

Unified Committee for Afro-American Contributions
Oral History Documentation Project

NICOLAS VINCENT BISCOE

Interviewed by Brenda Coates
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[location unknown]

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[Begin Side 1, Tape 1 of 1]

BC: At Seaside View. Today's date is March the 6th, 1997. Mr. Biscoe, I just want to let you know that if you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, please feel free not to answer. Okay. The first one is: Where, exactly where do you live? If you would just give me typical—

NB: I live on 235, Route 235 Three Notch Road, Holland Manor Drive. I'm the—That was originally my grandfather's mother's home place and then I got the property from my mother and built my house there back in 1956, which I started off with a \$150 and I feel that my house's value today at least somewhere in the neighborhood \$150,000. And from then on, like I say, I married Cecilia Chase.

We both cooperated together and continued to move forward which, within this time limit, I worked at the Base—at the Navy Exchange Patuxent Naval Air Station dry cleaning. I worked there for 34 years and I retired in 1986 from the Base. And course at the same time in those 34 years I was working the Base, I was in two other partnerships for our business at the Park, at Fill A Dollar [??] there. And then, I was in partner with

James Lanham. We brought Grove Apartments there on [Rte.] 235 in Lexington Park. We ran a business there. I was in partners with him at least about 10 years. And then at the same time, Lanham, myself and several other guys—Arvin Thompson—we went in the housing building business and buying properties. Well, we went a distance in that. And course as time went on, we dispersed that organization. We went our separate ways again.

And at the same time, I did buy X amount of property through the County myself and even helped others to own property and what not. I even mortgaged my own home to do so. And so, at 1969, which I bought Seaside down here and I started off with this business down here. I only had \$200. I mentioned to my wife about it and so, she didn't know we couldn't handle it. It was at the time, the guy as asking \$17,000 for it.

And so, at that time, you know, money was very hard to borrow, as they said, for blacks in St. Mary's County which I already had a mortgage on my house and there wasn't that much owed at that time. I think I owed a balance around \$3,000. I go to Maryland National Bank at the time and President [inaudible] was the president at the time. So, I give him the information that I had in mind. So, he listened to it and all and he considered it, and give me consideration. And, this was on a Monday. I needed \$17,000.

And so, that Thursday he called me back and said, "Mr. Biscoe, you're loan has been approved." So and then, well, we continue on with the deal in purchasing Seaside View. At the same time, he said to me, he said, "You only getting \$17,000 to get your foot in the door. What you going to do if you need stocks or anything?" He said, "What we going to do actually is grant you another \$10,000 for extras that you may need to do,

stocks and just knew the interest business.” So he did this.

And then, I started this business out and more or less, we running dances and different other small operations down here. And course, as time went on in St. Mary’s County the dances commenced somewhat failing and I found myself taking the money off my job on the Base, paying bands and no profits. So, I told my wife, “Seaside View have to have a better purpose.” So, I seen all these campers going down Point Lookout times on holidays. They would fill up and no place to go. Go on back up the road. So, I put myself out a big sign. Said, “Camping. Welcome to Seaside View.” So, people commenced coming. All nationalities and what not and camping and tent camping and travel home, RV’s and what not. So, course again I continue to expand Seaside View. Like I say, when I come here, we only had just the bar area. I built on to it with another additional, about a 32 by 80-foot recreation room. And course, we had—did catering here at Seaside View and we had charter boat fishing, crabbing and whatever, you know, picnic areas and banquet room which will seat about 250 people. And, we, at the time, we could cater—just rent the room separate or whatever.

So, these are some of the things that I have moved from from the beginning of Seaside View up to this point and which have now, I’m continue to constantly go further. You know, at the time that you look at business and all what not, businesses change and you have to change with times. Course, some people said to me sometime, “Why do I want to continue on going?” The reason why I want to continue on going because when I started out, I didn’t have any experience of business so I would feel letting myself down in the gifts that God has given me if I stopped now, which I hope I can be help to younger people, people who want to motivate themselves, get married, as people have helped me

along the journey 'cause like I say, I feel in good health as of now and all. And so, I feel like I just want to continue on continue on.

BC: Okay. Okay. You really answered all of my questions almost that I have on here. What I'm going to do is just to go back. You know, ask you specific questions about some of what you already told me. Okay? You said you live on, off of Route 235 and you gave the name of the street, but exactly where is that? You know, give me some landmarks.

NB: Landmarks. There's actually Holland Manor Road.

BC: But still, where is that exactly?

NB: Right as you run out of the Dameron area, there's a sign there—a route sign—say Ridge area. Well actually, I'm in the Ridge area of Holland Manor Road just at the beginning of Ridge coming south on 235.

BC: Okay.

NB: On the right-hand side of the road.

BC: South of 235.

NB: Right.

BC: It's in Dameron.

NB: No. Yeah, well, I guess—well, Ridge line is just a few feet on the other side of the driveway. I'm more or less on the borderline.

BC: Okay. Now, are you south of where the lawnmower place is?

NB: What lawnmower place are you talking about? The lawnmower place? We have one lawnmower place here in Dameron.

BC: The green and white one.

NB: Oh, you talking about Carol's?

BC: Carol's.

NB: Oh yes. I'm south of Carol's garage, the John Deere place over.

BC: You're south? Okay.

NB: Right.

BC: I guess I have a better idea. Okay. Even though your mailing address is Lexington Park.

NB: No, it's Ridge.

BC: I'm completely—okay. I made the—a bad assumption there. Okay. You're address is
16875 Three Notch Road, Ridge, Maryland.

NB: Right.

BC: Okay. I have a better idea now. And, that was your grandparents'?

NB: My grandparent's property.

BC: Okay. How far off the road is it? Off of the main road, off of Route 235?

NB: I'm off of the main highway off of 235. I would say somewhere in the neighborhood of
about—

BC: So you can see the house from the road?

NB: —just about a city block. Yeah.

BC: Oh, gee! That's a little distance back there.

NB: Yeah.

BC: So, about how many acres? This is where you were raised?

NB: This is where I was raised.

BC: How many acres are back there? How much land did your—?

NB: Well, they owned somewhere in the neighborhood, I think, it was roughly

around—around about 4 acres of land or a little better.

BC: Okay, and this is where your parents lived, too?

NB: Right.

BC: Okay. What kind of work did you parents do?

NB: Well, my father: He was a—He farmed. Well, actually he had a 125-acre farm and that part-time, he worked out. He shucked oysters. He worked the sawmills and then towards the last, he worked in Washington before he retired from the, from the Pepsi Cola Company there in Washington he was working for. And my mother: She, as a family woman, she, you know, kept up the family and then at times, she worked out at times. She even worked up Patuxent Naval Air Station at times private family work. And then she had—she used to be a cook there in Lexington Park for Bill George and some of the other restaurants around Lexington Park during her time in later years.

BC: Okay. So, you have really always lived on the family property?

NB: Yeah.

BC: Okay. What were times like when you were a child? You know, I guess I've already asked a couple of those, but what church did your family go to?

NB: We go to St. Peter's.

BC: You always have gone to St. Peter's Catholic Church.

NB: Right.

BC: Do you remember when you were young taking any trips with your family?

NB: Well, not that much. We used to go back and forth to Baltimore with my dad every now and then what not. But—. Well, it was all business at that time. It wasn't no pleasure

trips. So, most pleasure trip we had was work! [laughter]

BC: Okay. Was your family involved in community activities?

NB: Not that much. I wish my dad had been more involved in community activities. He always was a member, I think, from 18 years of age until he passed in '93 a member of Knights St. Jerome's Society, in a beneficial society. But, I think he used to belong to the Elks and I think, as time went on, I think he got out of that.

BC: Now, you said your father did farming. So, he raised crops and stock and whatever and that's how you all, I'm not going to say "survived," but you did ate a lot of what you grew.

NB: Yeah. Sure.

BC: Do you think the times were better or worse then than they are now?

NB: Times are much better now than they were then. But in a sense of speaking, well, it's just like it always has been. You're going to find some survivors in good—in bad times, and you're going to find some that won't survive even in good times. So, but, like I said, during that time when I come along, practically everybody had a cow, had a horse. They raised their own vegetables and what not. They had their own milk and butter. And of course by catching a day or two of work here and there, and they was able survive and raise their family and all.

And like I say, some did very well even back in those days. Doing is a funny situation. Like my father used to always say, "You know, a hen could sit on a peck of corn and starve to death" [laughter] and not realize it's sitting right there! [chuckle] So, but—But really, I have seen a lot of things that the old people did with little or nothing that even as of today that people with, with I say almost a hundred times more than what they

had to work with is not doing. So, it seems kind of difficult, you know. Well, you know try to manage the good times and the bad times. See, I feel that a person himself has to make times good. It just don't happen, you know. It's almost like putting a seed in the ground. If you want a good return, you have to figure what type of soil to put it in. You have to figure what type of cultivation you have to give it in order for that seed to develop and produce what you're looking for. So, and this is the way I feel that a lot of people have missed the point. They feel like it just should happen anyhow.

BC: Without them making the effort of it?

NB: This is it.

BC: Learning the best way to do it. Do you remember any particular home remedies? You know, when the family got sick or ill, do you remember any family remedies your mother used to use or, you know, your family used to use?

NB: [laughter] There's a whole lot of them!

BC: Like what?

NB: Well, I tell you. We used to get the—get the headache, fever, or something. It used a big weed up around the barn, a big broad weed. My mother used to call it some kind of a Murdock weed [Burdock], and she would make us go up there and get that weed. And, she would bring it back and take that weed and mash it and what not and put it in a cloth and tie it around our forehead and what not, and this would move the fever.

And so, and the same thing like cause you know around farm and all, somebody's always getting banged up or cut or this thing or the other thing. So, we—I hardly remember any time that the eight of us had to be taken to the doctor. She would go and get—she used to always keep turpentine on hand. That was one of the biggest healing

remedies that she had for us. She would take—if we got a cut or something on our leg, a finger or something, what she would do is take this turpentine and salt and put it into—and put it over this sore. It would sting at times. Put it over this sore and this turpentine and salt and wrap a cloth around it. And the next couple days, we was back in action again! [chuckle] Most all of us lived to get a ripe old age! [chuckle]

BC: [Laughs] Okay. So, you said, very seldom did you all have to go to the doctor?

NB: I don't remember ever going to the doctor! [laughter] No!

BC: Okay. Okay. When you were coming along, how did the black folks get their news? How did they find out what was happening?

NB: Well, my father, at that time—in education line, he was very well educated. He got his education in Baltimore City and what not and up until the age he was 18 years old. He come home after his father died, and he used to buy a lot of the newspapers, and keep up with the news, you know, throughout the nation and all that way 'cause it was quite awhile before we even—I guess I must have been somewhere in the neighborhood at least about 10 years old 'fore I even know that we had a radio in the house. So, 'cause—like I say, I was born in '32 and so it was back some time in the '40s. And course, then you come in as picking up news off the radio and all—battery radio which, we didn't have an electric—battery radio and what not. And by, course didn't do that much moving around, you know, being with other people, you know, from a distance. So, this was about the onliest way we got the most of the news.

BC: Because he got newspapers?

NB: Um hmm [yes].

BC: Okay. You said it was—you were about 10 before you knew you had a radio. He never turned it on?

NB: No, well, actually, we just didn't have one!

BC: Oh, I thought you meant it was there but you never—. Okay.

NB: No! No! [laughs]

BC: Okay.

NB: That's the truth! [laughs]

BC: I'm sorry. I wasn't—Goodness. Okay. What types of things did you do as a child? You know, like, what kind of chores did you have to do?

NB: Well as a child, well, coming up, like I say, coming up on the farm, we had cattle, hogs and all. Well, milking the cows and feeding the hogs and chickens and what not. And then, we were born on this farm 125 acres, which we had waterfront property and, you know, road-side property: wood and hauling, cutting wood and what not. And a lot of times, we would sell wood to the neighbors around the area and what not. And course, we had that waterfront property. We got fishing and soft crabbing and sometimes, we all—crabbing was much plentiful then what it is now. We would catch them and sell them and what not, you know, as boys. Help give us some pocket change, whatever. And, fishing and these are some of the things that I did during that time.

BC: Okay. What kind of games did you all play?

NB: Well at that time, we more or less had home games. We played baseball around the home among the brothers and sisters, you know. Course weekends and times, we had horses—go horseback riding, you know, all through the woods and different places

around—and what not things of that. Like I say on the water there, in the summertime, we would go swimming around the water and boating and what not. So, this is, more or less, the type of sport and games that we indulged in that time.

BC: Okay. How did you get along with your brothers and sisters?

NB: I got along with my brothers and sisters fine 'cause, like I say, I'm next to the youngest and course, my brother Vic—he's older than I was and course, I was more or less left with the youngest—my—Ernest and Evelyn. Course at that time, I always was—mostly lead a rough type of life or what not, you know. My mother used to be very hard on me because, I don't know. I'd get playing with the kids. The kids would get crying. You know, she would always beat me [chuckle] and what not. [chuckle]

So one day, my father told me, he said, "Boy. I'm a take you with me and make a man out of you!" [chuckle] So, I commenced travel around with my father in the woods or on the water or whatever it may be—garden or what not, you know and all. He and I spent a lot of time together, you know, and all, and he'd tell me about different his experience come along as a child. He would tell me stories and things [chuckle] and what not, you know. We had a very close relationship and all and which today, I'm glad that I did spend time with him because this is what a boy needs—time with the man, you know, 'cause he going to have to get out here and rumble through this world, you know, so he need to be tough.

And so, [chuckle] so I spent so much time with my dad that my mother, she come and get mad with my father. "You take that boy out everywhere you go! Suppose he get hurt of something, then I'm going to have to take care of him!" [laughter]

So anyhow, we kept it up and all and what not until my father went away to Washington and—my mother and him went to Washington to work private family for awhile and then he went worked the last job for the Pepsi Cola Company. So, those are some of the things that I spent time with family, you know.

BC: Okay. So, he left—he and your mother left to go to Washington to work.

NB: Right.

BC: So, your grandparents took care of the kids or?

NB: Well at that time, all the kids were grown. At that time, my sister was—Evelyn—she was the youngest at that time. She had another year or so in school, so she spent that year and she graduated Cardinal Gibbons, and then she went to Washington. And then from then on, you know, we commence splitting, going our separate ways.

BC: Oh, okay. So everybody was grown before they left to go to work. Okay. This next question is, how did your parents treat you? Even though you just told me you spent a lot of time with your father and whatever. So traveling with him like that, that was what you remember best about your father?

NB: Right. Yeah.

BC: And your mother?

NB: [chuckle]

BC: Sort of disagreeing with him doing that?

NB: [chuckle]

BC: Now, how did they discipline you?

NB: Oh, it was very well. I mean, we had—. Boys, they had to go around the house set in

ways. Even dressing—you couldn't go around the house with your shirt off or this thing or the other thing. You had to recognize your kinfolks. And get up in the morning, you had to speak to people and what not whether it's, "Good morning, Grandmother," which she lived with us until she died, and "Good morning, Mother and Dad" and what not, you know, and brothers and sisters. Get on out of their way and what not. And so, and they was very strict. We had to get up and go to church every Sunday and what not. And during Lenten season, the family would come together and get down on our knees in one room and we all would say the ten Deck of the Rosary, all through Lent, you know. As far as I can remember, I don't remember missing a night, you know, when we were coming up as a child, of the saying the Rosary before we go to bed. And like I say, attend our church duties and all and what not.

BC: So, but—. Okay. Did they ever have to punish the kids for doing things?

NB: Well, not that much. My oldest sister—she was a very, very outgoing person. She used to get a little hard-headed, you know and what not. But then again, she was a very helpful person, you know and all, you know. She had a vision, you know. She wanted to help the younger children and all and what not and this thing and that thing. Course, I think what really tore her apart, she'd gotten into a bad marriage, you know, and that didn't work out too well, but she really had a good ambition, you know and what not.

And course, my brother after me, after he got grown, which I don't know too much about his lifestyle with the family because he was much older than I were, commenced moving around and working different cities and what not in New Jersey and Washington, which he's in Pennsylvania now. And course, my brother, Paul—. My

brother, Paul, he was very outgoing young person when he was coming up. He was working-type person and liked to see things advance, you know and what not. And course, he moved away from here—Washington—as he got grown. And then, and now, he's living in Pennsylvania now, too. He has his own janitorial business up there in Pennsylvania and he's married and he has, I think, three kids. One of them's dead now and had kids and they're all grown.

Course my brother, Vic, and myself have always stayed here in the County. And course, like I said, a lot of people say they couldn't make a living in St. Mary's County you know and all. But still, my brothers and sisters and a lot of my colleagues left St. Mary's County and went different places, you know, throughout the nation and what not. But, I'm not bragging on myself. But I feel like that I produced much more than they have with way they—the way they all the big money and action words. So, I really can't condemn St. Mary's County myself. [chuckle]

BC: Okay. Do you believe that your parents prepared you well for life?

NB: I believe they did. They really want—. Especially, my mother. She wanted us to be the best in anything! [chuckle] So, course, you know, Mother always—I think Mother understands more about a child because she was a child once, see? Action, money, more that's produced and what not. And course—. Yeah, they really—they really did. And like I used to tell Dad, lots of time, even though my mother used to beat me all the time—. But like I told him that if she had been the man instead of the woman, we could still been better men and women! [laughter] Because she was very determined, you know.

BC: Okay. Now—. You said you went to St. Peter.

NB: Yeah.

BC: Claver Elementary School until the 8th Grade.

NB: Yes.

BC: How did you—how did you get to school?

NB: Well, we used to ride the bus to school. Eli Gant, he was the bus driver in this area at the time for St. Peter's School, and he would pick us up, as the bus drivers do, and bring us to school and turn and pick us up in the evening. That was the way we got to school.

BC: Okay. So from the 1st Grade on?

NB: Yeah.

BC: You always caught the bus to school?

NB: Yeah.

BC: Okay. Do you remember any of your teachers?

NB: Yes. One of the first teachers I can remember was Sister Stelma Rear. She was a very strict teacher and all, and I think she pushed her children for to get the most out of them and what not. And then, there was another teacher named Sister Margarita and one sister named, Sister Karen, I believe, and Mother Berkman. I'm not quite sure you heard quite talk about Mother Berkman.

BC: No.

NB: Mother Berkman was the Head Mother of that school and all, and she was very strict. [chuckle] She weighed about, I guess, I know she weighed over 200 pounds. How big she was. She would grab you [laughter] and put the yard stick on you. [laughter] Then, Father McKenna—he was a very great man at that time within the school and what not.

For some reason, Father McKenna [chuckle] always stayed on me, you know. Wanting me to go places with him and whatever. And for some reason, I guess it wasn't to follow the other boys that having all the fun. Father McKenna always want me to do this and do that, you know. So anyhow, even at the time before I got married, course, you know, you have to go Confession and all if you're Catholic. Father McKenna called me up one night, nine o'clock one night. "Nicolas, come down here to St. Michael's, to the Rectory." I wondered what Father McKenna want me, at nine o'clock at night, come down to the Rectory.

"Yeah, you're dating and all and what not." He say, "Who are you dating?"

So I told him— [cut off mid sentence]

[End of Side 1, Tape 1 of 1]

[Begin Side 2, Tape 1 of 1]

NB: [begins mid sentence] —December the 28th. Said, "I could marry you all." So, I mean, I figured surely was the right girl and all 'cause once—. When I did met her—when I met her and she said to me, said, "I hope you not like the rest of the guys that doesn't want anything out of life 'cause my father and mother, we never owned a home. Moved around from place to place all our lives and what not. And so, just hope you not like the rest of the guys."

So, that come in my mind right then, this is the type of girl— [tapes cuts off]

BC: Getting married...[laughter] Okay. Okay. Now as a—. To go back to your education.

Now—So, you only went to the 8th Grade because St. Peter's only went to the 8th Grade and was no Catholic?

NB: Well, they had high school.

BC: Okay. Well, why didn't you continue?

NB: Well, like I say, I don't know. I guess, you know how boys are, you know, they want to get out, you know, and be, I guess what you call themselves—be free, you know, and active, you know and what not. These, I guess, is some of the reasons whatever, you know.

BC: Okay. As a child, what did you dream of becoming?

NB: Well, as a child, when I came up, my dream—and I came up on the farm, like I say, 120-acre farm, roadside property and waterfront. My dream, as I worked with my Dad and all the things he had taught me, what the older people had done, even what his father had done and all, after coming out of slavery under such hardship. And I've seen that, at that time, that the black people in that—in my community had gone back instead of going forward. I mean, they went forward educational-wise, but security-wise they went backwards. And so, he used to tell me about—at his father's time, he come out of slavery and worked this farm. He had anything on his farm that any white farmer had and all the horses, the geese, the hogs, oysters, wood on the place, sand and gravel and what not. And, I just looked at these things, you know, and always wished to myself, I want to make my father, bring him back up to what his father was when he was a child and coming up.

So, but at that—. As time went on, my grandmother died in '48 and so it wasn't

no will left for the farm. He was the last child of his father and mother. Course, he had about six half-brothers and sisters. They had moved away to Germantown, Pennsylvania, what not. The minute she died and all, they came here to the funeral. That same day, they want to put the property up for sale and—which they had been away from the property for 30 or 40 years almost and had—did no upkeep to the property, help pay no taxes or anything, but they just know that they had—that they was an heir and had something in the property.

And so, they did go to Leonardtown, put the property up for sale 'cause all the lawyers and all used to always tell my father and all, unless they came in, paid them back for all the upkeep and paid taxes and all they paid and all what not, they would have to do that before they could actually repossess, you know. And, but, I don't know. The white folks always wanted that farm. And so, they all. "Well, here somebody come and open the door for them. Here it is now." And so, my father had lawyers from Charles County, Baltimore and all over the place fighting the case. One lawyer from Charles County won the case for my father, and he took it a Court of Appeal and won it. And then at the same time, he got back with Paul Bailey and Joe Wine in Leonardtown and they still disagreed with it for some reason. My father—My sister had to pay, right up there in Washington now. Somehow this lawyer, Barber from Charles County, won this case for my father. And so, well, he fit the case from lawyers from all over the place and right up unto the time a year or two before his death.

But you know, like I say, as time went on so long, the lady Miss Calloway up there to Great Mills bought the property. And, she bought it unlabeled. Well, nobody never signed the deed or nothing over to her and what not. But you know how

Leonardtown, at that time, they could handle things the way they want.

So anyhow, this was one of my ambitions about coming to make the farm and bring it back to what it were during my grandfather's time. And then, then after that, I always in mind of coming to be a boxer, prize fighter because I felt pretty good about myself and all. But being in an area where you had no training places and people in the area not being interested in what you was about to do and what not, and it would take money to follow sports around and get in different gyms and all. That sort of faded out of my system.

And then, like I say, continued on. At 20 years old, I got married and I felt as I still had a purpose. And so, I just kept on moving and what not, from one thing to another, one type of business to another and just kept on moving and what not. And course, that—. My work time. I worked with the plumbers here in St. Mary's County and carpenters, bricklayers. And then in '52, I went working for Gerald Hill at the dry cleaning place. I worked there for two years. And then, when the plant burned down, I went on the Base. Went on the Base then and I stayed on the Base for 34 years, and that was my last job working out.

BC: To go back a little bit, when you were a teenager and you were still living at home, where did your parents, sort of, let you go? What kind of activities did you do?

NB: Well, most any kind of clean activities. We mostly, at that time, went to church festivals and what not. When you're young you kind of do what's allowed, you have no problems with these places—you go to church fairs and things happen around the church and school and back home.

BC: Okay. What was it like when you first went out on your own?

NB: What you mean? Job activity or most anything?

BC: Well—. So you never—. Okay. You've never moved from home?

NB: No. I never.

BC: But now, when your parents left, you were sort of on your own?

NB: Yes.

BC: Okay. I guess that's about—. Okay. When you first, you know, started your job, you know started, you know, whatever. I guess, I'm a little confused about how to say it like this, you know, how to make sense. Now, what was your first job?

NB: My first job working out—I commenced working with the plumbers and some of the electricians.

BC: Okay. Now, do you remember how much money you made at that time.

NB: I think, at that time, we was making about \$5 a day.

BC: \$5 a day. Okay. And then when you went to the dry cleaning plant?

NB: When I first went to dry cleaning back in '52, I think we was getting somewhere in the neighborhood—. What was it? Around 80¢ an hour. Something like that. Wasn't much.

BC: [chuckle] Okay. Okay. Now: So, as you got older and whatever, then—and your parents were gone, then what kind of, you know, what did you do for entertainment then?

NB: Entertainment then, as I got older, then I commenced going, you know, different bars and still kept up with church activities, fairs and things, you know, of that nature and all and what not. And, that was where I went.

BC: Okay. Did you always—when you were working at the dry cleaning plant and working

for the carpenters, you had your own transportation?

NB: Yeah, I'll tell you. Now. I got this car from Theodore Hewlett. You probably never have heard of him. Theodore Hewlett—. Well, he had gotten another car and all and what not, and so it was a '42 Chevrolet. So, I needed the car and all and so I asked him about his car...said, "Okay. I'll let you have it. Just pay me so much every week" and what not and just—and I bought the car from him and had that for transportation and all and what not. And then as time went on, then I bought myself a pickup truck. I paid a hundred dollars for the pickup truck, you know, and I commenced hauling wood back in the, say mid-50's, late 50's and all and the early 60's—wood business. Hauling and selling wood was a good business.

So, I was working on the Base. I would come of the Base and then haul wood lots of times up until ten, eleven o'clock at night. We fixed the lights on the truck so we could throw it on and off and what not. Haul wood. Then on Saturdays, I did the same thing. And then, a lot of times when I wasn't doing that, Robert Bennett and myself would take on extra jobs 'cause Robert, he had a lot of connection with people, like in Town Creek and all and what not, and even up here at Immaculate Heart of Mary Church—paint jobs. So, we did a lot of painting around the area, too. So, we sometimes go, come off a job around 4:30 in the evening, grab a sandwich or something and gee, we would paint rooms and things up in—What I say?

BC: Town Creek?

NB: Up in Town Creek. Sometime, ten, eleven o'clock at night and come on back home. Get cleaned up. Get ready for that job next morning again. I have really put in some work

hours. I guess if I had 50 cents for every hour that I been put in working [chuckle].

BC: You told me your wife, Cecelia, lived up in Leonardtown. How did you meet her?

NB: I—. Well, I commenced going to town with my brother, Victor. At that time, you know, the boys from down here in Leonardtown was a big place for them, you know. That's where all the girls mostly were! [laughter] So anyhow, I met her in Leonardtown and Vic introduced me to her. He had known her and all that with him being up and around there. So anyhow, we come into dating and whatever, you know. She was working in Leonardtown Hospital at the time, you know, helping in the kitchen and all. And so anyhow, as time went on, you know, I guess we learnt more about one another and what not and all, and I guess we seemed we were suitable for one another. And so, we got married. By Father McKenna! [laughter]

BC: Right. Okay. You said you were 20.

NB: Yeah.

BC: Okay. Do you remember—. What do you remember about your wedding?

Remember—. Where did you get married?

NB: I got married at St. Peter's. We didn't have a big reception or anything. And my mother and father—we got married at church during the mass.

BC: Oh! Okay. So, did you have a best man and matron of honor?

NB: No.

BC: Your mother and father were the?

NB: Mother and father. Yes.

BC: Okay. Did you have a honeymoon?

NB: No. [laughter]

BC: Okay. What was your family life like? You know your relationship with your wife.

NB: My relationship was very good. Well, like I say, we both worked out at times. And then, when we wasn't working, around home we worked together to prepare things and whatever, and keep up things, and our church life was the same. She was Catholic and she took a great interest in church and all and what not. And so, this was the way our family life went on in this nature.

BC: When did you meet your second wife?

NB: I met my second wife back in '80—round about '86 or something like that. '87.

BC: Okay. Is she from this area?

NB: No. Lula is actually from North Carolina. Course, she come here when she was five years old. Parents brought up here and they come in to work at the Base, you know, and all. And so.

BC: Okay. How—. What's your relationship with your daughter and your grandchild?

NB: Oh, it's outstanding. Yeah.

BC: What part has religion played in your life?

NB: Religion has played in my life 100% for me. I have a lot of—. My faith is in God.

Usually say I have a lot of faith. I say my faith is in God. That covers it all. And so, I have a lot to thank God for, I'm telling you, because, like I said, I see so many people say things wouldn't work for them or this thing or the other thing and what not. And, it's not a day goes by that I don't say my morning prayers, my night prayers. And since I've been big enough to know myself, I can't remember missing Mass, I say, a dozen times in my lifetime.

And so, and like I say, I do have a lot to thank God for. Most of my adventures I have started out with I would always pray to God, you know, and the Holy Mary, Mother of God and all, to be with me before her son, Jesus Christ. And, most of the adventures I have went at, they have worked for me. I've gotten them done and what not 'cause I've heard a lot of people say, you know, white and black. What the white wouldn't do for the black. This thing and the other thing. I haven't had that problem. So_. [coughs] So, I do think, you know, my faith has been my biggest support. [coughs] I'm going to go get some water. [tape stops, then starts again]

BC: Are you—How do you participate in your church's activities? Do you belong to any of the church committees or—?

NB: No. I'm not on any the committees right now.

BC: Okay.

NB: Just the regular, you know, duties of the church.

BC: Okay. You are a—?

NB: Usher in the church.

BC: Usher. Okay. And, what other churches or religious organizations are you affiliated with? You belong to the Knights of the St. Jerome's?

NB: Right. I belong to Knights St. Jerome which I'm a President. I've been the President of Knights St. Jerome, I imagine now, for the last four years. And, some of the things that wasn't done in the organization before I come to be the President, I say we as an organization have gotten it done. And so, we are trying to motivate that organization to some of the visions that I was told by my father that it was started out to be. Knights St. Jerome years ago, when they started, they actually started out—they had a school there

and they had had a store, my father was telling me. And then, they helped people to buy land that wasn't able to buy so they could get situated with a home and whatever, you know. And then, they had—they had sick benefit. They have a borrow benefit and what not and, which is not a whole lot as a member. We still, as years go on, we're making our death benefit be breaking it up, you know, adding more funds to it.

And then as of now, we have started a scholarship fund, you know, to help kids, you know, if he wants to go to college you know, and all. And, we run different fairs and all and what not to raise funds.

And, which I belong to the Knights Columbus, too, down here in Ridge. Knights Columbus has been an organization the past year, they didn't have any blacks into it. But now, we do have now at least I'd say a half a dozen or eight blacks in Knights of Columbus and we are doing pretty well. We run chicken dinners every month. We help fund, contribute to St. Michael's School and different other needed problems around the County and whatever, you know.

And course, I belong to the Elks. Course, like I say, my activity hasn't been too great with the Elks. I mean, I like to get to more meetings and all, but, you know, run the businesses. You just can't keep up with all of them. And so, these things, you know, for the organizations and all, I've tried and have done my part, you know, towards them.

BC: Okay. Do you belong to the Masons?

NB: No. I don't belong to the Masons.

BC: Okay. Now, you said St. Jerome's—when your father was coming along—Knights St. Jerome—had a church. I mean, had a school there?

NB: Yeah. Yeah, they used to have a little school operation going. I mean, within the same

building, you know. Yeah.

BC: Oh. Okay. So, that was back in—?

NB: That—

BC: Before you were born?

NB: Yeah, way before I was born. That place is over a hundred years. Yeah.

BC: Okay. Now, how do you feel about life in general today in St. Mary's County?

NB: I feel life in general in St. Mary's County today is great. It is really great.

BC: Okay. Okay. How do you feel that it is different than what it used to be?

NB: I feel it is different from what it used to be—the communication with people and getting a point over and understanding one another, you know. As a segregation point—well, a lot of people say it today segregation in St. Mary's County is just as bad as it ever been. But course, like I say, I hadn't found that to be myself. I have found even the natives of St. Mary's County and people who have come to St. Mary's County have always been willing to help, you know, what I've axed of them and what not to maintain, to fund my business or support me in my business and movement and what not, and we have worked together as a group.

BC: So, so, your feelings about race relations, it's pretty good now.

NB: Um hmm [yes].

BC: You said that you don't feel that there is any segregation or—?

NB: Well, you have to go by what people say, you know. And course, segregation's a funny type of thing. I guess you could say people of the same race segregating one another because I'm quite sure, say, somebody's, you know, come out of family and be a little bit

of everything and what not. You wouldn't want to trust them in your home or would not to hardly want to be in some recreation area with them or what not. So, I guess segregation is—I don't think color altogether is segregation. I think it's people.

BC: Okay. Okay. Do you think teenagers are different than they used to be when you were coming along?

NB: Oh yeah, much different. They much more outgoing and they don't allow someone to think for them. They think for themselves today much more. And so, not like the old time coming—years ago, you could tell a teenager that Santa Clause coming down the chimney and this thing and the other thing. Your baby brother, your mother got him out of a stump! [chuckle] That just don't happen anymore. [laughter]

BC: Okay. Now, do you think that the people in the County are different than what they used to be?

NB: Oh, in what way?

BC: Now. Okay. Later on, I'm going to ask you about the people who have moved here. But now, I'm not talking about them now. I'm talking about the people, the natives. Do you think that they have changed from what they used to be?

NB: I think they have changed somewhat, but there's not as much as they could have changed, you know, and motivated themselves.

BC: Okay. How do you feel about living in the County? But if you've never lived any place else, that's sort of hard to—? But, you did live in Washington for awhile back.

NB: No, I worked in Washington.

BC: You worked there, but you didn't live.

NB: Carpooled back and forth, you know. I never lived there.

BC: Oh okay. Now, do you believe that there is a difference between people who were born in the County and the ones who have moved here from other places?

NB: I believe that the difference—in one sense of speaking, people who have moved here from other places, they see things that the County offers that we don't see. We standing right on it, but we still don't see it.

BC: Okay. Okay. Okay. Now, that's a—that's a good point. I've talked to other people and I guess nobody really ever said it like that. You know, "They're different because they can see things that we can't see." Okay. Now, how do you interact with these people who have come from other places to live here?

NB: Well, I listen to their story, you know, and give them mine and what not and the reaction, you know, and all has seemed to fit it together.

BC: Okay. Now, do you interact with people from the other sections of the County?

NB: Oh yes!

BC: In what way?

NB: Well, we communicate on possibility of the growth of the county and what not, you know, and first one thing of this nature. And, possibilities of what is going on at the present time and all and what not. And, ideas have somewhat, you know, butted together.

BC: Okay. So, you went interact with these people in that—

[tape stops, then starts again]

BC: Now, do you feel that people in the different—Are people different in the different

sections of the County?

NB: Well, I don't think in the sense, they are that much different 'cause they might be different according to the movement of that area, you know, and what not. But, I don't see them that much different.

BC: Okay. Have you done everything in your life that you wanted to or planned to do?

NB: Well, no, not exactly. Always said if I could hit the million dollar lottery, what I would love to do is go back to school. Get away from home, get in a quiet place, get away from home folks. I'd get right down because I've seen so many things that should be done and could be done in leadership. Just like a lot of people have asked me. Now, these are the white people. Say, "Why don't you run for the County Commissioner?"

Well, I don't feel like, you know, that I have all the ability to really get up there and fight it out with them. So if I had these abilities, I would.

BC: Okay. So you feel that if you had the schooling behind you—

NB: Then—

BC: Okay. Okay. Okay. So, um hmm! Maybe you'll hit the million dollar lottery the week after I hit it! [laughter] Okay. What do you think of the direction that the County is going in today?

NB: The direction of the County. [coughs] I think the County is moving in— [coughs] moving in one of the very best directions that I've ever experienced or ever heard of. But at the same time, like I spoke to county men and native peoples, you know, and I'd say, you got to watch yourself. What I mean say, "You got to watch yourself." What's

happening in St. Mary's County today, the older people are dying out. The kids are coming out of school and for some reason, they still don't see the value that the County offers. And what's going to happen, it's going to hardly be a very few native people own anything in St. Mary's County anymore. Because, like I say, they just don't see the value.

BC: Yeah. I can see that happening. Okay. Do you think that St. Mary's would become a urban county rather than a rural county? Will it become like PG and Charles County, you know? Can you see that happening?

NB: It doesn't appear that way yet; but like I say, it's hard to tell.

BC: Okay. Can you share an old story about how life was for you and your parents? Do you have an old story to tell?

NB: Life for me and my parents? Life for me and my parents and family getting together you know, relatives would come from different places they had been, like they used to from the cities and places, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Washington and what not. And gather around the dinner table, you know. Everybody would gather around and eat together, you know, and be talking about different things, you know, and the different experiences they were going through and what not. This was one of the most enjoyable things that I enjoyed with parents and relatives.

BC: The gathering together.

NB: Um hmm [yes]. And, this is what I don't think people do too much of today.

BC: No, they don't. I'm going to end the interview on that note. Okay. Thank you very

much.

NB: Okay. You're welcome.

BC: Biographical Data Information on Nicolas Vincent Biscoe:

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He attended St. Peter Claver Elementary School till the 8th Grade.

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He retired from the civil service on the Navy Base in 1986.

His wife's name was Cecilia M. Chase Biscoe and his present wife

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