



Josiah P. Rowe III

Life Along the Rappahannock: An Oral History Project

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Interview conducted by
Woodie Walker
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Since 2016, Friends of the Rappahannock has been interviewing individuals with unique knowledge related to significant events affecting the Rappahannock River watershed, and the communities that inhabit it. This project's goal is to collect and preserve significant and endangered oral histories of people living along the Rappahannock River, from the Blue Ridge Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay. These audio-visual documentaries will be available for generations to come.

Oral history refers both to a method of collecting information through recorded interviews of informed narrators with singular perspectives on significant historical events, and to the product of that process. Recordings are transcribed, and reviewed by the narrator, to provide researchers with primary source material. These accounts reflect the narrator's experiences, perspectives, and historical understandings rather than a definitive account of history.

Friends of the Rappahannock is a non-profit, grassroots conservation organization based in Fredericksburg, Virginia. It works to educate everyone about the river and to advocate for actions and policies that will protect and restore the Rappahannock River. This project is a collaborative effort with the University of Mary Washington Department of History and American Studies.

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Josiah P. Rowe III

Josiah Rowe III has occupied positions of leadership in the Fredericksburg community for more than 70 years. He was publisher of the Free Lance-Star from 1949 until 2010, and served the city as mayor from 1964 until 1972. Today, Mr. Rowe continues to share his extensive experience with civic organizations and the Fredericksburg Area Museum. Mr. Rowe was very involved in discussions regarding the Salem Church Dam proposal, the Embrey Dam removal effort, and the adoption of the city's conservation easement.

[00:09] Walker: We are going to talk a little bit and then I want to tell you what I want to do, and then we will actually start our process.

[00:15] Rowe: Okay.

[00:18] Walker: Tell me your full name.

[00:19] Rowe: Josiah Pollard Rowe the third.

[00:27] Walker: So, what I want to do Mr. Rowe is I set up some questions to just begin with some basic biographical stuff. Things about when you were born and where you were born, where you went to school, tell me about your family. Then I want to transition into kind of some of the things that you're an adult, with your own children and grandchildren, things you did on the river, if you took people out canoeing. I understand there's a pretty cool story about when you were a student at Lafayette school and someone kicked the ball in the river?

[00:58] Rowe: Yeah

[00:59] Walker: Yeah, I want to know about that. So, you know, I want to kind of talk about things then, as you were growing up, your relationship with the river, and then I want to move into your professional career, as publisher of The Free Lance-Star, as mayor of the city. I want to talk about some of those issues, as well. So that's where we are going with this.

[01:40] Walker: Good looking shirt, Mr. Rowe. Yeah that's what I want. Okay so, Go Live. Okay so we are going to start with a few things, to begin with my name is Woodie Walker. This interview is part of an oral history series called Life Along the Rappahannock. It's a collaborative effort between Friends of the Rappahannock and the University of Mary Washington's Department of History and American Studies. Our narrator today is Mr. Josiah P. Rowe III. It's 10 am., July 26, 2017, and this interview is taking place at Mr. Rowe's residence in Fredericksburg, Virginia. To begin with Mr. Rowe, tell me a little bit about when and where you were born.

[02:32] Rowe: I was born in Fredericksburg, and except for military service and going away to college, I have never lived anywhere else.

[02:42] Walker: And your birthday?

[02:45] Rowe: February 24.

[02:46] Walker: And what year?

[02:47] Rowe: 1928.

[02:50] Walker: 1928.

[02:50] Rowe: The same year this house was constructed.

[02:53] Walker: This house. Okay, we saw that coming in didn't we? All right, very interesting. Who were your parents?

[03:00] Rowe: Mom and Dad.

[03:02] Walker: Yes, sir.

[03:03] Rowe: My father was Josiah P. Rowe Junior. My mother was Genevieve Sinclair Bailey Rowe.

[03:13] Walker: Very good. Were they from this area, Mr. Rowe?

[03:16] Rowe: Yes. Dad and his parents and his grandparents all lived in Fredericksburg. My mother lived in Spotsylvania County

[03:26] Walker: Okay.

[03:27] Rowe: Near Ely's Ford.

[03:29] Walker: Well, I go to Ely's Ford quite a bit. As a history buff I know about the Civil War activity there, and then I take people on the river, through FOR. We do a paddle we call the Civil War Paddle, and I come from Germanna down to Ely's Ford. Very interesting. As I mentioned earlier, not long ago I went to the Fredericksburg Area Museum, and I saw some really interesting things from your family, and from your dad, and maybe even before your dad,. Tell me about your family's history here in Fredericksburg.

[04:10] Rowe: Well, they moved to Fredericksburg from Stafford County well before the Civil War. My great-grandfather and his brother and several others were in the meat processing business. They didn't raise cattle, but they bought cattle. They had a slaughter house down near the river. As a byproduct of that there was a meat market, which is in the 200 block of William Street right now. It's called Rowe's Meat Market. George Rowe, who was my great-grandfather, left his business at an early age and became a Baptist minister in Fredericksburg and in Salem Church. The family was not, you might say, overly-religious, but there were Baptist connections throughout the family at that time.

[05:38] Walker: Tell me about the family. So your family has the meat processing business. Was this before or right about the time of the Civil War?

[05:49] Rowe: Before

[05:50] Walker: Okay.

[05:51] Rowe: After that time, they were interested in agriculture, beyond my [06:00] early understanding, because Captain M.B. Rowe, who was a son of George Rowe, lived at Brompton, which is now the property of Mary Washington University, and he had cattle, which were prize cattle. Jersey cattle. But they also entered competitions all the way down to Louisiana with chickens. I guess some of the cattle went down there and so forth. The interesting story about the cattle was, when William Randolph Hearst was building (Hearst Castle) San Simeon in California, he wanted the best of everything, and he wanted some cattle from Brompton!

[07:12] Walker: Isn't that special. How about that?

[07:15] Rowe: And we have a letter that was written by my father's cousin, who took the cattle from Brompton out to California on a train.

[07:37] Walker: Isn't that something?

[07:39] Rowe: We tried since to trace the lineage of the cattle now and all the records are not gone, but incomplete. But it's Jersey cattle in California.

[07:57] Walker: They might admit that.

[08:00] Rowe: Came from Fredericksburg.

[08:01] Walker: Isn't that something?

[08:01] Rowe: My father was not interested in the cattle business. He attended VPI, Virginia Tech, and after a year or two dropped out to enter the air service in World War I.

[08:20] Walker: Yes sir.

[08:21] Rowe: His writing was significant. He was very literate and very practical, very much to the point. But he wrote letters from his training experiences starting at Princeton University, going to England, by boat, of course. Then to Italy, where the training was occurring. He never talked very [09:00] much about the war itself, but you sensed from the letters that he wrote, frustration of training, training, training, and not getting into the war.

[09:15] Walker: He wanted action.

[09:16] Rowe: But the times were such that the training was occurring in Italy with the American pilots and pilots-to-be, Italian instructors, French airplanes.

[09:39] Walker: Right.

[09:40] Rowe: They were all in Foggia, Italy. Not until the last month or two of the war did they get anywhere near the front and the action. But he recorded all of his experiences in letters home to his mother, knowing that they would be published in the local newspaper, which his uncle was the publisher of during the 1917-1918 time period. After the war, he got into a couple of business ventures in Fredericksburg but continued to be sought after by his uncle to write things for the newspaper. When Uncle Press, as he was known, died unexpectedly in 1925, my dad was asked to be editor and publisher of The Free Lance-Star newspaper.

[10:58] Walker: And that's how... How far back to the family, you had an uncle who was the publisher. Was the family involved with The Free-Lance Star before him?

[11:12] Rowe: Well, it was a local stock company, and he was, my dad's uncle, was a stock holder. But the other business men in Fredericksburg who took a background role, but they were not employed by or active in the operation of the newspaper.

[11:35] Walker: I want to talk to you about your role with the newspaper, but before I do, I want you to tell me a little bit about growing up here, where did you go to high school?

[11:46] Rowe: Fredericksburg High School, which became James Monroe High School, and it was in the building which is at the corner of Kenmore [12:00] Avenue, Hanover Street, George Street, and Barton Street. It was Fredericksburg High School.

[12:08] Walker: What year did you graduate high school?

[12:10] Rowe: 1945.

[12:12] Walker: In 1945. That was the year the war ended.

[12:15] Rowe: Yes.

[12:17] Walker: Before I go further with that, I want to go back a little further back with your schooling, tell me about the story about the ball in the river.

[12:25] Rowe: Well, there was only one elementary school early on, it was called Lafayette Elementary, it's now the regional library. The boys played in the front of the school... The girls played in the front, the boys in the back, and at one point we were playing with these great big rubber balls, and I don't know they were probably eighteen inches in diameter or something, and one of them bounced across the playground right down into the Rappahannock River. One of the boys in the class, without permission or anything at all, just took off and ran down to the city dock, which is about a half mile away. I guess he jumped in and got the ball and in about an hour he comes back to school, soaking wet, with the ball in hand, subject to discipline for leaving the school and doing a dangerous thing!

[13:40] Walker: That's pretty good, yeah I get that, but he went and got the ball.

[13:45] Rowe: He got the ball

[13:46] Walker: Yes sir, that's pretty cool.

[13:48] Rowe: And instead of being commended, he was chastised.

[13:54] Walker: Sounds like he did a good deed. All right, so 1945, you graduate high school. What did you do after high school, did you go on to continue your education at a college?

[14:05] Rowe: I went to Washington and Lee. Started there before World War Two was officially over. I went to summer school in 1945, and enrollment in the school at that time was about 125 people.

[14:26] Walker: At Washington and Lee?

[14:27] Rowe: Yeah, half were freshman, and half were older, some of whom were ineligible for military service. They were doing education at that point. I stayed at Washington and Lee for three more years and graduated in 1948.

[15:00] Walker: Before we talk about some of your professional career, tell me about growing up on the river. Did you, as a kid, were you the kind of kid to play in the river and went fishing?

[15:11] Rowe: Not at all.

[15:12] Walker: Not at all.

[15:13] Rowe: No, I never went swimming in the river, I never went boating in the river. My dad was working six days a week, almost seven, so the family didn't do things other than around the house.

[15:32] Walker: And where did you grow up, where was the house that you grew up?

[15:35] Rowe: It's where my daughter, Jeanette, lives now. 801 Hanover Street. About five or six blocks from where we are right now.

[15:46] Walker: I'd love to come, I want to talk to you someday about the house because as a history buff, I know about the Civil War history of the house, and it's just fabulous. Alright, so you grew up there, Dad's working all the time, and you weren't the guy to go out and play in the river, fishing and that kind of thing. What were your hobbies when you were growing up, what did you like to do?

[16:07] Rowe: Well, my first newspaper experience was my hobby. It was delivering newspapers. And my first exposure to that was in 1936 when there was an election, for the re-election of Franklin Roosevelt. My brother, three years older, had a newspaper route and it was an extra edition put out for the election and I was an 8-year-old assistant delivering papers in 1936.

[16:51] Walker: Well, that's pretty exciting. Just curious, well, you were 8-years-old, I don't know if you had political opinions at that time, as a kid growing up in the Depression, what did you think of FDR?

[17:03] Rowe: Didn't pay much attention to it really. It was a national thing and local people didn't, I mean my dad was not a strong supporter of FDR since that... when the election came about. Today's young people don't know the fervor that the country got into about an election of a president.

[17:34] Walker: Right.

[17:36] Rowe: Politics was not a part of my background.

Walker: So, you graduate in '48, from Washington and Lee. When did you get married?

[17:49] Rowe: 1956.

[17:51] Walker: And who is your wife?

[17:54] Rowe: She was Anne Martin Wilson. Her parents [18:00] were good friends of my parents. I'll tell you that during World War II, my dad wanted to get back into flying, and the military people said, oh no you're too old to fly. At that time in 1941 he was 46, 47 years-old. He was commander of the local guard, which was called the Virginia Protective Force. The National

Guard having been activated, the state, I think, decided it really needed a local force. My dad was the commander of that. He chose the two lieutenants, one of whom turned out to be my father-in-law, and the other was C.M. Cowan, who ran for mayor against my dad in 1948.

[19:16] Walker: Tell me, how many children did you have?

[19:19] Rowe: Four.

[19:20] Walker: And who are they?

[19:21] Rowe: Jeannette, Florence, Sally, and Josiah IV.

[19:27] Walker: And Josiah IV. When you were raising your family, did you take your kids or friends, did you have experiences with the river at that time? As a recreational thing?

[19:43] Rowe: I had a canoe, and canoes at that time were aluminum, made by the Grumman Corporation, which made aluminum airplanes. They made good canoes and I had a canoe. Regrettably, it got stolen a few years later, so I didn't have it no longer, but we paddled around in the river. Came down the river, only one time with all the children in the boat. It was an interesting experience because there were very few people in sight, either on the river or on the shore, it was a wilderness experience.

[20:42] Walker: I like that. I want to talk about your professional career and some of the issues that you dealt with, whether as publisher of our local paper, or as mayor. You mentioned your father ran [21:00] for mayor, was he a mayor of Fredericksburg?

[21:04] Rowe: Yes.

[21:06] Walker: And when was he mayor, what time?

[21:08] Rowe: 1948 until 1949, when he died.

[21:12] Walker: Oh.

[21:13] Rowe: But his father had been mayor and his grandfather.

[21:19] Walker: Okay. So a long history of family participation in local government.

[21:24] Rowe: I think so. My grandfather who was mayor during the time of World War I, was a butcher. That was the family business dealing in meat and meat byproducts and so forth. I don't recall him being involved in politics as such, but he was known as Old Man Joe Rowe down at the meat market.

[22:01] Walker: Old Man Joe Rowe down at the meat market, go see him. Interesting, okay I like it. When did you get involved with the newspaper business as an adult, as a professional?

[22:18] Rowe: Well, during high school, which was during the time of World War II, it was obvious to me that my dad needed all the help he could get, because all of the young people had been enlisted or drafted into the military service. I decided that I could be a help after school, and in the summer time, setting type. I taught myself to be a linotype operator, and I was pretty good at it, I was as competent as the several linotype operators the newspaper at that time had. So, I would go to school until 3:30 in the afternoon I think it was, and then go work at the newspaper until the paper came out at 5 o'clock, late afternoon. Then I would deliver papers, so I was involved in several aspects of things, not involved in creating or writing, but in the production of it. And when my dad died in 1949, my brother, who was in law [24:00] school at the time, dropped out of school and he and I jointly became co-publishers of the paper for about 50 years.

[24:11] Walker: About 50 years. What was your brother's name?

[24:14] Rowe: Charles.

[24:16] Walker: Charles Rowe. Got it. When did you actively take over and get involved in the paper as co-publisher?

[24:28] Rowe: Right then in 1949

[24:31] Walker: Right then?

[24:35] Rowe: I was 21 and my brother was 24.

[24:39] Walker: Before we talk about some rivers issues that you dealt with professionally, I just want to ask this: 1949 you and your brother become co-publishers of The Free Lance-Star, when did you become mayor of Fredericksburg?

[24:59] Rowe: 1964.

[25:04] Walker: And how long were you mayor?

[25:06] Rowe: Eight years.

[25:07] Walker: So 1972, okay.

[25:10] Rowe: I had been on the school board six years before that, and that was an interesting time, because it was right after the Brown vs. Board of Education.

[25:24] Walker: Sure.

[25:25] Rowe: The closing of schools in Prince Edward County, and the beginning of integration in Fredericksburg.

[25:37] Walker: Right, yeah, I would say you were mayor during some of the most turbulent times we could have had, with the Civil Rights Movement going on and people trying to work with that, and understand that. I want to read a little something and setup some of my next questions, okay? I want to talk about some of the things that you were involved with regarding the river that have had such lasting impact. For example, the city easement, Embrey Dam removal, some of those issues. So, the City of Fredericksburg owns approximately 4800 acres of forested riparian lands along 32 miles of the Rappahannock and Rapidan rivers, and also more than 30 miles of additional property on some of their tributaries. And in 2006 the city placed more than 4000 acres of this land into a conservation easement. In 1969, the city purchased this land from Virginia Electric Power Company, tell me about that, what were the reasons that the city decided to buy that land?

[26:53] Rowe: Well, the river became a prominent political issue [27:00] during the 1950s and '60s. When the United States Corps of Engineers, which is an army-based organization, at the direction of Congress, was analyzing rivers all over the country which could be used for multipurpose dams. And such a project was entered into in Fredericksburg, not at the behest of the city, but Congress got involved, and what became known as the Salem Dam project got on the boards. The city was involved only at that time, because we were getting fresh water from the river. The power company had acquired that land in the early 1900s when they elevated the first dam that was there, and the city got its water supply from a canal, which had been built for navigation during the 1840s and 1850s, it was no longer in use. There was a number of canals built during that period, which were generally unsuccessful because the railroads came along and were able to take people and produce to the western lands. But Fredericksburg was where the dam was located and the power company said we are going to get rid of all this upriver land that we have. The reason they had upriver land was, when they first built the dam, they weren't sure what elevation would be appropriate for power generation.

[29:29] Walker: And you're talking about the Embrey Dam?

[29:30] Rowe: The Embrey Dam.

[29:31] Walker: 1920s, no 1911.

[29:33] Rowe: 1911, but there was an earlier dam behind it.

[29:37] Walker: The crib dam.

[29:40] Rowe: Which was built with wood, and the power company said we are gonna get rid of this land to Fredericksburg City, do you want to buy it? The city had no resources [30:00] to buy several hundred thousand dollars worth of land. But, with the federal project on the drawing boards, and it happily did not mature, the city manager at that time was Freeman Funk, who died only in the last year or so, he said, why don't we see if the city wants to buy that land and if the dam is built this land will be our contribution to its ultimate use and success and so forth. So, the city, which is quite unusual as you have referenced, bought thousands of acres of land upriver from the dam. We didn't realize that acquiring the land and the dam were going to create a problem later on, with who's going take care of the dam, or take it down if it has to come down. But the army Corps of Engineers was plugging away with a Congressional appropriation every year for additional studies and so forth. It became known as the Salem Dam, because the topographical maps provided by the government all had a name for a prominent feature within the boundaries of that map. Salem Church was in it, because as you know and others know, it was a Civil War battle site in itself. So, it became known as the Salem Dam, and the Corps of Engineers was plugging away year after year, they'd get another appropriation and they would survey what would be done. The proposal was a multipurpose dam; multipurpose meaning anything you can think of to do with water and river situations and we'll put it in as a benefit. And the justification of I think it was 50 million dollars initially to build the dam. [33:00] Well, what are the multipurpose things you can come up with; one is flood control, two is stream flow augmentation, that is let out some water when there is not enough in the river, water quality is supposed to be improved by a dam, recreation is supposed to be an advantage, but if you've let out water because there is not enough in the lower part of the river, you have lowered the pool from which you can have recreational activities. So a multipurpose dam has conflicts built in it all along, but the City Council of Fredericksburg, which I became a part of, had decided that it wanted to support the idea of a dam. I didn't think it was going to happen because there were too many conflicts of what a multipurpose dam could do. That is, you can't boat on a thing when the water level is going to vary maybe as much as 20 or 30 feet over a summer period. The city bought the land saying, if the dam is built, it will become federal property, and this will be our down payment or contribution towards that project. I never had to take a vote on a council about whether to continue our support, but all our support really amounted to was that we were not citing opposition to it. The thing ran out of steam in the late 1960s, I guess it was, and the proposal from the power company was (for the city) to buy all the land including the trees which were on it. But, if you can't afford all of that, we, as the power company would cut all the timber and then they could regrow and that's what happened.

[35:28] Walker: So, the city bought the land, but allowed the power company to timber it.

[35:33] Rowe: Yeah.

[35:34] Walker: Harvest the timber to help reduce the cost, is that what it did?

[35:38] Rowe: That's right, and I think it was three or four hundred thousand dollars worth of timber. The city was having to borrow money in the first place and we said, well the timber will regenerate itself at some point.

[35:59] Walker: So, the way [36:00] that I understand it, the way you are describing it, the Corps of Engineers studies the possible uses of a Salem Church Dam. They approach the city. The city was in favor of the idea at the time, the city council. What did the residents, I'm just curious, what was the mood in the city amongst residents, was this a controversial issue or was everyone pretty much in favor of this?

[36:28] Rowe: It wasn't really controversial, but I felt that it wasn't going to happen because it was too complex. We had to go up to Washington and meet with congressmen from time to time. I remember one time we met with Senator A. Willis Robertson of Virginia and I asked him, I said, Are you in favor of this? He said, well I'm in favor of anything that's feasible. Well, that's a mushy term as a way to answer a question without giving you an answer. Congress really didn't have to play any role other than big appropriations to the Army Corps of Engineers to continue to study dams all over the country.

[37:20] Walker: So, Salem Dam project runs out of gas, late '60s, early '70s. To my knowledge, and please fill me in, kind of the next big issue chronologically for the river and the city's involvement was the decision to take down the Embrey Dam.

[37:42] Rowe: But before that there was the decision of whether to dam up any of the tributaries as a backup water supply.

[37:50] Walker: Please tell me about this.

[37:52] Rowe: Mott's Run, which was the first of three possible sites for water supply. It was in the late 1960s, I think, that we developed the first of those three at Mott's Run. The other two have been developed by the counties now. Stafford has one at Deep Run, I think it's called, and up near Ely's Ford, Spotsylvania has put in a dam which inundated the family home of my mother's family.

[38:33] Walker: Was that Hunting Run by chance?

[38:35] Rowe: Yes.

[38:36] Walker: Okay I understand.

[38:37] Rowe: We developed, built the dam at Mott's Run, and interestingly, Mott's Run itself disappeared because the dam was built where two streams came together. [39:00] The two streams came together and made Mott's Run, but that joint juncture of those two streams is under water now.

[39:11] Walker: Right, and that ultimately becomes our source, the City of Fredericksburg's source of drinking water and we stopped using the pipe that went through the canal.

[39:25] Rowe: Yeah, but you know, the filtration plant is jointly operated with Spotsylvania County now.

[39:41] Walker: So, we own the land. We buy the land. The dam project, Salem Church Dam Project, goes off the table. We develop a better source for drinking water by creating Mott's Reservoir. I guess this kind of sets the stage for, well, what use does the Embry Dam have at this point, if we are not diverting water in anymore. Tell me about that, how did that come about, how did that decision come about to remove the dam?

[40:17] Rowe: Well, it was beyond when I was active in city government at that time. The city had no way itself to take the dam down. It occurred to me as things came along that the power company did something for itself by getting rid of the dam without having to put any money into it.

[40:47] Walker: Because when the city bought the land they got the dam.

[40:50] Rowe: That's right.

[40:51] Walker: I understand. That's an interesting aspect. I never thought about that before.

[40:55] Rowe: Then Senator John Warner, who was himself was a fly fisherman of sorts, got some federal appropriation for the removal of the dam. The city was happy to have that happen, because while the dam was structurally sound, it served no purpose other than to block migration of fish and recreational uses.

[41:36] Walker: Yes, sir. Describe for me, I'm curious to know, today, what does the river mean to us today? I think in terms of fishing, and yes, with the dam removal we have migratory fish that are able to move up stream and spawn again. We have a growing [42:00] ecotourism industry here where people come here to paddle and to fish and new stores are opening downtown that cater to those kinds of activities. How do you see the river and the way the community uses the river and views the river from your young life, you know, growing up in the '40s, and young people, and the way the city saw and the community saw and valued the river, versus today?

[42:28] Rowe: Well, the river was an asset that was not touched for years but it actually touched the city because there were floods. There were two significant floods in my lifetime, one in 1937, one in 1942. The river rose 44 feet in one of those floods, and it inundated the first floor of most of the shops on Caroline Street. The water that came over the canal came through Kenmore Avenue, a lot of houses near where we are now that were damaged because of water that had not directly come from the river but from the canal coming through there.

[43:37] Walker: So, I've seen pictures of Caroline Street flooded, buildings flooded. That meant that things that were lower, closer to the river on Sophia Street, had to really be hurt.

[43:49] Rowe: Many of them ended up being torn down, including a house that the Rowe family had occupied when it first moved from Stafford County into Fredericksburg. No one I knew at that time had lived along the river, but the river was the focal point of the town.

[44:14] Walker: Even then. Was there much trade? We all know about the story of the Colonial Era, and the wharves and the warehouses that were at city dock, and the importance of Falmouth as a shipping point. Was the river used for commerce during in the 1940s, '50s, and '60s?

[44:34] Rowe: Only for two general purposes. One was fuel oil, gasoline. There were storage tanks down near where the city dock is now. And the other was the barges which came to the cellophane plant, [45:00] which was Sylvania Industrial Corporation, later FMC. So, the commerce was those two things.

[45:20] Walker: So, the fuel oil was brought to city dock, stored there, and then loaded to boats that would move it downstream?

[45:26] Rowe: No, it was loaded there and then trucked out of this area.

[45:33] Walker: Okay, so that was the distribution point by truck.

[45:36] Rowe: Later on, you know, the fuel oil pipeline runs through Fredericksburg all the way up to Woodbridge.

[45:47] Walker: I don't even know about that. Okay. Lot of things, interesting history. So it's changed, you know in the '60s when you were mayor, there was what a lot of people referred to kind of as the Green Movement in the United States. People became very environmentally conscious. I think something, I was born in '63, so for me I was ten in '73, and I remember this commercial, and it was the Crying Indian. It was Iron Eyes Cody, do you remember the commercial, he would walk along the beach and there was pollution and litter on the beach, and then the Indian chief would look at you... one tear. A lot of people were motivated by that Green Movement in the '60s and '70s and became very eco-concerned, environmentally concerned. Did you see that happen in our community, people starting to see the river in a different way?

[46:50] Rowe: Well, overriding all of the thoughts about the river, were how are we going to deal with the next flood.

[46:58] Walker: Once again. Okay.

[47:00] Rowe: It was in five years we had two major floods. Interestingly, there are people who suggest that those floods were magnified by the fact that the national Depression had occurred in the 1930s and people who needed money timbered their land upriver. And I don't know that much study has been done on that, but that was a factor because the river didn't have any backup place.

[47:43] Walker: And the buffer, that buffer zone and trees picking up the water and holding back the water and the tributaries.

[47:49] Rowe: It just didn't happen because all the trees had been cut down.

[47:53] Walker: So, we had massive runoff and it led to the floods.

[48:00] Rowe: It led to the damage from the floods anyhow, but those thoughts were overriding, and that's what has occurred ever since. How are we going to fix the river up in a matter that we can use it, and not lose any investment because of the next flood?

[48:29] Walker: Well, I don't know much about what we've done about floods. Tell me, we are talking about the last big flood in '42, that's 80 years ago.

[48:38] Rowe: That's right, but it's still in people's minds.

[48:41] Walker: Okay.

[48:42] Rowe: You know the riverfront park between Falmouth and Fredericksburg, any construction there is built so that rising water doesn't take the building away.

[49:04] Walker: Built out of the flood plain. How did we get Old Mill Park? Old Mill Park today, it's a beautiful place to go, but it's low lying, in the flood plain.

[49:18] Rowe: Well, it was owned by the Franklin family, which occupied Fall Hill, which was the first house on the river upriver. Interestingly, the mailing address of that used to be RFD 1 Box 1, it was the first house. Mrs. Franklin, who died about 20 years ago, her family had owned that land and some other lands near there and it's all reduced down to that one house.

[50:06] Walker: Just above our office at Friends of the Rappahannock. Fall Hill is just on the hill above us.

[50:12] Rowe: We haven't mentioned Lauck's Island, which is right adjacent to the city and it is a large piece of land.

[50:21] Walker: Yes, sir.

[50:23] Rowe: It is all owned now by the widow of Dr. Rob Wheeler. I'm glad they didn't have to sell it, I don't know what disposition is, plan for it now. At one point there was a bridge from what is now Normandy Village over to Lauck's Island and that bridge came down in one of the two floods, I'm not sure which.

[50:58] Walker: Mrs. Wheeler lets us take [51:00] people over to the island each spring.

[51:02] Rowe: Yeah.

[51:04] Walker: And I'm lucky enough to get to help organize that trip, and she's talked to me about the family that was there in '37 and '42. The way I recall it, she said the flood came in '37 and destroyed the bridge and they built it back. Then it flooded again in '42 and destroyed the bridge and they didn't build it back.

[51:28] Rowe: Right.

[51:30] Walker: But we're really lucky to get to go over there, they manage it kind of in a hands-off way, it's a nature reserve. And it's pretty special

[51:42] Rowe: I hope that work is being done to secure either the public access to it or the public ownership of Lauck's Island.

[51:54] Walker: Yes, sir.

[51:54] Rowe: At some point.

[51:55] Walker: Yes sir. I think that's close, that's kind of wrapping up the things that I had prepared for. I wanted to talk to you especially about Salem Church Dam, because you were there when those decisions were being made. I wanted your thoughts about Embrey Dam and how the community sees the river today versus how the community saw the river in the 1940s and '50s. The purpose of this program is to capture these stories of folks like yourself, who have lived along the river for many years, so that we can archive these stories in a way that future researchers can access them. Are there things that you think I need to know, or you want to mention because we've talked about a wide range of things and is there anything you want to add to our conversation.

[53:06] Rowe: The existence of the Friends of the Rappahannock is the first multi-jurisdictional approach to managing the asset. We've seen in this whole area that Fredericksburg is expected to do everything and everyone else pitches in if they want to, or if they can. Not until FOR got well-organized was there any effort to protect the river. When the city acquired all that land upriver, nobody from any of the counties said we'd like to help you, none of that occurred. But fortunately, the city was able [54:00] to do it and I think the ownership of all of that land upriver from Fredericksburg was a significant event. Not only did it protect the river and everything downstream, but it was done by a small city which didn't have great resources. We had to borrow a lot of money to acquire it and I think the present state of it is commendable. You've got people who want to get involved. It is just fortunate that nobody came in and wanted to buy that land and put in a subdivision with river views and river access and all of that.

[55:10] Walker: It's unique on the east coast of the United States, it's unique. For a community on the east coast in a very urban area located between Richmond and D.C., right here with all of these people, and we have that riparian corridor which can't be improved upon, that has public access and people can take their kids canoeing, fishing and camping. It's unique on the east coast, it's really a tribute to the forethought of yourself and others, Mr. Rowe, and the city government that helped make that happen

[55:44] Rowe: Well, I don't claim any credit for it but I was a participant in a lot of the things that occurred during that time, but the Rappahannock is one of the few rivers on the east coast that is not dammed and not messed up with industrial uses.

[56:15] Walker: It's true. It's very rare if you look at the James or the Potomac on each side of us, even the York. The Rappahannock came through the Industrial Revolution of the 19th and 20th centuries pretty clean, we're in pretty good shape and we have a lot to take care of and to be grateful for.

[56:35] Rowe: Well, you and the young folks who are joining the movement deserve a lot of credit for not just for being here but for seeing what the future can bring to that river.

[56:58] Walker: Well, [57:00] that's beautiful. Thank you, Mr. Rowe and thank you for letting us be in your home today to talk to you.

[57:07] Rowe: Glad to talk to you and glad to meet Matt and Nancy.