

HOWARD QUILLEN:

April 2015

Interviewer: Linda Ladas

Interviewee: Harold Quillen

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LINDA LADAS: Today we're here in the home of Harold Quillen in Richardson's Landing in Chincoteague. And with me are Ennis Barbery, Executive Director of the Museum of Chincoteague Island and Irene Volke who is a friend and neighbor. My name is Linda Ladas and I'm a volunteer at the museum. I also want to mention Mr. Quillen has done another interview with the Island Library back in 2012. That interview is available on their Web site [<http://www.chincoteague.com/chincoteagueislandlibrary/oralhistory.html>]. Can you start by telling us your name and a little bit about your childhood?

HAROLD QUILLEN: What year I was born?

LINDA LADAS: Uh huh.

HAROLD QUILLEN: I was born in Philadelphia [May 7, 1927]. I lived there close to five. My father got killed in a car accident. Him and my mother had separated. And he brought me down here to my grandmother's. I had a sister. Me and both of us come down here. My uncle took the sister back to Philadelphia. She raised terror up there. So I my uncle lives up the street here His wife, Gladys, they were down there at the grandmother's and asked me, take me home with them. Didn't have no children. See if I, you know, spend the night. So I spent 19 years there. [laughter] They were very good to me. Just like a mother and father could ever be. Treat me like anybody. They did a lot for me.

LINDA LADAS: Your father was originally from Chincoteague?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Father was original from Chincoteague. Mother from Philadelphia. Father had a [?] job on a tugboat in Philadelphia. He was captain of a tugboat and he got killed when going to work one morning in Wilmington. Car accident. The boat was at Wilmington, they went, sailed river. I think he worked for the Corps of Engineers. They sounded rivers, you

know. I went out on the boat with him one time. They have a lead weight, then a man pushed it overboard—depth of the water. He checking it up and down rivers.

LINDA LADAS: What was your father's name?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Harold Quillen.

LINDA LADAS: And your grandparents lived here on the Island? What were their names?

HAROLD QUILLEN: My grandparents? Henrietta Quillen and Bert Quillen.

LINDA LADAS: And your mother was from Philadelphia. And what was her maiden name?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Ethel Dible. I don't know much about my grandparents up there.

ENNIS BARBERY: What was the last name, Ethel uh...

HAROLD QUILLEN: DIBLE, Dible.

LINDA LADAS: So you spent your childhood and went to school here in Chincoteague.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Went to school here, uh huh.

LINDA LADAS: And you graduated from both Chincoteague...

HAROLD QUILLEN: Graduated in 1944.

LINDA LADAS: From high school?

HAROLD QUILLEN: High school. See they only had one high school then. It had 11 grades.

LINDA LADAS: Just 11.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Uh huh. I was the last year when I went to school. Next year they put 12.

[laughter]

LINDA LADAS: You were lucky.

HAROLD QUILLEN: I got out a year earlier.

LINDA LADAS: When you graduated from high school then what did you—started raising chickens or did you have other jobs before that?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Not right away. When I graduated high school I was only 17. I went to work over—first job was over to the base. Just Navy started to comin' in there. They put me back in the woods at a sawmill. Crew back there kept sawing logs. They cut these trees, saw them up and make these barracks for these, BOQs [Bachelor Officer Quarters] they called them. They had no place for people to sleep. Everything's a rush. Everything was in a hurry. Sailors there sleeping in airplanes. Into them. It was a mess. I got out of that and I piddled around. My uncle was raising chickens for Roy Twilly. So Roy asked me, "If you—we'll get you a job raising chickens." I said, "Yeah, but I think the Army wants you. Wants me." [laughter] He says,

"Well, might just get you out of there if you are a chicken farmer." "If you get me fine, let's get it in." And I raised chickens for 14 years. We had chicken houses all over the neighborhood here. Fourteen thousand by this field. Ten thousand over where I lived in the woods over by Smuggler's Cove, or Wildcat they call it.

LINDA LADAS: So you had them right across the road from your house when you first started?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I lived up there till I got married. Chicken houses right here, yeah, across the road. We walked down a field. Wasn't a road here then. Everything was brambles.

ENNIS BARBERY: We should say we're in Richardson's Landing. Was it called Richardson's Landing back then too?

HAROLD QUILLEN: It's named after my uncle. He owned all this property see. One that raised me. He sold to, Investment, Rosalind Investment Company. He sold them from this road this way to that road over that way. That's Richardson's Landing. Where Irene lives different. That [unintelligible] Drive. Where Roy Twilly owned it, Doc Rameron He sold all this property here to the water for \$10,000 dollars. He thought he was rich. [laughter] He was rich in them days. They come in here and dig these canals. Put roads back here. Then started, you know, building houses. So I lived on this side road up in the ghettos they called it. [laughter] That's what John used to call the name. You see, he lived in the ghettos. We had no voting rights across the street.

LINDA LADAS: What year did he sell it, do you remember?

HAROLD QUILLEN: No, I can't remember. I can't much remember dates.

LINDA LADAS: Before we talk more about the chickens I wanted to go back a little bit and talk about your wedding and your wife and how you met.

HAROLD QUILLEN: We got a better downtown here 'cause they didn't have much in those days. Had to walk in town. Had no cars. Every Saturday night everybody used to go downtown. They had at that time a Legion Hall. The furnished a dance every Sunday or Saturday. For teenagers. I met her there. And she lived on Clark Street. We went together about a year then we got married. Then we moved up here in the woods. Got married, didn't have no bed—sleeping on a mattress. [laughter] We had no electric, no bathroom. And she come from town. They had a bathroom there and everything. It's a big difference. Said she'd never stay up here with me and all that, but she did.

LINDA LADAS: And what was her name?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Shirley Ann Holston.

LINDA LADAS: And she lived on Clark Street. What were her parent's names?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Daisy Holsten and Robert Holsten.

LINDA LADAS: She had siblings, or brothers or sisters?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yes she has sister lives up here and her brother lives in Delaware. Your talking wife right?

LINDA LADAS: So on what date were you married?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I don't know. Sixty-six years of it.

LINDA LADAS: Sixty-six years, that's wonderful. And you have two daughters I understand. Can you tell us a little bit about them?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well I got one daughter lives here next door to me. She got married young, first time. She married a guy in the Coast Guard. He got sent overseas for a year. While they were gone they parted. She liked him but she didn't love him. He was a very nice guy. The family liked him. But she said, "Dad I don't love him. Nothing's wrong with him." She divorced him and then she got married again. She's got three children now. She's taught school, I think, 30 some years. She won't [unintelligible], she's retired now. And her daughter's here next door now.

LINDA LADAS: So she taught school here in Chincoteague?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Right.

LINDA LADAS: And so a granddaughter lives next door to you?

HAROLD QUILLEN: The other granddaughter, her other daughter lives in Jersey, Cape May. She married a guy in the Coast Guard. She's up there now.

Video reboot

LINDA LADAS: So you have lots of family here in Chincoteague. I understand you have family dinners every Sunday.

HAROLD QUILLEN: My daughters and her family, yeah, grandchildren.

LINDA LADAS: How many grandchildren do you have?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Sixteen.

LINDA LADAS: Sixteen. [laughter]

HAROLD QUILLEN: Great, I got great, greats, greats.

LINDA LADAS: Is that right?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yes.

LINDA LADAS: And they all come here for Sunday dinner.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Not all them, no. [laughter] Just the ones around here. My other daughter and granddaughters lives in Delaware. That's where most of the children are up there. Her children.

LINDA LADAS: When you and Shirley got married you moved up to Wildcat is it?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well we call it, yeah, I guess. Stop up that way. At the turntable, go left. Walk out on your right. Split, the road was this way and this way. Another road. That's where the Leonards live.

LINDA LADAS: So she was willing to live in the woods with...

HAROLD QUILLEN: Stayed there as long as she could. To better herself. Kept working. Started doing a—my uncle give me a piece of land out on Main Street here. My uncle that raised me. So I started to build. I could build a little bit myself because I could do a little bit of everything. Started laying blocks on this house. Keep working on it, get some help. My brother-in-law comes help me. Some others put the house up right. Weren't cheap. Moved that road. Stayed there for several years. And Shirley wanted to get back here. So my uncle give me this property here where we're sitting on. He sold the rest of it. But he give me this corner lot. From that I started again, laying blocks. [laughter] I put a hundred loads of dirt in here because the dirt was low. Yeah, it was low.

LINDA LADAS: You built this house by yourself?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Me and my son-in-law. He was the carpenter, her second husband, Gorsett. He built this house. Next that three houses right in a row including that house where they live.

ENNIS BARBERY: So you raised the elevation. So you put about a hundred loads of dirt in here? You kind of raised the elevation of it a little, you think?

HAROLD QUILLEN: It was a little hard. It was low when I started. I think it was the lowest piece of land her. It was like a glade right here. At that time got dirt five dollars a load, see. Now it's some hundred some dollars a load. [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: What year did you build this house?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I'd say 1976. Brick. Brick, in there, fireplace. Or I'll forget it. [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: You started raising chickens shortly after you were married.

HAROLD QUILLEN: It wasn't too long. I wasn't too long after we were married, no. As a matter of fact I was raising chickens before I was married.

LINDA LADAS: Can you describe how you got started raising chickens?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well, in them days you got hung up with a feed company, like Folly Feed Company. They set you up. They started you with your first chicken house. All you do, you furnish labor. They furnish the feed, the chickens and all that stuff. In the end when you sell chickens all that comes off the top. What's left is half yours, half theirs. If there ain't none, there's nothing. [laughter] Sometimes you don't get nothing. It's part of the price of chickens.

LINDA LADAS: What seed company was this?

HAROLD QUILLEN: They called it Twilly Feed Company.

ENNIS BARBERY: Twilly.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah Twilly.

LINDA LADAS: And that was located here in Chincoteague?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Old Mill Road [Lane]. Right down Main Street. There used to be a mill there right across the street where those houses are. I used to haul feed out of it.

LINDA LADAS: That mill was here until just a few years ago wasn't it?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah.

Interview Time -14:24

LINDA LADAS: They gave you the chickens.

HAROLD QUILLEN: They gave the chickens after they paid for them. After they furnished to them I guess. They paid for everything. All you furnished is the labor. And personnel. I had a chicken house and the coal. Whatever you used, because it was charged you. At the end it comes off the profit if there's any profit. Sometimes there weren't none.[laughter] I met one of my friends in town one day. And we just both discovered we were chickens. He raised chickens. Say, "How you doing Paul." "Well alright, a mess or something. We didn't make a damn penny did we?" "I'll tell you one thing we got a job. [laughter] We got a job. A lot of people [don't] got a job." [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: I think you told me you had kept the chickens for 14 weeks, is that right?

HAROLD QUILLEN: At times then, yeah. Most times it was around 12. If like market's bad, you know, can't sell them, you know, you hold on to them. Wait until you can get some money for them. Now I think it's seven or eight weeks, six weeks. Things have progressed.

LINDA LADAS: What did you feed them.

HAROLD QUILLEN: We started off with crushed corn. They're called bitty grade. Ground up corn, real fine. You give that for three or four days then you give them a little bigger corn. They you start on what we call mash. Ground up, everything's grind up into it. It's like a ply board sort of thing. I don't know, it's got fish oil in it, this that and the other. Supposed to you know, beneficial to them. Then you give that to the end. Then you give them whole corn to the last week. Try to get some more weight on them.

LINDA LADAS: How much would they weigh then in about 12 weeks?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Hopin to get three, three and a quarter. Yeah.

LINDA LADAS: Then they would come and take the chickens.

HAROLD QUILLEN: They'd send a truck here and a crew. They pick them up and take them to the slaughter house.

LINDA LADAS: At that time was the slaughter house was in Pocomoke?

HAROLD QUILLEN: There was one in Pocomoke, yeah. We sent a lot of chickens to Birdseye; at one point in Pocomoke. There's two or three in Delaware. We had trucks come down from Delaware and pick up the chickens too.

LINDA LADAS: So they you would clean out the old chicken house and get ready? What would you do in order to get ready for the next ones?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well first thing you do you try to get in touch with the farmer.

LINDA LADAS: I'm sorry.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Give help to the farmer, from the mainland. He wanted manure. He wants the chicken manure. If you're lucky he'll come get it and give it to him, he'll take it out. If it ain't, you got take it out yourself and throw it out. We were lucky. Most times we got rid of it to the farmers because they use it for fertilizer. After you get that out sometimes you have to put sand in. You have carpet it with sand. Chickens eat, how low it got. Most time; every two or three crops you put sand in again. On top of that you put shavings. Sawmill, you know, on top of that. First day or two when you get chickens in you lay newspapers down so they'll eat nothing but the corn. You put the corn on newspapers and they'll go picking on that.

LINDA LADAS: How many of the new chickens would you get then? How did you determine how many you would get?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well you order—they had chicken houses. They put 500 to a stove. Five hundred to a stove usually. They come in boxes, 100 to a box, the chickens did. And they deliver right to your houses. They take them flip them out, all about at one time. They go for that corn. See had stove's there to keep them warm. Put what we call covers over them.

LINDA LADAS: The chicks were only a few days old then?

HAROLD QUILLEN: They were just born. They hadn't anything to eat, nothing. Born from the hatchery.

Interview Time -19:09

Video reboot

ENNIS BARBERY: That's very interesting. I didn't know how the chicken industry worked.

HAROLD QUILLEN: It was that when I went there they were doing it. Now it's nothing. Every night—stove, coal stoves—you had to put coal in them every day. Sometimes twice a day according to how the wind blew over. They kept the ashes. Later years they got oil burners. I don't know what the heck they use now, but we had feed carrier. In the chicken house roll the feed down; hundred pound bags. You put 300 pounds on the roller and roller down, and stop and empty out the bucket. Strip it in feeders. Now they got one chute right straight through the feed house. Right straight on, nothing. It rotates right around. We had water troughs up and down. Empty the water troughs. They get them messed up. Now they have a little button up in here [points to his nose]. Get milk out of that. I mean water out of that. Drips. No mess like that. They did. All the feed comes—big bowl. It's on a timer. So much goes through. That's why the raise so many chickens now. It's so quick. Man can feed 20-30,000 chickens an hour. Everything's right in the feed house on automatic. He goes through and all he has to do is pick it up and eat it. Some things change.

LINDA LADAS: Where did you get the coal for the stoves?

HAROLD QUILLEN: From the feed house.

LINDA LADAS: Oh, they carried coal?

HAROLD QUILLEN: They sold coal, our feed house did. For people too. Sold by the ton, or one of those coal bags. Maybe 100 pound or 200 pound. Every year we fill our bin up in summer time with coal for the sheep. They get the coal. They come from over there in Decatur, in a train,

the train. The feed house took a truck over there and loaded it off the train. Shovel in the truck, bring it over here and dump it out. They did deliver it as you want it. If you're ready you can go right from the train to your chicken house, one stop.

LINDA LADAS: So then you had to carry the coal into the chicken house every day?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah. You had like 20, 25 stoves in a chicken house. We had a coal stove, like what you call it now a days I don't know. They had three stoves, sometimes half a stove. Helps them burn.

LINDA LADAS: You ended chicken farming when the storm of, what year was the storm?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Sixty two.

LINDA LADAS: Sixty two, that's when you quite farming?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Everybody quit, you know. They raised no more chickens on here. At one time there was a million chickens on the island. More chickens raised here than anyplace in the world for the size of it.

LINDA LADAS: After the storm the companies weren't willing to finance?

HAROLD QUILLEN: No. They couldn't do it because it was too risky. They lose all this, see.

LINDA LADAS: Did they still support farmers on the mainland or just here in Chincoteague?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I really; I think so, yeah. They furnished everything like that. They raised a lot more chickens. A lot less labor. A man can tend more chickens. [Unintelligible] you had to go through. Me and the other boys had done it.

LINDA LADAS: When you quit chicken farming what did you do?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I worked a couple of years for Savage and Miers shucking oysters on their boat. Get up mornings. Go down. Get in the boat, dredging oysters. They were on his land. He planted them. You have to cull them off. Bust them apart before you put them in the shucking house so the shuckers could use them. You couldn't put big bunches in there. They would shuck them. I don't blame them either. [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: Where did you dredge them? Where was his farm?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Cockle Creek. He had pieces of grounds all over, all around here. Certain men did. Made a living at planting oysters and sell them in winter time.

ENNIS BARBERY: And that was Lee Savage, right?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Lee Savage.

ENNIS BARBERY: Lee Savage and, who was the Miers?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Savage and Miers, Bob Miers.

LINDA LADAS: And where did you take them to be shucked? Where did you take the oysters to be shucked?

HAROLD QUILLEN: He took them to his own shucking house. He had shuckers working for him. We just lived 'round his house there. Take them up and measure them. Dump them in there.

LINDA LADAS: That was hard work, huh?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah. Then I run down the bay a couple of years. Go down picking up oysters. Wild oysters. Bring 'em up here to sell 'em. These people to plant them. You take monitor, 1,000 bushels a monitor, 500 bushels a monitor. Probably four of you go down in your boat, stay four, five days. Stay moored in that boat. Cook. I used to cook. Always got to cook. [laughter] Work on the tow line. There wasn't much rest there. Get up and have a breakfast. Those clam baskets, clean them up. [laughter] No time washing dishes.

Interview Time - 25:17

LINDA LADAS: What did you cook? What did you cook to eat?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Ate a lot of beans, bacon. You'll eat oysters, clams, ducks, anything you can get. See not much cooking. Didn't take the time because you weren't there that long. We had a cook stove. Wood, wood stove. We made bread. Pan like, four pieces. Piece a piece. They called it pan bread.

ENNIS BARBERY: How do you make pan bread? How do you make that?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Flour, water and lard [laughs], salt. About it.

LINDA LADAS: You didn't use yeast? Did you use yeast?

HAROLD QUILLEN: No. Unless you got some in flour.

ENNIS BARBERY: Unleavened bread.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Didn't rise very much, I'll tell you. About like that [Shows about an inch between his fingers]. [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: Who did you do this with?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Down the bay? Elmer Matthews, he had a boat. Katherine M... That name is moot. I had a boat myself, a small boat. Everybody had a small boat to go out to look for oysters. When the tide got done you had to quit. The tide rose. It come up the boards to the sides of the monitor. Thirty oysters on the side of the monitor. Everybody put their oysters on there. And you stayed there until you got her loaded.

LINDA LADAS: How would you find the oysters?

HAROLD QUILLEN: You have to look. [laughs]

LINDA LADAS: What were you looking for? How could you tell...

HAROLD QUILLEN: Oh rocks. Something sunk. A lot of oysters catch on to it. Sometimes you catch them in the grass.

LINDA LADAS: How many would you get in a day, a typical day?

HAROLD QUILLEN: If we could get up to a bushel we'd be tickled to death.

LINDA LADAS: Per day?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah. See that four of us. It was 200 bushels.

LINDA LADAS: And they were very small then.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah. Then bring them up here and sell them to Savage and Miers. They'd plant them in Chincoteague Bay here. The following year they'd dredge them up. Dredging. Then take them and shuck them.

LINDA LADAS: How much did you get for the shell oysters, or for the seed oysters?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I forgot what they charged, what I got a bushel went for. Weren't a whole lot. I really don't remember. All as I remember unloading them. We had [unintelligible] the boat in the bay. The boat, you know, back in the monitor shoveling them over board. I got five dollars for doing that.

ENNIS BARBERY: That's interesting. I'm just thinking we should put this interview in our seafood industry booth. Because we've got all these things for seafood. We don't have people talking about that.

LINDA LADAS: So after dredging oysters what did you do?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I got a job down here at the Lollipop. [laughter] They called it the Lollipop. That was Paradise Inn. I stood there and drank a beer once in a while. This fellow that owned it, he was old, grumpy. He wanted to get out of business. Sue you. Sat there one day, he says. 'You look like you're pretty level headed guy. I watch you quite a bit.' He says, "You're quite often here. You're not just doing your raring, raising up." He says, "How would you like part of this business?" I said, "I'd love it. How am I goin' to get it." He said, "Well, I had my mind giving my son [Morris?] half, let him come in and work and I'd sell you the other half." I said, "Good to me." So that's what I did. Didn't work out. Son wouldn't work. I soon find that out. So, got rid of him. He didn't want to work noway. Never did. So there I was. I said, "I've got

to find a partner, somebody to buy his half." So I went to Roland Hardon. I know him very well—married my wife's aunt. I said, "Roland, would you be interested in getting part of this business down here? It's not rich but we can make it I think." So yeah, "I'll have half of it. Morris' half to give the rest to the bank." So I went to the bank. Jean Halloway's there. Bankers always grumpy in those days. . He says, "Well Harold. Say Jean, I want get a little bit of money." "Oh, no problem. Say what do you want?" "Only about \$25,000." "What? What? Back to my seat." [laughter] I told her what I wanted. He says, "We have to have a meeting at the bank. The board of directors. See about that." So I did. They passed it. So they took half of the loan and we paid it off as we went. We built the business up. Built it up. We had a good business when I left. I think last time sold for \$3 million.[laughter] I missed in on a lot of debt.

LINDA LADAS: So it was called the Lollipop when you bought it?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Actually very first, Paradise, but everybody called it Lollipop. I don't know why. Then we got it and called it Chincoteague Inn. We changed it. Start buying fish off the dock. We called it Chincoteague Fish Company.

Interview Time - 32:03

LINDA LADAS: So you would buy a lot of seafood from the local fishermen and use it at the inn but also sold it? Is that right?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Right, yeah. Also went to New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore. In the end, most of it's going to North Carolina. They got a good market down there. When you ship your stuff to New York you know what you're going to get for it. They put it on consignment. That's the hard part of it. When you deal down South, they'll tell you what they're going to give you. They you know what you're doing. But when you're fooling with New York, Philadelphia and places, you don't know. You hope.[laughter]

LINDA LADAS: When you bought it was it just basically a bar or did they serve food at that time?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well, he had surf food. When he had it. He sold—if you remember them days they come out with these sandwiches you put in a toaster, all made up, you know. Warm them up. That's how he... That's his food. So he did. He sold beer. See, he had to have that so he could sell beer. Like I say, he was hard headed. He would watch a man all night. Somebody come there says, "Captain Mack, can I get a Bud?" "Yeah, yeah. I let him. I says, "But they're warm. He wouldn't put them in a cooler. [laughter] He wouldn't put them in the cooler. He had a

lot but they were warm. Bottles of warm beer. [laughter] But the Navy come here they come over and told him he'd have to have a different operation. You have to have a restroom for his, you know, for sailors. He had no restroom. Take a leek around the pole. [laughter] That was the restroom. He got in touch with George Holloway. Said, "George, build me a bathroom here. See I got to have it so can let Navy come in here." He got the bathroom built. Mack says, "Give that man the keys... channel so now got a bathroom. [laughter] Lock it up. I said, "Conrad he would. He's a stubborn old bird."

LINDA LADAS: Did you get bathrooms eventually?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Oh yeah, we did. Yeah we got a bathroom there. Had a tangle with it the first we got over there. So I got appointment with the health department. He come around, you know. I said "We're going to have to have some bathrooms here." He says, "Used these poles for a long time. Just use around these poles." I said, "That's ain't what I want." I said, "I want some bathrooms here." So I got some like—Mac Roland built them himself. Men's bathroom and women's bathroom in there.

LINDA LADAS: So you expanded your kitchen to include further...

HAROLD QUILLEN: We had a big kitchen there. It was serving as a living room with curtains. Kitchen. There were two or three rooms over... see they were all in one thing. They wanted one kitchen. Donny Rappaport, he had a whole room there that he used hanging fish nets in. Closed all that off. Got rid of all that stuff. Turned into a restaurant, you know. We added on to it, added on to it. Seat about a hundred at the inn. We had very good business.

LINDA LADAS: And you did most of the cooking?

HAROLD QUILLEN: At the inn there? Off and on I was cooking, but I had cooks too. I had two good cooks. When I quit they quit.

LINDA LADAS: Who were your cooks?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Two colored girls from the mainland. Two sisters.

LINDA LADAS: How many years were they there?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I guess they were there six, seven years.

ENNIS BARBERY: What were their names?

HAROLD QUILLEN: We served breakfast. We had cooks for breakfast. [?] and all breakfast cooking. Then we had lunch. Then there was dinner. We were open about six o'clock in the

morning—opened a coffee shop. Soon the fishermen would be in there already for coffee. Some days they never fish already.

LINDA LADAS: In addition to the cooks you had a number of other employees?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yes ma'am. I had a dishwashers, busboys, bar tenders, waitresses. I know I had a couple, three, four that worked on the dock. I had thirty some employed. Full going, you know, from early morning till late at night. Changed shifts see.

Interruption in video

LINDA LADAS: What did you serve after you put in the kitchen? Most of you customers were tourists or local people from Chincoteague?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah. We had most all local trade. Got a lot of the tourists too, you know. Word get around that you got a good product, cheap. You got to advertise. People find it out. They were at that place all the time.

LINDA LADAS: You started the inn right after the bridge was built to Assateague, is that correct?

HAROLD QUILLEN: It was after that.

LINDA LADAS: It was after that. So there was already a good tourist trade here?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well, I don't know. The bridge was there. Wasn't much of a tourist trade till they put in a new bridge there. See the older bridge they got from New Jersey.

[unintelligible... McPeace?] Bridge. Wyle Maddox hauled it from New Jersey down here and put it up. Stayed up for several years. Then they built us a new one. Government built us a new one.

LINDA LADAS: So the tourist trade wasn't as big then as it was later on. How long were you there at the inn?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I don't know, 15, 20 years.

LINDA LADAS: What changes did you see in Chincoteague tourism over that period of time?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Oh lord, I can hardly tell you. [laughter] I was growing up; what it is now. See up here there was nothing but woods, nothing, brambles, nothing. You had to hack a path from the house to the water. About that wide [gestures about a foot with his hands].

[laughter] Used to cut through a lot 'cause there was a lot of duck hunting.

LINDA LADAS: When did you get electricity on this end of the island?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well, you mean when we first come here? We had nothing. Maybe about a couple years after I was here on my land. See we had what we called nickel lamps. That's all we had for light. We had no refrigerator, had ice. Iceman come around and bring a block of ice about three times a week. Ten cent piece of ice. Put in the refrigerator. It had a drip pan there to catch the water.

LINDA LADAS: You said nickel lights?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Nickel lamp.

LINDA LADAS: Where they kerosene?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah, it was kerosene. Something into it, fuzzy thing that makes it more brighter, what you call them. You remember Nancy, heard them? Nickel lamp? I don't think I got one here. We got a lot of lamps here.

NANCY [?]: Is it like a wick, was there something like a wick inside it?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah. It's a round wick.

LINDA LADAS: So you decided to sell the inn then and retire?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well, yep. I told my wife I was getting tired of it down there. I was beatin a bag myself to death. And I wasn't getting along too good with Paul. He had different ideas than I did. See, he didn't want me to sell. I said, "I want to get out of here." I said, "I might as well live as long as I can, enjoy myself." I said, "I got enough money to carry us along." So we did. I was glad I sold it. Glad it did sell. It went up so high after I got out of there. I think like it sold, he got \$3 million for it I understand.

LINDA LADAS: So did you enjoy your retirement, or are you enjoying your retirement? What do you do now?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Oh yeah. Well I'm going to get up in the morning and do what I want to do. I'd have to go down six o'clock in the morning and open up the place. Stayed there sometimes after 12 o'clock when fresh ones come in. Got to stay around the bar with the girls working there. Now what do you want? [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: So then you didn't do any more work on the water or anything after you sold? You just retired and enjoyed life?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I went to work with my granddaughter's husband, a little bit carpentering.

LINDA LADAS: You went back to carpentry?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Uh huh. Just wanted something back a little spending money. Didn't have to go. Have to do it. And I enjoyed doing it. But I didn't have to do it. Makes a big difference. If you got to do it. [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: Is there anything else that you would like to tell us? Some of your memories of Chincoteague or growing up here?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I don't know. What do you want to know? [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: You said you had dances on Saturday night. Where were the dances?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Legion Hall.

LINDA LADAS: And was it live music?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Most time it was jukebox. Once in a while they had dances there, Saturday night, but most times jukebox. Teenage dancing.

ENNIS BARBERY: Did you have a neighborhood store up in this neighborhood?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yes ma'am.

ENNIS BARBERY: Where was it located?

HAROLD QUILLEN: You know where Gazellda's is?

IRENE VOLKE: Yeah, I'm just trying to think, how to explain where it is. I can't think... [is this Nancy?]

HAROLD QUILLEN: One here, one Tichles Creek, Ted Metcalf's. That's another five, six stores at that time. Now there's none. See I dealt right here. This one store. Had to walk to the other store. Nobody had no cars.

ENNIS BARBERY: Was it Wildcat store, Richardson's Landing store? What did you call it?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Whoever owned it. They called it Howard Merritt's store. Or Dickerson's, Derickson's.

ENNIS BARBERY: What kind of stuff did they sell?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Canned goods and you know. They had few meats. Didn't get too many meats. Just ordinary stuff, flour, sugar, bread.

LINDA LADAS: You also described an observation tower that was down at this part of town.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Right where [unintelligible] was. Tower there. I was at work in that tower. Volunteered. Put there during the war. Spot planes. You go up the tower and they had a telephone in there. They had all these pictures of planes on the wall. If you see an airplane go by

you'd grab the phone and call and tell what you'd seen. But I never seen one. You see no planes them days. But they had one there.

LINDA LADAS: So you would volunteer for several hours at a time?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah, right.

LINDA LADAS: Did you have binoculars or how did you look for them, just with your eyes?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Your eyes.

LINDA LADAS: And you never saw any planes.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Never.

LINDA LADAS: Do you remember Camp Fletcher?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I remember when they built it. First Army come here they didn't have any camp.

LINDA LADAS: When was the first time the Army came?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I was in high school looking out the window first Army were come here. Oh the Army. They put them in a skating rink there Twilly's skating rink where they bedded them up.

LINDA LADAS: And that was up at Twilly's you said.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Yeah. It's gone now.

LINDA LADAS: Where was the skating rink?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Right down—they had a store there; a skating rink beside. They sold Chincoteaguegarettes in there for the kids. One penny a Chincoteaguegarette in a big batch.

[laughter] That's what they give you.

ENNIS BARBERY: Oh Yeah, I've heard that. So it was right by the school, right?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Right. By the school. Everybody went over there to get a penny Chincoteaguegarette. [laughter]

LINDA LADAS: The skating rink was where Camp Fletcher...

HAROLD QUILLEN: Oh no, no. Right across from the school.

LINDA LADAS: Oh, right across from the school, okay.

HAROLD QUILLEN: Camp Fletcher was there up by Ridge Road and Church Street.

ENNIS BARBERY: Do you remember what they did at Camp Fletcher? Do you remember seeing what kind of activities they did there?

HAROLD QUILLEN: More or less. Bunked them up, sleeping up there. They had guards. To guard different places; that's it. Wasn't much there for the Army to do. Coast Guard, around this way. Ran the boats and stuff.

ENNIS BARBERY: The one question I had was about the '62 storm and what exactly you saw when that happened.

Interview Time - 47:33

HAROLD QUILLEN: We livin' up there, Main Street and Marvin Merritt was working for me. He's closing up the attic—making two bedrooms up there for the girls. That night tide went to blowin, spittin snow. And Marvin put his tools up there in the attic. He went home. One of the girl's girlfriends stayin with us. So I was going to take her home. Elmer Matthew's daughter. Started out close by the school—too much of water—turned around and come back. I said, "Can't take you over tomorrow when the tide goes down." Well, stayed up pretty late that night because the tide was high. And when it went down—had a floor furnace. When the tide went down into the floor furnace. Said well I," Certainly goin to be it now. Tide's going out." I woke up. It's early. I looked, water just kind of went to the top of the floor furnace. I said, "Grab the kids quick, get upstairs." That's what we did. We stayed there, let's see, all that day. They come got us in a boat. Took us down to Howard Merritt's store. That was pretty high. And there when the tide went down, my mother come got me and the kids, you know, took us to Philadelphia for a couple of days, and the dog. I was working at a dock at that time. Tide come into the cash register down there. I was on that dock. Pretty mess down there.

LINDA LADAS: How long did it take you to clean up the Inn to open again for business?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Well at the time we went and opened up wasn't too much for business but for beer. Beer cooler was floating around anyway. They were all right. [laughter] We didn't have much trouble with that to tie me down. Get electricity in there. Hooked up to my boat. But like I said, the restaurant we had wasn't opened then.

LINDA LADAS: How long did it take before you were able to get electricity again?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Weren't very long. We're very fortunate with electricity around here. Maybe a couple of days probably, I don't know. See I was in Philadelphia. Come back and stop here and get a shot before they let you come on the island.

LINDA LADAS: What kind of shot?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I guess for hepatitis or something, I don't know.

LINDA LADAS: A tetanus or something like that?

HAROLD QUILLEN: You have to get a shot; you don't have it.

ENNIS BARBERY: Who came and got you in the boat. Was it the Coast Guard? Who came and got you in the boat?

HAROLD QUILLEN: A friend of ours from [unintelligible]. He had a big scow with an outboard motor.

ENNIS BARBERY: Did you say his name, I don't think I heard it was—what was his name?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Eddie Quillen.

Interruption in video

LINDA LADAS: Did they come to Chincoteague to visit you?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Who?

LINDA LADAS: Your mother and sister.

HAROLD QUILLEN: My mother did, yeah. Sister, well she comes a couple of times. She didn't like Chincoteague. Her and my mother didn't get along too good either.

LINDA LADAS: Why, didn't she like Chincoteague?

HAROLD QUILLEN: I don't know. I don't know. I think when she was young the 'squitters got her bad. [laughter] They bite her. She had welts as big as your finger about. [laughter] They didn't bother me.

LINDA LADAS: Well I want to thank you very much. Is there anything else you think you would like to add today?

HAROLD QUILLEN: Not that I know then.

LINDA LADAS: Well we really appreciate this.