

Henry Hartung shares his memories of a day trip to Chesapeake Beach with Bernie Loveless.

Mr. Hartung: Well, there are going to be people that's going to remember this. I'll bet you a dollar to a donut because this was one of the biggest things ever.

When we were small and Mother would bring us down, and Father would go fishing and go swimming, and then my sisters would come later. And they would stay down and go dancing, you know, and all that. And we always left about 6:00, 6:30, whatever time the train pulled out of here while it was still light; you see.

Mr. Loveless: Yeah.

Mr. Hartung: So I said, to my mother — I think I was about 13 years old, 12 or 13 years old. I said, "Momma, how come we have to go home so early?" I said, "Why don't we stay down and get a later train sometime?" You can get an 8:00 o'clock train, 9:30 or so. She says, "All right."

My father came in with a sack of crabs, a half a sack, or whatever it was. They all went home with sacks gunnysacks.

Mr. Loveless: You're telling me they took the sacks of crabs right on the train with them when they were going back?

Mr. Hartung: Oh, trains, streetcars, everything. Sure, everybody came home with a sack of crabs. They smell like crazy, you know, by the time you got to Washington.

Mr. Hartung: Well, anyway, so we stayed. And it was a nice hot day. And it was nice. Everything was just fine, but it was the postmen's day. It was the day after school closed, and there was such a mob down here that when we got down in there to get a train to come home, it was dark.

Right up here — you know where the woods used to be up here?

Mr. Loveless: Right. Up the hill.

Mr. Hartung: We stood here — thousands of us, I guess — hundreds at least. And every — and the trains were loaded; they were hanging on the backs of them and everything and going up — because we had to wait for the trains going up to Washington to come back to pick us up now. That would be about — let's see.

Mr. Loveless: Oh, my gosh. Well, I bet they were standing up on them.

Mr. Hartung: Oh, yeah, standing on the steps hanging onto the rail. And they did, and the trains went up to Washington; then they'd come back and take some more home.

We stayed — I don't know what time it was any more, but late. And the mosquitoes started — the big ones. And everybody went up into the woods and they started to get twigs and branches, and they made fires to keep the mosquitoes away; but that isn't stopping them from chewing us up.

Well, finally we did get a train and we got home. When we got to North Capitol and H Street where we would switch from one car to another, there wasn't no more cars running.

Mr. Loveless: The streetcars had stopped.

Mr. Hartung: Well, H Street to R Street — North Capitol and R is where we had to go — my mother and my brother, younger brother four years younger than I. He was a little tot, you know. And he was just at that cantankerous time and late at night and everything and going home.

And I'll tell you a beautiful thing about that. We started to walk from North Capitol Street. There wasn't a living soul around except one nice old colored gentleman. And he was a nice man. And he walked alongside and a little behind us like this all the way home. We never spoke to him; he never spoke to us; but he was protecting us. I'm sure of that.