

A". PRESENT: R. Dodds, Joe Liener

Harold Spencer Argue, 92, was born in Jenkintown, Pa. He lived in Annapolis since 1936. He was a cabinet maker, working for the former Trumpy Yacht Yard in Eastport until they went out of business.

JL: Did you know Al May who was a foreman for Trumpy up in Cooper's Point?

HA: No, I knew the foreman who came down from up there. He wasn't a foreman when he came down but for twenty five years he was the foreman of the gunner (?) shop.

JL: You knew Ernie Tucker?

HA: Do I know Ernie Tucker? Do you know the "boogie-haired" half-pint? I made him a model of one and his wife said, "I don't want a half-model, I want the whole model." I said, "Ho, ho, you want the full pint." Yea, I know Ernie Tucker. I knew him right up from the time...

JL: Well, then you knew him when up in Dundalk then too, didn't you?

HA: No, I wasn't there with him when he built the Owen's Cutter, the one that was after the war, because he came down here to our yard after the company went there and he stayed there. Then things got kind of slack so he cut out. But, he would usually go around, you know he would always use that cane, the one's that... sticks they used for hanging tobacco on, that was his cane.

JL: It was split out of a piece of timber?

HA: Yea, and when he would get into a boat at noon time, when it was lunch time, he'd come to a boat and if it happened to be open, no planking on it, he would get in between its ribs and put his cane up in the top. He'd get in there and get hold of the thing and he'd pull himself up and he couldn't walk. He could manage pretty good without a cane but he couldn't walk at all.

JL: From his waist down, he had Infantile Paralysis when he was a right tiny, little baby.

HA: Yea, he had, what you call it?

JL: Polio

HA: Yea, Polio

RD: I don't know whether you ever got a copy of the book that Jane Tucker wrote on Half Pint. She wrote a little book on the boat.

JL: Called Half Pint.

RD: Did you ever see that?

HA: Half Pint?

RD: No, the book that she wrote on it.

HA: Yea, I got her.

RD: Oh, you do. I was going to say if you didn't have it, I would send you one.

HA: No, his wife gave me one and he had signed it. It was one of the first ones out. I still have it. That Ernie was a corker. He always would sign his drawings with a duck flying.

JL: You know old man Trumpy give him the dickens about that didn't you?

HA: Ernie didn't stop. I went over to the drafting room one time to see him about something or other. I said, "Ernie, I don't want any more of those ducks on those drawings," I said, "I can't model that." And he looked at me and said, "Huh, they're still going on regardless." He was a card. No, he passed away down...

JL: Died right in the house over in Oxford.

HA: There was some kind of sail boat gathering down there right in front of him and the house. I know the name and can't think of it. His wife had to call another company and a lot of people out on their lawn, right on the water, watching the sail boat going on. She came into the house and there he was on the floor.

JL: I've rode around here with him a lot of times cause he used to go with him up to McCleans to get the marine stuff.

HA: Did he ever tell you about the time he used to swim every morning? He'd tie a line to his hand and to the boat and he'd swim in the river. He'd go overboard and take a swim. He happened to look at the boat and here there was a late breeze and it was moving it away. He said just, by luck the line was hanging over and he swam over and got aboard. He said he never went overboard without a line.

RD: How long did he work for the Trumpy yard here?

HA: How long hadl worked? He came down here in 42, 43. I worked with him until they closed up.

JL: I forget when it was when they quit here.

HA: Around 42 or 43 when they closed up.

JL: No, no. When they started. It was in the 70's.

HA: Yea, 72 or 73. Something like that. No, I asked Mrs. Trumpy one time... Well, I didn't do patterns with her, I just made half-models of all their boats. I got them together, shaved them out, glued them up, and Mr. Trumpy, the old gentleman, would take them home and mold them out. He had a bad cold one time and the doctor told him he was not to touch anything at work. Young John came to me and he said, "Is that block ready so that dad can get to it." I said, "Yes,

it is." He came back in two days. Z said, "What's wrong?" He said, "The doctor won't let him touch that boat and he wants you to go ahead and do it." -I said, "Wait a minute, he laid the lines out. He knows the shape and he knows the why." I said, "I know the **lines** and I put them on the blocks the way he wants them, I hope." I said, "Now you come down and you want me to shape that up." I said, "What am I going to do if anything goes wrong?" He said, "Dad says you're to make them." I said, "Alright, I'll do the best I can." I shaped it all up and fixed it and about a week later John took it back. A couple of days later the old gentleman walked in, he'd never said much, he was very quiet-like, he walked over to me at the bench and my foreman, always was standing there like this watching me and anybody who would talk to me, or wanted to talk to me, he said, "Harold, from now on you will make these models and shape them up." I said, "Mr. Trumpy wait a minute, I'll tell you the same thing I told young John. You made these drawings, you know why these lines are there and what they mean and how." I said, "I'll do the best I can." So he says, "Just keep on going." A little while later he came down to me, you know what the splines they use and he had white pine. He brought down this stick and he said, "I want you to make me three or four of these sticks about four feet long." I said, "Mr. Trumpy, I now make a suggestion. You, have some Port Orford cedar here. Let me make you up some splines out of that." He said, "Why." I said, "Look at the pine, bend that, sag it, its not a true curve. Nobody's ever made weights that would bring that right. It's alright, now here's this spline. I just happened to have a strip of Port Orford cedar. Now bend it like this, now sag it." He said, "What's that?" I said, "You use Port Orford cedar, you can't get it anymore, we used to get it from some land around here twenty feet long and that grain is that straight all the way through. You want me to make you a couple of those?" "Yes," he said, "Make them out of that." I made him three or four of them. I don't know, about an eighth or about a quarter, three sixteenth square.

JL: Yea, a pretty good size.

HA: Yea, and a right smart too long. So, I worked them up and got them all ready and he said, " Well, lets try them. Put them on the bench." I said, "Turn them around. Say why?" He just shook his head. "Now," he said, "I want you to take this one, 3/16 X k and taper it down from one end to another. Is there a reload plainer that will take care of that?" I said, "Yes." Well, I still got her. Thirty or forty inch standard Clay, wood bottom. I beveled the edges to take care of that extra heavy block and I get that thing and I say, "Here's my plan." He says, "Now, how are you going to do it?" I reach up there and I take the shavings like this. Down here first and then go back and up. "Fine," he says, "Do this about an 1/8 of an inch thick here to this boat here then you can stop. Then you can go back again." "I don't know how you do it," he says. "The tools do it, I don't"

JL: Do you know what makes the best splines?

HA: I have heard that, I've got a piece of it, lemon wood?

JL: No. Do you know where they get them from?

HA: England.

0- JL: Over in England. When the broken shaves off of the carriages and so forth were made out of lance wood, the good ones, the good ones, and they would save all of the broken pieces and make the splines out of those. Best wood there is.

HA: That's the way the thing goes.

RD: What kind of boats were you working on at the yard.

HA: Now?

RD: No.

HA: I worked with Trumpyjs up to the last and they were thinking seriously of trying a steel hull out of young John. See Donald died. The old gentleman died. I don't know if it was a heart attack or what.

JL: I think it was.

HA: I think so, too. And the young John ran the yard for a year or two and he come to me one day and he said, "Say, I'm thinking of closing up the yard." I said, "Why?" He said, "I can't get men to learn a trade." I said, "I understand what you mean. They come in here to me. They've been here three months. They come in and want to buy my tools and I say, "What do you want to do with those tools." Well, I've got pattern makers tools, scoops (?) with off-set handles and with this scraper I get a gouge as wide as that. I said, "There's the gouge, do you know how to use it?" "Yea, sure." He said, "Where's your mallet?" I said, "I don't use a mallet, that's a hand tool." So, they said, "I'd like to buy your tools." "But you don't have enough money to buy them." They said, "What do you mean?" I said, "Well, I wanted to insure them during the war time and they wouldn't give me more than five hundred dollars insurance on tools. A fellow told me they were second hand tools. I said, "You're second hand, get out of here!" I said, "If you can't insure them for twenty five hundred dollars, clear out quick!" "Well you're making a big mistake." I said, "You're the one that's making a mistake."

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RD: You did mostly interior work on these boats?

HA: Mostly interior? No, what they would do was give me a few parts of joiner work we'll call it. A small case was built in, no sides, one end, no back and that was your corners, front, and the end and we'd make it up with closed front to bottom. Everything was plain mahogany. One day I got a set of drawers with in walnut and I made them up and John came in to me one day, young John, and walked over to me and he said, "Who made that walnut bureau?" I said, "Which one is that?" "It's that one I had to figgure the grain on the wood." "Well," I said, "That's the door fronts they gave me to work with." I went out in the mill and asked the foreman, "Is that what they want me to use?" He said, "Yes." I said, "Most of the time they give me the kind of grain." He said, "You make them up out of that." I said, "Alright." John didn't know it and I told him. He said, "They are the most beautiful door fronts I ever laid eyes on." I said, "You get that kind of fronts in here and I'll try to make them up." Same old stuff.

JL: I noticed that you've got curly maple here on your spindle.

HA: They got a lot of wood in during the later part of the war, but during the earlier part of the war, maple, chestnut, and this came in as the fellow was taking charge of the lumber coming in and such like that.

JL: We'd get that aid the maple that we used to make the battery wedges for the submarines and of course it would run through the plainer on that thin stuff very nice and just throw it out the side. Of course everybody grabbed it.

HA: I asked the foreman at the mill, "What are you going to do with, it?" He said, "We can't use that." I said, "I can." So this is part of it. Ah, yea.

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D: You worked during the wartime. It must have been quite different from what you were doing later on.

HA: Oh, yea. They got maple in there and needed maple but had had straight green stock. They had cued mahogany <sup>like</sup> this and it was only used for planking under chine. The boats were built from the keel to the chine here and then up the sides. This was mostly straight at the bow and then shapgd:"out and that was put in on the angle. They would have to bend that and twist it. You couldn't twist that stuff.

RD: He has a good memory doesn't he? I wish I have that memory when I'm 92.

JL: Yea, that's mahogany.

HA: Yea, but you bake that in the sunlight, that's the same model as 1908, and you get that in the sunlight and dry it.

JL: Did you buy a lot of mahogany from the fellow, the fellow up in Tacony? Billy? That's all sold up there.

HA: Treated mahogany?

JL: Yea.

HA: Who was that fellow up in New York?

' L: Constantine gang up there.

HA: He's up on the Hudson River bank. Willie Mann and the government came up there and they wanted to buy mahogany. They picked up all that he had out in the yard and he said, "What's that over in the building over there?" He said, "That's very fine treated mahogany." "Can we have a look at it?" "Oh:..no, thank you," he said, "I've had that over twenty years and it's very fine wood and he walked in there and looked at it and said, "We'll take the whole lot." It's claimed that that man stood there and cried.

JL: That's the way they did with Billy Thompson up here. Thompson Mahogany Company. You've gotten stuff there, I guess, Haven't you?

HA: Oh no doubt. I may have heard anything like that stuff.

JL: There were three big dealers. There was William H. Lear, Danial Buck, and Billy Thompson here in the town. That is Philidelphia.

HA: I smacked on these \_\_\_\_\_. This is a darker one.

JL: Yea, it's a darker one.

HA: That's a walnut handle and this is a teakwood handle. I've got many more of these to make up.

p' L: Way down on the butt of the tree is where that crinkle starts.

HA: So that's the way those things go. Here's a chair that I made when I was working up around Philadelphia Antiques. A man come to me, and I had some repairs p-to do to it, and he said, "I want you to fix that up," and I said, "What's the Matter with it?" "The need repairing on it and the upholstery." "I can do that." I used to do upholstery work ... made a repair magazine. I've still got a bunch of needles.

JL: A lot of curved needles?

HA: That's the small one, ten inches. I've got two or three around here and I can't find a hammer. Double pointed needles, mattress needles, and I don't know where their at. I can't seem to keep tva k of things but that's the way things go.

JL: Trumpy's was about the last place you worked?

HA: Yea, the last place I've worked here and I've got stuff around here that I haven't got near for twenty years. I've got the parts downstairs for a very nice wall cabinet. Come out square and about two inches shallow in the center. The center has a dome top, the sides have a shape like this, there is the dome top here. I copied it from an antique. Two of them was sold in New York. Nine hundred dollars apiece and that's been forty years ago. I've got the parts downstairs all ready to put together, the door, the frame, and everything. I'll get around to it. There's a swinging cradle.

RD: I noticed that.

HA: If:'s a doll cradle and it swings from the top of the swing. I made them one .p.

JL: They made full sized ones like that.

HA: I had one. My first baby was raised up under it... and removed something or other and broke part of it and I took it apart. I've still got some parts downstairs and I took it all apart. My wife told me onetime, when we moved down here, "What ever became of that cradle?" I said, "It's down here, all apart." She said, "When are you going to get it together?" I said, "One of these days." It's not together yet.

RD: Do you remember any particular boats you have worked on?

HA: The names of boats?

RD: Probably so many of them, I'm sure.

HA: I can't keep track of them. I used to make the half-models to go up to the drafting room and there was the layout, frames, and the planking. Just the model and the buck (.) drawings, whatever they are going to be. Then one or two I made the full model for. They were kind of given to the owner. They were not given, they were sold to them. Young John wasn't giving anything away.

JL: I was going to say, they were not giving anything away.

i`9A: I asked young John, when they were closing up the shop...They had a beautiful lunch of half-models, I asked him, I said, "John, is there any chance I can get a half-model, something to remember?" He said, "I'll remember you." He's still

remembering. I never got them. They got in touch with the owners and asked did they want to buy it? Some of them did and a lot of them didn't but there was a lot of people came in who were anxious to buy it and that's how they got them.

L: So that's how they got spread around from the shop?

HA: So that's that.

JE.: The place I was in, we had a lot of the workmen that used to work over to Mathis and Trumpy's come in and worked for us.

HA: It's here somewhere.

RD: What are you looking for?

HA: I'm looking for.. .That's the outside of a jewel box in walnut. That's solid walnut, dome top, horh\*owed out inside, and this is inlaid in ivory and that's the inside, see the inside, and the bottom of the tray and this is ...

JL: Piece of cracked wood.

HA: Walnut.

JL: Yea, cracked you got.