

Harold Buckwalter - September 2023

Alan: The only Buckwalter mystery that I know, and we'll get to that first and then I'll start over, Nettie's son Russell. Was his father James Asa Fentress? Do you know?

Harold: I think you're right. Yeah, I know it was James Fentress. Yeah, that's what I understand.

Alan: Yeah. Nobody's ever been able to tell me, but in doing the research, in the 1920 census, he's shown as living with Nettie Buckwalter, John A. Buckwalter, Anna Buckwalter, and his name is Russell Fentress.

Harold: Yeah, I think you're right.

Alan: And then after that, his name was Buckwalter on the 1930th census and all the records after that, he's Russell Buckwalter.

Harold: I think you're right.

Alan: Not that it matters a bit today.

Harold: Yeah, but that's all right. Appreciate you working on the Buckwalter history. And not that it's important, but I sit here in this chair every day naming the eleven Buckwalters that I'm related to and remember.

And I start out with... Come on here. I'm handicapped. It's my brain.

Mary, Harvey, Mary, Harvey, Amanda, Mary, Harvey, Maggie, Anna, Ruth, John, Alice, Irene, Ruth, my father Abram, and Naomi was a Hobbs at C-11. I think I've got them in the right order.

Alan: You're close. I just looked them up before I came here. I couldn't recite them now, but that sounds about right. What was Grandpa Buckwalter like?

Harold: Grandpa Buckwalter, John Adam, and Grandma Anna. And I met and remember all of them, and I've probably told you this before, but almost every day I sit here remembering Grandpa Buckwalter would hold me in his lap as a preschooler down here in the home place where I was born and rock me in his chair and sing "what can wash away my sins. Nothing but the blood of Jesus."

And there was another one. I forget, but I had to think in my life, not that it matters. I was born down there in that house. July will be 90 years ago, and when I remember that as a little preschooler, Grandpa Buckwalter would hold me in his lap and rock me in his rocking chair and sing these two gospel songs, and "what can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus." And then after the... I forget the other one, but yep, I remember them very well. I

remember living there.

My parents were on the other side of the house, and as a kid I would slide down the banister from the second floor, and I loved it at Grandpa's house.

Alan: What's your first memory, your earliest memory?

Harold: Well, that would be him holding me in his lap as a preschooler and singing. There was another little two gospel song, and I had to think. Affected my life in a very real way, I'm sure. John Adam Buckwalter. Your mother was Alice? Yeah, Aunt Alice Keffer. Yeah, Uncle Roy. **Note: Alice was Alan's grandmother, not mother.**

Alan: What was he like?

Harold: He was a good guy. Worked on the railroad, I think. Yeah, there's nothing bad about him that I can remember. Yeah, but great.

Alan: Well, did you go to... was the Mennonite school already there then?

Harold: Attending school. My school was the first three grades were at Great Bridge Elementary, in that three-story building. We had no Mount Pleasant Mennonite school at that time, and I was on the first, second, third grade. And then they started the Mount Pleasant Christian school in the old yellow store building down by the airfield, and I remember that and almost every day I quote a scripture verse that I learned in the Mount Pleasant Christian school in the old yellow store building.

Isaiah 40, 31. "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles. They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint." And every day I'm quoting that scripture sitting there in this chair.

Alan: Who was your teacher then?

Harold: Well, let's see. One of the first teachers was Sarah Jane Weaver.

Alan: She married Chester Wenger?

Harold: Yeah. And then there was another one. Like I said, I've got a handicap card. It's for my brain. And some of those things escaped me. But yep, the old yellow school building. And you've probably heard this, and I'm a blabbermouth.

We were right across the road from Mount...or the airfield, and we were little guys, but this you may not have heard. And on the back side of the field, they had a bombing range where they would drop smoke bombs and the smoke would go up. And when they weren't flying and it was quiet over there, we would crawl under the barbed wire fence, go over there and pick up bombs that hadn't gone off.

And when we finally went to Harrisonburg for the last two years of high school, Cletus Hobbs, Aunt Naomi's son Cletus, took a quart jar of smoke powder in a glass jar, and we had our dormitory rooms on the third floor. And after lights out and bedtime, I don't know if he did it more than once, but Cletus put a stream of smoke powder down the hall and around the corner and struck a match at his door and psssshhh.

And our hall manager, of course, could trace where it came from. I don't know what kind of punishment he got for it, but kids. and memories. And yep, a quarter history. Cletus Hobbs

Alan: Was Cletus in your class?

Harold: Cletus?

Alan: Cletus Hobbs Was he older than you?

Harold: He was, he might have been a year, year and a half older. His older brother Ray was like four years older. But I think Cletus was probably a year and a half older than I was.

Alan: Who else would have been in your class?

Harold: In our class, Mildred Miller was in my class in public school and all the way through high school here and in Harrisonburg. Mildred Miller and Daniel Wenger, the three of us, started out in the first grade together in public school, graduated together in high school at Harrisonburg. And yeah, Mildred was not related to us, but she was a girl in our class from the first grade all the way through graduation at Harrisonburg.

Alan: Where did she go when she left here? What? Where did she move to? Where did she live after she left? I remember her vaguely, but not very well.

Harold: She may have stayed in Harrisonburg. I'm not sure.

Alan: When you were a boy, had they already completed the road from, by the church, back past Shaddingers and around the corner on up the Blue Ridge?

Harold: Yeah.

Alan: Was it dirt or was it paved?

Harold: It was paved.

Alan: And I've got an old map that shows the road only goes about as far as the Shaddingers. And it shows Wenger Road coming about this far. And this doesn't show, well, it shows Blue Ridge, of course, all the way down across, and then the Cason Lane, because the airfield isn't there. But I don't know when the road that is now Maxwell Street and Bedford was actually put in. How come Grandpa moved here, in terms of England?

Harold: I don't know, but I do know my father was, I think, about 10 years old when they moved here from Lancaster, thereabouts. And back to your question, I don't know why they moved to Virginia from Lancaster County. I think maybe there were other families moving, and I don't know which ones. And Grandpa Buckwalter was a carpenter, and it was before the days of electricity, power tools.

But he helped to build Mount Pleasant Church. And before the addition was added on, when it was just an A-frame church. And now, back to my boyhood, and living with Grandpa and Grandma Buckwalter down here at the home place, I remember going with Grandpa Sunday mornings through the backyard and the field behind the house, and crawling under the barbed wire fence, like an hour before church. He would go and build a fire in the coal stove. That was the heat in the church. And he would build a fire in the coal stove, and I would walk along over there with him.

And then he would come back home, and church would start. And then, along with my parents, we would go over to the Mount Pleasant Church for the service. And my parents had a car that we would ride over in the car.

And Grandpa would sit up close to the front, and at the church, when we got over there, he would take a poker and stir up the coal stove in the aisle. The stove sat kind of in the aisle of the church. And, yep, memories.

Not that it's important, but I have lived right here, as you've probably heard, all my life, with the exception of two and a half years during the Korean War, when Twila and I were over at Williamsburg doing our IW service over there.

But back to when my parents lived with Grandpa and Grandma Buckwalter, when they left there, they moved into a rental house up right at Cooper's Ditch on Mount Pleasant Road, just the other side of the river, and in a weatherboarded house that they rented for six dollars a month. And that thing was drafty. It was built on stilts. When the wind would blow, the carpet in the living room would come up off of the floor. And that's where we lived when I started in the first grade at Great Bridge Elementary in the three-story building that still stands there.

Alan: Did they have a bus, or did you have to walk to school?

Harold: A bus picked us up. And part of the story is, when we lived the other side of Cooper's Ditch, there was a non-Mennonite family that lived on this side up on the hill. Let me think of her name now. Doris Locker. She was like nine years old. She was a student at Great Bridge. And I would walk across the bridge, and she and I would get on board the school bus together out to Great Bridge Elementary. And the first day, she took me to my classroom. She was that familiar with the school. And she wasn't in the same grade I was, but showed me where my classroom was. And, like I say, I attended over there three years before they opened the Mount Pleasant Christian School in the old yellow store building. I was in the fourth grade when that opened.

Now, I'm a blabbermouth. I could go on and on.

Alan: Please do.

Harold: But I'm blessed to be 90 years old in July, and all of my vital signs are good. The only prescription drug I take, I take one Finasteride every day, which is for an enlarged prostate. But when it comes to blood pressure and other health problems, I give God the glory.

Now, what I say, you may have heard this before, but this house was built in Grandpa Buckwolder's soybean field. This was a soybean field. For \$500. Uncle Ira Miller built it, and the story on that, it starts with that.

My parents had no money, but Uncle Ira said, that's all right, I'll go to my bank in Berkeley and borrow \$500 and build the house for you. So he did, and he got over there, and the banker says, "you can't build a house for \$500." Uncle Ira said, "if you'll lend me \$500, I'll take you out there and show you the house." The banker says, "well, the bank won't let me do it, but I'll loan you \$500 out of my own account, and I'll personally lend you \$500." So with the \$500, Uncle Ira Miller framed the A-frame of this house. It was just the four walls, and we moved in when we moved from up at Cooper's Ditch.

So I was in the first grade when we moved in, and the carpenter work that Uncle Ira Miller did on it, he framed it, he put the wooden weatherboarding on the outside, and we moved in. Had a hand pitcher pump out here in the kitchen, and when we moved in, there was no stairs upstairs. There were slats on the studs, and I slept in the south room that had a sheet metal roof on, and my father was working on the ferries.

He did all the wiring, and every payday, he would bring home a couple sheets of drywall tied on top of his car, and he did the wiring, and he would put a couple sheets of drywall up, and in time, it didn't take too long until Ira Miller came back and built the stairs that I didn't have to climb the slats. But when we first moved in, that was the story of the house, and while we lived here with my parents, they added the back porch, glassed it in, put a septic system. We had a bathroom in the house here, got rid of the old outdoor johnnies, and as years went by, and I don't know when, but next improvements on the house.

Eddie lived here with one of his three wives. He's with the third one now, but he put central heat and air conditioning in. Anyway, when Twila and I moved in, we had Window World to replace all the windows in the house, downstairs, upstairs, and last summer since she's gone, we had a new septic system and spread out back in the lot, out back.

So, I sit here every day saying this house was built for \$500. Grandpa bought all this soybean field, which might have been worth \$50 at that time, and the current real estate value of this house and the lot of two acres that it sits on is probably worth \$250,000.

Alan: Probably.

Harold: So, yeah. So, the house has a story, and I'm a glad I'm there.

Alan: Well, did you graduate from the 10th grade at the Mennonite School and then go to Harrisonburg?

Harold: No, I graduated from Harrisonburg. In Parkview, I graduated from the Harrisonburg Mennonite, Parkview Mennonite High School. Now, with my wife, one more story. Well, I'll back up.

When Twila and I married, the day we married, I was living here with my parents in this house, and it poured down rain all day. That was 1952, February the 24th, and my two wedding attendants, James Edward Rhodes, a first cousin in Harrisonburg, and he's still living. He's still up there. And Leslie Foreman was not a relative, but a lifelong friend. He lived down toward here in the general area. But the day we got married, it rained and poured down rain all day, and we got stuck out here in the driveway, backing out to go over to the church for the wedding.

And, of course, I had a new suit and new Florsheim shoes. I couldn't get out and push the car. They got out, pushed the car out of the mud, and we went over to the church for the wedding.

Now, this you've probably heard about the wedding. We had attended weddings in the (Virginia Mennonite) Conference, Newport News, and Harrisonburg, where after the ceremony in the church, before we left the church, the bride and groom kissed. And so, in preparation, we asked Amos Weiner, who was our pastor, whether we could do that.

He kind of drew his frown. He said, "I don't see anything wrong with that." So, we were the first, Harold and Twila were the first, to kiss at their wedding.

And her parents were living in at Ward's Corner in Norfolk. She graduated from Norview High School, and we had our wedding reception in at her home. And her father was driving a Greyhound bus, and he was a professional bus driver.

And he had reserved the room in the William Byrd Hotel on Broad Street in Richmond for us. And so, we left the wedding reception and drove to Richmond. And on the way to Richmond, the rain changed to snow.

And we got up Monday morning and walked up the sidewalk to White Tower Restaurant for our breakfast. And when we got back to our room, the maid had closed the window on Twila's orchid that she had left in the window. An open window to keep it fresh.

And for years, we kept it upstairs here in a cedar chest, that it may still be there. And we spent two nights in that room in the William Byrd Hotel in Richmond. And then Wednesday—it's been Monday night and Tuesday night—Wednesday, we drove to Washington and saw the White House in the Capitol Building.

And we were going to drive home across the Chesapeake Bay Ferry. We had no credit cards and didn't have much money. And we wanted to be sure to have enough money to pay for riding the ferry across.

So, Wednesday morning, we ate bananas for breakfast and rode back across the Chesapeake Bay Ferry, made it back home. And as I said, we lived here with my parents. The balance of the year was '52.

And the back porch, we had a temporary partition right at the door. The back porch was our kitchen. And, of course, my parents had the bathroom in the house. And we had a bedroom upstairs in the north room. And we lived here with them until January of '53, and then went to Williamsburg during the Korean War for our 1W service. And Twila worked in the office, and I worked in the carpenter's shop. And they treated both of us extremely well.

Alan: Was that at the Historic Williamsburg or at the hospital?

Harold: No, we didn't work in the hospital. I did some repairs in the hospital. Twila worked in the office, but I was in repair, carpenter repair. And they were building a new hospital out of town, and they used me in the state inspector's office. And it was a very good job, and they treated me exceptionally well.

And I want to back up a little bit and tell a.... I was riding in the carpenter shop pickup truck from downtown out to the property that they were building a new hospital with my carpenter foreman. William & Mary students, were sitting on the brick wall in the Y on the street at Gloucester Avenue. And he got out, and he asked him, he says, "you know the difference between William & Mary College and the Williamsburg Hospital?" They said "no." He said, "you've got to show some improvement to get out of Eastern State Hospital." And I thought, well, that was a pretty good joke, and I still think of that.

But anyway, they used me in the state inspector's office. We would take concrete samples and record them, and when they came back, they were crushed and checked to see if they were strong enough. Anyway, they put me in the building inspector's office working on that, and they treated me so well that when it came time for us to leave, they wanted me to stay on and go to William & Mary College and work on a degree of engineering and continue working as a state inspector.

But we were eager to get back home, of course, and while we were in Williamsburg, Linda was born, and Eddie was born, and friends and family that helped to frame the ranch-type single-story house down here, 441 Werner Road. And when we got back and moved in there, Beverly was born in 1956, and we lived there with our three children until her father, Rudy Diller, passed away of a massive heart attack, and he's buried over here in the Mount Pleasant Church. And then we, along with friends and family, built this two-story addition with an apartment upstairs for her mother, Dorothy, to move into, and we continued living downstairs.

And while we were there, and time-wise, I don't know how long it was, but we

came home, I think, from Harrisonburg one time, and she had had a stroke, and I don't know who called, but she was in the hospital, and she eventually passed away. And we rented the second floor to other persons, and I don't remember now, but of course, the house still stands there. And we had, time-wise, I can't give the dates, I don't know, but time-wise, Eddie and his wife moved out of this house to a job he had in North Carolina, and we moved in, and Sam and Beverly moved into the big house, and they lived there a while, and eventually, of course, they owned it, had the deed to it, and we have the deed to this one.

And anyway, Sam and Beverly have sold the big house. I don't know who the family is that lives there. But musical houses, yeah.

Alan: I remember when you did the addition, because I was there one day, and you had a mongoose trap, and Clarence Miller came in, and you would go show him the mongoose trap, which everybody else had shown it to, when the mongoose tail flew out, they all jumped back.

When it flew out in Clarence's face, he never moved a muscle.

Harold: Yeah, yep. I've said it at least once, and I've said it a couple times. I repeat it many times every day. For old men, if I make it till July, it will be 90. I'm blessed with remarkably good health.

And, of course, no longer have a car or driver's license. I have a identification card from the Division of Motor Vehicles, and I need to get proof of who I am. I have that, and I have no driver's license. I no longer drive. It's the family that sends me wherever I need to go, and I'm blessed. I really have need of nothing.

This is premature, and only in the last probably week have I heard it. Eddie and his third wife, Robin, live in Franklin, and he's up there with her several nights a week, and he told me, of course, they needed my permission because I had the deed to this property. They would like to, and I said, I think it's good.

Buy this house and property, build a couple rooms in the back, a new bathroom, and I forget what the other room is. And Robin moved here from Franklin. It wouldn't be going back and forth to Franklin, and she has worked in a nursing home and has experience. At my age, and I don't drive, they would both be here and live here with me, and I'm expecting that to happen this year. I don't know when this year.

Alan: It sounds like a good idea.

Harold: But I think it's wonderful, and so a whole other history.

Alan: How did you meet Twila? Where did you meet Twila?

Harold: Okay, you got to hear that, too. Seventy years ago, she walked in this door at the side porch.

Her family, Dorothy and Rudy Diller, had moved from Harrisonburg. His Greyhound bus driving job brought them to Norfolk, and our parents knew each other in Harrisonburg. And on a sunny Sunday afternoon, they were attending church.

They walked in that side door before my sister, Shirley, was even born. We were probably 13 years old. Or I was. And my sister, Shirley, wasn't even born, and I didn't know what to do. I never had a girlfriend, and when I saw Twila, I got up and walked out, and all I needed to do was get out. And from that day, she was on my heart until right now.

And the rest of that story, when I went to Harrisonburg for my last two years of high school, I roomed with the Hunsberger twins, Donald and Ronald Hunsberger, in a triple-deck bunk. And I slept on the top bunk, and I wrote Twila's name in fluorescent paint on the ceiling. And we had to have lights out at 10 o'clock. And when we turned the lights out, I went to sleep every night looking at Twila. And we both graduated in '49. I graduated from Harrisonburg Mennonite High School.

She graduated from Norview. And when I came back home and was attending church over at Mount Pleasant, I decided one Sunday morning I was going to ask Twila for a date.

Alan: You mean you had her name written on the ceiling and hadn't even had a date yet?

Harold: No, no, no. I don't think we'd even talked to each other. And when I went out from church, they always parked back by the cemetery. She was standing there with an older guy that I had never seen. I didn't know who he was. And I thought, that's all right, I'm going to ask her anyway. I learned later he was a cousin of hers, had driven a truck down from Harrisonburg, and came along to church with her.

And I went and asked her whether I could pick her up on Thursday evening and bring her out to Young People's Literary Society up here at the school. The school was there, and she said yes. So, I had never been to her house, and she gave me the house number 8041 East Clinton Road in Monticello Village at Ward's Corner. And so, I drove. I had my first car. It belonged to Vernon Miller. It was a '48 Ford.

But anyway, when I rang the doorbell, a stranger I'd never seen came to the door. And I had seen all of her family. And I asked him, I said, "is this 8041 East Clinton Road?" He said, "no, this is West. If you continue on around the circle, East Clinton is on the other side of the circle." So, I did, and that was our first date.

And I picked her up there, and we dated for two and a half years. And practically every date, we would eat supper out on Monticello Avenue at a barbecue restaurant, go out there and get a barbecue and a limeade. And while that dated for two and a half years, yearning to know each other.

And you've heard about our wedding day and the rain and snow and the yackety-yackety-yackety-yack. I'm a yackety-yack guy. Now, leaving Twila and I, well, yes, back to Twila and I, that clock in the corner, I don't know how many years ago.

I bought that as a kit and put it together and stained and varnished it. And gave it to my parents for Christmas one year. And when my father passed away and mother went to Parkview Mennonite Retirement Village, the clock went with her and it was up there.

And when she passed away, the things were brought down here. The clock came along and the clock sits there and is still ticking. Every morning when I get up, that's where my day begins. I go over and wind the clock. Never have used the chimes, the bells. And I don't know who will get the clock when I'm gone.

But blabbermouth has sat here blabbering for an hour, giving you Buckwalter history.

Alan: I need a little bit more. Do you know what church Grandpa Buckwalter belonged to in Pennsylvania?

Harold: No, I really don't. I'm sure it was Menilnight, but I don't know which one.

Alan: Would it have been the Eby's that he moved here with? I went to Berlin, Ohio to the Amish Minimum Museum and spent a day there just copying or downloading stuff from the budget and there's so much stuff I couldn't possibly get it all. So I met the director there and now he's doing it for me and sending me everything from the Kempsville and Mount Pleasant that appeared in the budget. And I've downloaded everything from the Gospel Herald and the, what came before that, Herald of Truth. There are some articles on the budget.

And there was one about Grandpa Buckwalter from his, I need to go back and see where it is, but from his home congregation making the announcement in the budget that he and I think it was Jonathan Eby were moving to Centris where Evie's brother was already here. And they were sad to see them go.

Note: It was actually Sam Landis whose brother Abe A. Landis was already in Mt Pleasant.

Harold: Well, I don't know. As I said earlier, I believe they moved to Mount Pleasant, Virginia because other Mennonites were moving from Pennsylvania.

Alan: There does seem to be a connection between most of the people that moved here and somebody else. Since then I've been wearing Robert Mast's book out, referring to it, that and the Virginia history and the Franconia history and the Lancaster County history and the Northeast Pennsylvania history, you get a little tidbit here, a little tidbit there, but even the Swartzes, I believe the Clendennings were friends of the Swartzes and came about the same time.

Even though they didn't wind up at the Mennonite church they were both from the Michigan area, same area of Michigan, and moved close to each other. And in the budget there's a lot of back and forth between the Swartzes and the Clemdenings.

Well, when you got out of 1W service, what did you do for work then?

Harold: Well, I had been a bricklayer before I went into 1W.

Alan: Where did you learn that trade?

Harold: With the Kramers, yeah.

Alan: Okay, was that Levi?

Harold: Yeah, yeah. There was a non-Mennonite guy, but he and I started, we were good friends. And he and I, we worked together. What was his name? I'm trying to think now, Jim, James, Milligan, James Milligan. And we were working together after 1W service when I really gave my life to the Lord.

And he and I were building a chimney, a chimney or a house, and I don't remember exactly where that was when he could tell there was a big difference in me. And he asked me, he says, "I want to know what's happened to you. You're not the same."

And I told him how I had just surrendered my life to Jesus and was living for him. And he stuck his trowel in the mortarboard and listened, and then tears ran down his cheeks. And he said, "I wish I could do that, but I'm not quite ready." Yep, Jim Milligan. He and I kept in touch through the years. He passed away, and I forget his wife's name. But anyway, yep, the journey.

You've probably heard this. It was my yackety-yacks, part of my life story. I was born down here in Grandpa Buck Walter's house. And the day I was born, I had a first cousin nine years older than I was. Come on now. Her name was...

Alan: Would have been a Buckwalter?

Harold: She was a Buckwalter cousin and nine years younger or older. She was nine years old. And when they brought me in and showed I was born on her birthday, we had the same birthday, July 18th, she cried because she couldn't have me. She thought I was her birthday gift.

Alan: Anyway. How did your parents meet? How did Abe and Roberta meet?

Harold: How did our parents meet? My mother was born in Harrisonburg, and every summer a Mennonite preacher would bring students down to work in the grape vineyard.

Alan: That would have been A.D. Wenger, Sr?

Harold: Yeah, A.D. Wenger. And the Buckwalters were living at the back of the vineyard.
The old house that stood back there. The Buckwalters were living back there in the old two-story house. And that's how my parents met.

And my mother worked down there the first summer and then struck up an acquaintance. And my father went to Harrisonburg that fall and attended a short-term Bible school up there. And she came back down the second year.

And while they were down here, they were engaged to be married at Mount Pleasant. And they met down here in the Amos Wenger vineyard and they dated for two years before they were married.

Alan: Well, I've got enough to work on for a while.

Harold: Well, I've said it before, but I've been blessed with a long, healthy life and have wonderful memories and a wonderful family, a wonderful church, and a wonderful family that includes you. You've got a big family. And Kelly.

Alan: When we did the chorus, I looked at the chorus and figured about half the singers were Buckwalter descendents for married to Buckwalter descendents.

I talked to Stanley, our cousin, Stanley, Betta Lee's son, a couple of weeks ago and picked his mind for what he could remember. And he made the statement that he had heard the story, whether it was true or not, that Grandpa Buckwalter's knees had calluses on them because he spent so much time in prayer for his family.

And he said, "I don't know if that's true or not, but when you look at the family and how many of them have become ministers and how many still retain the faith, that you almost have to believe there's something to that."

Harold: Now, with my blabber mouth, I've got two ship stories to tell you. In the first year of my ship ministry, boarded a ship from Japan. The ship's name, Bolivar Maru, and the captain, of course I told him I was the harbor chaplain. And he took me up to the navigation room. And back in the navigation room, he showed me a Shinto shrine. And he said, "this is the Japanese god. He gives us a safe voyage." And they took their load of coal to Japan, offloaded it into Australia to load iron ore. And on their return from Australia to Japan, in a typhoon, the ship broke up and sank. And there were only two survivors. One was the first engineer and the other an unlicensed crew member. But it reminded me that this god, the Shinto shrine, did not really give them a safe voyage.

My other ship story, the last year, the ship I boarded, I always go to the office. And I went to the office. And I asked the chief officer, I said, "what is your country?"
He frowned and said, "it doesn't matter."
He walked out. And when I came back with my cup of coffee, he said, "why did you ask me what is your country?"

I said, “well, I have friends from a lot of countries.” And I said, “I thought I just might know somebody.”

He said, “do you know anybody from Albania?”

And I said, “yeah. I said, I know Dini Shahini.”

And he did kind of a double take. “You know Dini Shahini?”

I said, “yeah.

He said, “he graduated with my sister.”

I said, “do you know he lives in Norfolk?”

“No.”

I said, “do you want to talk to him?”

I had my cell phone. And Dini was working at, oh, come on... Regent University. And I picked up the phone and I called Dini.

And I told him “I'm on a ship and a friend that graduated with your sister is here. Would you like to talk to him? “And then I told Dini, I said, “if you'll meet me at Farm Fresh at Ward's Corner. I'll take you on board the ship and leave you there while I board some other ship.”

And I did. And Dini tells me that that friend that graduated with his sister has passed away since then. But that's two ship stories. The first year, the ship that broke up, and all died but two members. And the last year, Dini's friend, and I ended it. So yackety, yackety, yack.

Alan: Did you know Huston Thomas? Ruth's husband. Huston Thomas. Was he killed in a hunting accident?

Harold: I don't know. I don't remember. Robert Thomas is still living. And I don't know how his wife died.

Alan: Well, I appreciate you taking the time.

Harold: Well, you learned one thing I'm a yackety, yack.

Alan: I learned more than that. And I appreciate it.