, I'm a sonofabitch, you know what I mean? That's the way they looked at it. But they could shoot them Bluebill to no end! Come aboard! Come on aboard! [person approaching]

MR. MERRITT: They were scared to death we were going to come on to their property, and Oh look, somebody's come and brought us some more beer. Do you know who he is? [person passes by]

MR. DAISEY: No. Maybe he went to get some more. Sometimes he comes up and sees me.

MR. MERRITT: Who is he? Does he live up the shore here?

MR. DAISEY: I don't know. But I damn will drink his beer anyway.

MR. HALL: Well, I'm going to really get him cranked up now. We're going to let him drink one beer and I'm going to go check in at the refuge. I don't know any of the people over there now but I do want to go over to that beach and do some filming over there. But one thing I want you all to tell me...and Goddamnit, I want you to tell me the truth now. I want you guys to tell me. I think I've already told you guys about the most miserable night I ever spent in my life; that was worse than that duck trap right behind Newman's house! Are yall going to tell me that story!?

MR. DAISEY: You mean the day we crawled down and shot the ducks?

MR. HALL: You're damn right!

MR. DAISEY: We left them there, you know. I wouldn't go back and get them. We killed too many!

MR. MERRITT: Cig, remember?

MR. HALL: I want to hear the whole story. Wait a minute; let me get this thing turned around here. [Turning tape over to side B]

MR. DAISEY: You go up the field this away.

MR. HALL: Yall start at where you located them ducks. Now I know you had to have baited them!

MR. DAISEY: No! They wasn't baited! They always come there when it rained.

MR. MERRITT: You know what it was? When you had them heavy rains, every bit of that stuff in that field; weeds and seeds and stuff like that would wash up in that low end of it. And them Mallards; you couldn't beat them out of there!

MR. DAISEY: They was never baited in their lifetime!

MR. MERRITT: No, I never baited.

MR. HALL: You didn't have to.

MR. MERRITT: And a lot of them were tame ducks coming out from Donny Raye and them boys.

MR. DAISEY: I'd say about eighty percent of them were domestic, wasn't they?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, probably.

MR. DAISEY: So what we done; we left there after we talked with you and went on up to Claude Murray's lane and walked down that ridge. When I walked down there, I crawled right up to them a little too close. And goddamn when I let go, I killed more than the limit! I said, "Jesus Christ, that man is still out there in that field, Newman!"

MR. MERRITT: I said, "I guarantee you Dave is peeking through them bushes!" What was the limit then, I forgot?

MR. DAISEY: I know it was two or three live Mallards apiece. But I killed way over the limit. So I said, "To hell with them. There ain't no need to pay a fine! Let's scoot the hell up this ridge!" So I flew up that ridge. We put them guns in that car and left. We went away and left them. So that night, who went back? Did you go back the next morning or what? [asking Mr. Merritt]

MR. HALL: S---, you went too!

MR. DAISEY: No, I didn't go back.

MR. MERRITT: No, I went and got Boone and somebody else. I got enough to cover what ducks we shot.

MR. HALL: There was four of you.

MR. DAISEY: I didn't come with him back out there.

MR. HALL: And you didn't come out there til after midnight.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah. I wanted enough to cover them. I should have smelled a rat anyway. I know damn well that the raccoons and stuff in them woods would have drug them ducks around by then. When I got back there, them ducks were sitting there just as nice as you please. We had old Rex with us, that old black dog. You don't remember him. He used to follow me around with the mail.

MR. HALL: But do you remember what you said when you came back out there to the pond?

MR. MERRITT: No, I can't remember now.

MR. HALL: You said, "Goddamn, look here!" You were coming out there to stick a blind. You were going to stick a blind and make a hunt in the morning.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah.

MR. HALL: And you said, "Goddamn, look out here, somebody done shot these...it's them goddamn Game Wardens! Them sombitches have come in here and shot our ducks!" I had them all counted out there on the pond.

MR. MERRITT: I enough for the...we all had license too.

MR. HALL: And you said, “Well, Goddamnit we’re going to take these ducks, somebody done shot them out here!” Each one of them got two Mallards each!

MR. MERRITT: And old Rex, he was smelling you the whole time. I didn’t know he [Mr. Hall] was out there!

MR. HALL: I wasn’t about let them know I was out there. I said, “S---, look at this man!”

MR. MERRITT: I should have smelled a rat when nothing hadn’t bothered them ducks when we went back there that late. A raccoon would have had them if nobody hadn’t of been around. The coons back there were about as big as a dog; back there in them woods.

MR. HALL: I thought you were with them back there, Cig!

MR. DAISEY: Dave, if you want to get right down to it, I don’t know whether you approve of it or not, but me and this man has killed a lot of stuff but we ain’t really killed...over the last ten or twenty years, we ain’t killed no wild ducks. We ain’t shot no wild ducks. We’re too smart to shoot wild ducks. What the hell you want with an old fishy looking Black duck when you can shoot somebody’s raised Mallards and let them have their wings? They’re ten times better to eat. You know that yourself! They’re so fat that when they fly, their ass is down! A true wild duck is just like a bullet! He’d be smooth, and go right no through. But an old ‘tamey’ will fly like that.

MR. MERRITT: I’ve got so I don’t even want to shoot a Black duck to tell you the truth.

MR. DAISEY: We ain’t really killed no wild ducks in a while!

MR. MERRITT: That was that snow storm that you were talking about.

MR. HALL: Old Boolamb, he was with you that night, out there. Who else was with you that night, Newman? Cigar, are you sure you wasn’t there?

MR. DAISEY: No! I didn’t go back there.

MR. MERRITT: No, you couldn’t have got him back there!

MR. DAISEY: No, I would go back there no more. I said, “to hell with them!” I wouldn’t take a chance on paying a fine about it.

MR. MERRITT: I know they were them nice Mallards. I hated to leave them there. I forget who it was now, Dave. I know it was Boolamb and me and two more.

MR. DAISEY: But that field, we always hunted in that field. That field was always good for ducks. And you know what's there now, if you went in there and looked? It's about twenty houses there.

MR. MERRITT: It's a trailer park.

MR. HALL: Didn't your cousin own it?

MR. MERRITT: It belonged to my Uncle. But then he died and my brother Paul bought it.

MR. DAISEY: There's twenty houses there now! No pond or no nothing! You'd never know there was ever a pond there.

MR. MERRITT: Right back there where we shot them ducks, a damn trailer's setting there now.

MR. HALL: Do you still live in the same house?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah I still live in the same place. Now them woods behind that; nothing was ever done with that. That was left to the whole family and hell, there must a hundred of them now. I believe Ed Tulle will try to take it and develop it.

MR. DAISEY: They'll put it in court and take the rest of it.

MR. MERRITT: See, if they won't let them fill; they've got them ridges and glades and things.

MR. DAISEY: Pete, Dave, did you get a beer? See, around here we help ourselves. If somebody brings it we'll drink it!

MR. MERRITT: You could poison us with beer couldn't you? But see, if I have my way there will never be a damn tree cut on it, not on my part of it. I'm an heir to that woods land back there. I'd like to see it stay exactly like it is. Not even a tree would be cut.

MR. DAISEY: Dave, this used to be great place for ducks.

MR. MERRITT: But, they'll eventually sell it out probably.

MR. DAISEY: There's ridges, high ridges and glades all over this piney island clear on down to where I used to live. And it was full of ducks in the spring of the year. Man,

you never the likes. Boys would go in the woods and come out with the biggest haul of ducks you ever seen. Now, you see what it is. Nothing but damn houses. No, Chincoteague is in bad shape; I ain't kidding you!

MR. HALL: But you know what? It's going on everywhere.

MR. MERRITT: Everywhere around the water, isn't it?

MR. HALL: And not only in this country, but all over the world. Boy, what they're doing to the tropical rain forest, we're going to pay for it!

MR. MERRITT: You better believe it! We'll be sunk here, if the temperature rises and melts that polar ice cap! Where we're at will be under water.

MR. DAISEY: That's right!

MR. HALL: The rising seas is going to be a problem. It's already escalating at an unbelievable rate.

MR. DAISEY: And boys, I don't want to move no more! I've moved nine times in my life and goddamn if I had to do it again.

MR. MERRITT: I heard old man Tom Reed say one time that the earth could stand anything but man, and it's the truth.

MR. HALL: I'm going to try to get him to repeat that for me. I'm going to look him up.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, it said it could stand anything but man. He's a right interesting old gentleman.

MR. HALL: Oh yeah, Tom was one of my good friends. Where is he staying now?

MR. DAISEY: He's still there.

MR. MERRITT: He's still living at home, I think. His daughter takes care of him.

MR. HALL: Is it that same house that he used to live in, that white house there?

MR. MERRITT: Yeah. He's still in the same place. It's built up around him though.

MR. HALL: It's Deep Hole, right at the end of the road. He lived right at the end. I don't know, this island don't look the same to me anymore.

MR. DAISEY: It's still the same house. You won't miss it. It's an old big bungalow type house, real high up off the ground. Yeah, he's still in the same place.

MR. HALL: How do you get there? See, this island has changed so much, I don't remember. Do you go past Chicken City Road?

MR. DAISEY: You go up to the old turntable. You know the old turntable? If you go right on out here and turn to your right and head on out you'll get to the turntable. Now the first house is his son-in-law.

MR. MERRITT: But he's still in that same place. And see, there's another man who violated the law all his life and I don't know no better conservationist that what he is!

MR. HALL: Shoot, Tom Reed is a fine man!

MR. MERRITT: And look; he knows what he's talking about!

MR. HALL: Oh, he does!

MR. DAISEY: He's a smart old man! You don't put much by him, I can tell you that!

MR. HALL: That's right. He's one of the finest men I ever knew.

MR. MERRITT: He's lost his wife. He's lost her.

MR. HALL: I was the first Game Warden he told all his; how he did everything, and showed me. That is in 1963 or 1964. He said, "My outlaw days are over." And he called me over to his house. He had the shed right over to the side. That's when he showed me what later became famous; that boat where he had his gun hid up under there. Then he had his damn Black ducks where he could put dippers in there. And he had his geese where he could put the Black ducks.

MR. DAISEY: One thing we found out about him though; he can make a good story better!

MR. HALL: Oh yeah! I liked that one about that damn Lasses they were using up there. He was talking about the Lasses and a damn mouse got up in there and died.

MR. DAISEY: You know what happened? Carter Reed told me this. J. C. Appell and his wife, when he was Refuge Manager, we were going to Easton. They were going to take me, and they were going to take Carter. Him [Tom Reed] and Carter was lighting Bluebills in Hog Island Bay. It was an old German guy that lived ashore. They had a little twelve-foot bateau and they were loaded down with Bluebills and their guns and

stuff. The wind breezed up and blowed up a gale. They had to up under the mainland, you know, up under the western edge where it was smooth, see. And the boat was way off in there, and they couldn't get to her. They seen this light in the house and they started walking to it. They got there and there's some old German guy. They told him they were in a mess; that they couldn't get back to their boat the wind was blowing so hard. He told them to come on in. They went in there and the man got out some bread and the molasses jug.

MR. HALL: They were market hunting?

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, they was lighting, with a light box. They were loaded with Blue bills in that little tinny boat. Anyway, when he poured the molasses out, hair come out with it. Come to find out, there was a mouse in the molasses jug. He had been in there and died. But anything sweet like that had preserved it. See, sugar will preserve any damn thing.

MR. MERRITT: Sugar and salt.

MR. DAISEY: So they eat that mess.

MR. MERRITT: Yeah, Captain, he could make a good yarn. Old man Carter, he couldn't lie a bit. Cig said he'd see him coming Dave, and say, "I'm going to get the best of him. I'm going to top him. I'm going to tell a bigger lie than he does." And you'd let him go first and you still couldn't top him!

[tape skips]

MR. DAISEY: Well, it's an honest way out. I agreed with you a hundred percent. It ain't never going to be the same. The "anties" are going to get us. That's what I'm afraid of.

MR. HALL: Well, the damn thing about it, down in our country this year they wouldn't buy anything.

MR. DAISEY: No.

MR. HALL: They were trapping Nutrias and can you believe this; a few years ago they'd catch so many Nutrias, you can't believe how many they'd catch a night. They'd go in the marsh and shoot them with a .22. They'd get a little bit for the skins. This year, they wouldn't buy the skins. But they killed them. In those years, they'd just throw the carcasses away. Some times you couldn't ride down the bayou it smelled so bad from Nutria carcasses. This year, they trapped them; and they wouldn't buy the skins, but they'd buy the meat for alligator farms.

MR. DAISEY: How about that!

MR. HALL: It's the best thing to raise alligators on; red meat. So they sold the Nutria for so much apiece for the meat.

MR. DAISEY: Well, we didn't make a penny did we Newman? By the time we figured the beer bill... the only thing...if you want to say we don't anything wrong while we was trapping was that we carry a little bit of beer with us. If you want to call that wrong. You know what I mean? But I'll tell you the truth; we couldn't keep it for the Manager, cause he stay in it every five minutes! He was in it every five minutes.

MR. HALL: I'm going to drink me one.

MR. DAISEY: Yeah, it won't hurt you. Anyway... Help yourself Pete! Pete's on a diet.

MR. MERRITT: He's trimmed down quite a bit!

MR. DAISEY: You'd better believe he has!

MR. MERRITT: They tell me Priscilla's lost a lot of weight.

PETE: She lost forty-six pounds.

MR. DAISEY: So we trapped over there but we didn't make no money. I could come home here, and ...Am I off the record?

End of Tape