

Interview Log

Interviewee: J. Thomas Requard
Eleanor Requard

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BEGIN SIDE A

K.F.: Okay. Can I have you say your name so that I can make sure we're getting it on the record?

J.R.: J -- I'll just use J, Thomas Requard.

K.F.: Okay. And when were you born?

J.R.: July 4th, 1919. July 4th, my little minor claim to fame.

K.F.: Okay. And where were you born, Mr. Requard?

J.R.: Baltimore City.

K.F.: Okay.

J.R.: However, we soon moved to Baltimore County, and most of our life was there.

K.F.: Okay, all right. And what did your parents do?

J.R.: Well let's say generally real estate. My father was in real estate brokerage early, and then got into home building. And that continued until he died. But during that period, he built quite some rentals. Of course, I was with him. I was a little help. Shall I continue that line?

K.F.: Yeah, go ahead.

J.R.: Well after my father died, I continued building for a while, but then I had taken over a fair size number of rentals and acquired some more and with my uncle who is in charge of construction, also retired and we just continued a rental operation. And after Eleanor retired from the school system, she came to work along with me. And then we, and then we both -- then we sold out and both retired.

K.F.: Okay. Well let me ask you then you mentioned you had some background with boats. Can I ask you about those?

J.R.: Well in my father's business early on, he did some waterfront developing, and I used to go with him to those areas, and people would have row boats, and I would be playing with the row boats. But really the thing I like best, in those days they had the Tolchester boat -- Tolchester ferry -- ferry boat, I guess they called it more correctly, running. And my mother used to take me frequently to Tolchester. I'm sure we also were up to Betterton, probably all the way down to Chesapeake Beach.

K.F.: Okay. What was it like, what was Betterton like at that time when you were visiting?

J.R.: Betterton and Tolchester both had amusement parks. And, of course, nice sandy beaches and bathing or swimming. That was the big thing. I don't really remember any sea nettles around Tolchester, but up at Betterton in the fresh water there, there wouldn't have been any sea nettles. The one thing I remember about the old Tolchester was they had a little racer dip there which only dipped about 10 feet. So that didn't frighten me, I used to enjoy riding on that. But I've never learned to like any of the full size ones.

K.F.: And what was this?

J.R.: A racer dip. Roller coaster, I think they call them today.

K.F.: Oh, okay. And was Betterton and these beaches, were they really crowded? I mean was that the place to go on the bay?

J.R.: Oh, yeah. Both Betterton and Tolchester were very popular in their time, in their day. The bandstand from Tolchester is at the museum now, you know.

K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

J.R.: There is quite a nice large marina at Tolchester, but there isn't much of any town there now. But Betterton always was a small town along with the Betterton recreation area.

K.F.: Okay. I've been to Betterton, so --

J.R.: Huh?

K.F.: I've been to Betterton.

J.R.: Oh, yeah.

K.F.: So I recognize that at some point it had been quite the place to go.

J.R.: Uh-huh (affirmative).

K.F.: Okay. And so this was when you were a young man, or a teenager or --

J.R.: No. Child. Yeah.

K.F.: Okay. Well how did you meet you wife then?

J.R.: How did I meet my wife?

(Laughter.)

J.R.: Well let's just say a dancing place.

K.F.: A dancing place. I have to ask you to elaborate.

J.R.: Huh?

K.F.: I have to ask you to elaborate on that.

J.R.: Shut that off.

(Off the record.)

K.F.: Okay. Well about what year was this that you --

J.R.: That we met?

K.F.: Yeah. That she finally went out on a date with you.

J.R.: Oh, 1936.

K.F.: Okay, all right. So last week we had talked a bit about your early attempts to save Isabel and re-work some of the wood, and when it was in such poor condition. And I wanted to have you describe what that was like, trying to fix up that boat and learning as you go.

J.R.: Well it wasn't in terribly poor condition. It -- let's just say it was ready for a cycle of substantial maintenance. The varnish had darkened because it hadn't been cared for for a couple years, and the decks were pretty well cracked, but in those days, you used a heavy paint and periodically it had to be removed. We have some of her father's tools for that purpose still here. And just in ordinary course of time in those days with the canvas, the canvas would deteriorate and need to be replaced, and it was at that point the varnish might have deteriorated faster than normal. But anyway, I said to -- knowing nothing about it, I said I'd fix it up. So by trial and error, I eventually learned how to remove varnish and refinish it. But, of course, then the big jobs we -- as Eleanor told previously, we eventually moved up to Ungerman Boat Yard in Dundalk, and they did the re-canvassing. And, of course, we would do some varnishing inside and painting inside and things within our capabilities. But always the major jobs, of course, were done by boatyards.

K.F.: Well let me ask you about some of the trial and errors -- some of the trial and errors, the early ones. Can you tell me about some, a few that didn't work maybe?

J.R.: Well fortunately, they -- the errors were soon found out. I think I started scraping varnish with a penknife, and then I learned that you were to use a scraper. And then

finally somebody said -- I might've tried to sand it down, and finally somebody said well, you dummy, you use paint remover. Well I got some liquid paint remover and found out you don't use liquid paint remover because it runs everywhere and gets on your hands and burns you. Eventually, in using the paste-type paint remover, which is easier to handle and stays in place and works better. So we went on from there. That was the major thing.

K.F.: Okay. And I'm curious, some of the photos that we saw last week of you all when you were at the marina in Dundalk and fixing up the boat, what were your days like there? I'm very curious. It looked like you had made some friends with the people who worked at the marina and stuff. And I'm wondering if you can tell me about some of the people who worked there.

J.R.: Yeah, sure. We were only there maybe a couple of years, but being nearby, we were there every weekend, and I guess sometimes during the week too. The owner was a man named Ernie Chase. He was quite a boat racer. He and John Bramble, who had a little boatyard up in the harbor, Ernie Chase owned three or four nice mahogany speed boats, and John Bramble used to drive them for him. Ernie Chase, I don't know where his basic money came from, but at that time he also had a paint store on south Broadway. The manager was Charles Whiteford, a snippy dumpy little guy, and they had a watchman who was, I think, perhaps a retired waterman from up New England somewhere, a New England accent, and he was lame, but he was very nice person, we were very friendly with him. And they had Bozo the dog that we were -- and, of course, we got to know some of the people that kept their boats there. There was -- forget the guy's name, but he had a Skipjack there that was used as a pleasure boat. That guy went into the marine engine business. And I remember he put one in a boat, a real estate broker that we knew, Sewell, and he tells the story, he's -- cut away so much of the boat's framing, he used to run along watching the engine and it's kind of bobbing up and down. And I don't remember the fellow's name, but I think he had a couple of daughters, Charlotte and Sue, and he called the business Charsue Motors. Another interesting thing, this has little to do with pleasure boating, I guess, but at Ungerman's yard there, they had a Chinese junk that was owned by Charles Ripley. Was it Charles, what, Robert Ripley, I guess, the guy who wrote Believe It or Not, and he had an oddball guy lived on it, supposedly taken care of it. Of course, Ripley was never seen, and this guy didn't take care of it very well. I think Eleanor mentioned that her father had, after we -- at the time we bought Isabel from the family, the family gave us the star boat, which we had painted there. A little strange thing happened. It had a shed there, a boat was kept in or at least it was there at the time for repairs, and our little star boat was laying next to it. And the people who owned the boat that was in the shed were visiting there, and on the star boat, there was a canvas cover for the cockpit. And somebody had thrown a cigarette over, overboard and it landed on that canvas cover and burned a hole in it. So the boatyard apologized and said well we'll get you a new cover. So they sent it off and got us a new cover, and they had built the hole right in and stitched it up nicely. That's just a little humorous incident that went on. So eventually we moved the boat from Unger's there up to a boatyard at the foot of -- not at the foot, at the head of Hanover Street bridge, a boatyard that had been there for many years, Sam Marks, because they were engine specialists. And we went up there for the winter, and next spring, they put in the first new engine that we put in. And it was from

there that we went to Fairview. It must've been about '46 -- no, we were at Fairview before we got the new engine. But anyway, that brings us up to that point.

K.F.: Okay. So let me see if I got this straight. Did all the marinas have sort of a specialty that they -- a service that they provided? Is that why you would go to one and not another? You said that Marks had, they were engine specialists. And so --

J.R.: Well the truth of the matter is we had become dissatisfied with Unger's. I mean they took a little advantage of us. They charged -- let's just say they had high charges. And we, being sort of helpless, our work didn't get done until very late in the season, and we decided to --

(OFF THE RECORD BRIEFLY.)

C.B.: We can make these so that nobody will ever hear them. We're not going to --

K.F.: Yeah.

C.B.: Because you're intimidating yourself, I think --

J.R.: Well no, no. She's -- I don't intimidate myself. She intimidates me. She tells me to be careful.

C.B.: You'll be okay.

(Laughter.)

J.R.: Okay. Well generally, boatyards are not specialized. Some are, perhaps, well known for quality and a particular type service, and more likely known for bad service.

C.B.: Just like gas stations you take you car to, the same.

J.R.: That's right.

C.B.: You're helpless and they know what they're doing. So they take --

J.R.: Yeah, I guess that's --

E.R.: Well the only reason we left Mark's was because Barbara said he was so dirty.

J.R.: Yeah, and then we --

E.R.: And then he died. So --

J.R.: Okay, well that's a good -- we can go on from that if you want to continue the boatyard idea.

K.F.: Go ahead if you want to pick up --

J.R.: No, I mean you want to go back on record?

K.F.: It's on, go ahead.

J.R.: Huh?

K.F.: It's on.

J.R.: Oh, okay. Well Mark's, everything went very well. But that was right up in the city, and the air was so dirty, it was difficult to keep the boat clean or even get a proper paint job without getting a lot of soot in it and so on. So then we eventually, I guess in '47 or '48, '48 or '49, whatever, we went to Balco Yacht Company or Lynch Cove in the Dundalk area, which was more or less on the creek side, just around the -- around the corner from where Ungerman's was, but Ungerman's had gone out of business by that time. Actually, the pictures that I gave you, we had a picture of that Balco Yacht Company there. Balco happened to be right next door to the original Owen's plant. Anyway, we stayed there for quite a few years. Have to think where we went next. Oh, yeah, okay. When we built the house here in '58 to '59, we lived on the boat in the Spring of '59 while the house was being finished, and we went, took Isabel back to Balco that year, but that was such a long run that the following year, we took it to Oxford Boat Yard

for our regular work, and we were there for several years. At that point in 1967, we put in the new Chrysler engine. And then we tried Crockett's in Oxford for a couple years. My memory fails me a little on the sequence now. After Oxford we went up to Georgetown, all the way up the bay. That was an interesting thing there. Getting work done in boatyards, of course everybody wants their work done in May. April's too early and June is too late. So you learn to be real nice to these guys. Never question the bill, never question the work. If it isn't satisfactory, move on. So we went on a cruise with -- probably Classic Yacht Club, yeah. We were at Georgetown Yacht Basin, which joins the very nice Kitty Nighthouse Restaurant. We had a little problem on the deck, and the boatyard manager helped me repair it. So I timidly said are you taking any new customers? Yeah, he said sure. I said could you maybe take care of us in June? He said, oh, with an old boat like this, you don't want to wait for warm weather, we'll do it in May. So I thought I'd died and went to heaven. So we went to them for a couple years. And that was, of course, it was an adventure running that far back. But everything was satisfactory, but then came along the gasoline crisis, so that sort of ended that. I guess that's when we went to what was then Fluharty's in the Narrows. And that was very good when Buck and his two sons were running it. But then they sold out. Buck's brother had retired, and Buck wanted -- Buck wanted to more or less retire. And new people took over and we weren't too happy with them. So we had stopped in to -- somehow or other we had developed a leak, and we didn't want to go too far, so we went to Cutts to see if they would take care of it and they did. And they did a very good job on it, so we stayed with them a few years. Then in the normal course of events, we went to Oxford Boat Yard and stayed with them until Isabel went to the museum. And, of course, we still take our present boat there to Oxford Boat Yard.

K.F.: Well you mentioned that going from here to Georgetown to that boatyard was always an adventure. Why was that?

J.R.: Well it was so long. It was such a distance. It was about nine hours from the boat trip, and then we had to ferry one car there first, drive two cars there and leave one car, then come down here and then reverse that process to go back and retrieve the car when we brought the boat down here because I've never -- well I was going to say I've never operated the boat alone. That's not quite true. When we were here taking the boat to the boatyards at Oxford, I would take it alone that far and Eleanor would drive around and pick me up. But, of course, the distance like that, or when we went back to Baltimore at Balco, we had to do the car bit.

K.F.: And then you started mentioning some of the yacht clubs that you --

J.R.: Well in -- well when our father was ill and we were taking care of the boat, I guess it was understood that we would eventually take it over, and I remember our father was very, he was very interested and relatively active in the power squadron and encouraged me strongly to join the power squadron or take the power squadron courses and join the power squadron which we did in 1940 -- let's say '45 or '46. I think '45, and they met at Maryland Yacht Club, and we decided to join Maryland Yacht Club, which we did in 1946. And at that time, they were just -- Maryland Yacht Club was in the course of moving down from Baltimore to Fairview, and they had some new slips. So I -- I engaged a slip for us. That's when we went to Fairview, '46 after our spring work was done. The chairman of the membership committee at Maryland Yacht Club was a (indiscernible) man

who subsequently became commodore and subsequently became our brother-in-law and was a dear friend until he passed away some years ago. Well we were talking about yacht clubs, yes. I digressed a little bit.

K.F.: What are the benefits of joining the yacht club, or what were they at that time?

J.R.: I guess you'd say the greatest -- the main purpose of a yacht club was social, including the social aspect of the cruises. A group of boats would go together on the cruises. Usually in those days when we were active, usually around to other yacht clubs. They all had reciprocity. In later days, they would go to perhaps marinas as well as yacht clubs. Maybe even more so because with the expansion of boating, the yacht clubs would hardly have room for transients, and, of course, the commercial places were welcoming the transients. But in the yacht clubs, most of -- well many of them, I don't know whether most of them, always had nice dining facilities, dock facilities. You engaged in what was called dock cruising.

(Laughter.)

K.F.: And what was that?

J.R.: Well you lived on the boat more or less as if you had a summer home. You'd be there every weekend, and perhaps if you were working, if you had a limited vacation, you'd spend your vacation on your boat. Now at that time, of course, would be the time for extensive cruises. But then they had the various affairs at the yacht clubs, the boat races, and they'd have outdoor affairs like bull roasts, and of course usually a dance on Saturday night. And then, of course, most of the power squadrons meet at yacht clubs. And usually there's, after the course sessions, then there's a social hour or hours afterwards.

K.F.: And can you explain to me a little bit more about the power squadrons and what that was?

J.R.: Is.

K.F.: Okay.

J.R.: The power squadron was started by a Charles Chapman, somewhere up north, New York, I think, Long Island, to further wide spectrum the boating activity. By wide spectrum, I mean by teaching people how to use boats, how to preserve boats, how to enjoy boats. But one of their main aspects is on safety and following the rules of the road and that sort of thing. When we started, and I have -- several years ago I got a 50-year certificate, there were only about -- the courses were elementary piloting, advanced piloting, junior navigation and navigation which, of course, got into the teaching of full navigation that you could presumably navigate around the world. Which interested people took that just as a hobby, just as an interest in the thing. Basically advanced piloting and - - advanced piloting teach you what you really need to know for just local operation. And then at that time they had two other courses, seamanship which had to do with, I guess, little more advanced discussion of maintenance of boats, and knot work, docking, and probably had a little bit of weather along with that. And there was a motor mechanic's course. Subsequently they developed, they added a course on weather alone as a separate course. And I think since we've been -- after our active period, they've added several more. I don't know which others, but they've got a number of courses. Chapman wrote this book, which we have an old one here, but they're brought up to date periodically. Oh, and then of course they have rendezvous. Oh, and to sharpen navigation skills and so

on, they have two types of navigation contests. One is called a predicted log contest in which somehow or other you're given a time period to go from here to there, and you have no instruments or anything except your tachometer. And if you're real experienced, you know the speed of your boat and so on, but ahead of time, of course, you're allowed to calculate for tide and current, which will have an effect on it. So the person that comes closest to arriving at, not at the predicted time but within the predicted time, closest to the predicted time span wins that. And then there's -- that's predicted low. Then there's navigator's contests, and then I think that's operated around a course, maybe a triangular course, in which-- it's been so long since we were involved in anything like this, in fact, I never -- I never took -- got in any of these contests, I was not that technically minded. But what it did, I think you were not allowed to see your tachometer then, but you had to make -- it was almost sort of like an extended predicted log race. The person who made the course, came closest to what was supposed to be the objective, of course, won. But then they would have rendezvous. They typically, their rendezvous were at a place where the participants would bring their own food, and even their own food and tables and chairs and silver and everything else. That wasn't for us very much.

(Laughter.)

J.R.: But it did make it very accessible to people of lesser means. So that was a good thing about it. It was very democratic.

K.F.: Okay. So it sounds like it really opened up pleasure boating to a lot of people because it was going to teach them how to run their boats and --

J.R.: Keep them safe, yes.

K.F.: Keep them safe, okay. So it gave people the resources they need then to --

J.R.: When you think about it, there are so many things that you can do wrong dangerously, and of course the biggest danger is fire and explosion, and -- or getting caught out in bad weather. So it's a great organization.

K.F.: Okay. Well let's jump back to the yacht clubs for a second. And actually, I had a question. How much did it cost to join the yacht clubs back when you first started? Do you remember?

J.R.: Not really, but it was relatively nominal, relatively nominal. And in the yacht clubs with real estate, frankly, I don't know. Actually, we belong to Cambridge still, and the dues are probably about \$200 a year. Slips, I have no idea what they cost. I just see slip rents around in marinas for a moderate size boat probably around \$1,500 a year. So, but I'm not at all familiar with those figures. Cambridge is nominal. Maryland Yacht Club was -- they were relatively nominal. The yacht clubs would make their money on their dining room largely, and have outside events. They would charge admission for them. And, of course, they were designed as the non-profit affairs, although they do like to expand. They take a place like Annapolis Yacht Club where they've been many, many years, they've got almost a magnificent club house now. But now that's another aspect. Annapolis Yacht Club, Cambridge Yacht Club and Miles River Yacht Club, these are very largely community social centers. Very, to use a crude term, high class community social centers. Lots of the members don't even have a boat. Of course, they're probably looking for rides on them -- with members who do have boats.

K.F.: Okay. Well that brings up another question that I had. When you first started joining the yacht clubs, what were the types of people who were members of the yacht clubs?

J.R.: From the ridiculous to the sublime.

K.F.: Okay. Who were some of the friends that you met through the yacht clubs?

J.R.: Really such a variety that it's hard to -- one of the earliest people would be Paul and -- I've forgotten his name. Paul -- oh, I was thinking of -- all right, we met, we met -- we actually went and -- when we started at Maryland Yacht Club, we had already met quite a few, mostly relatively young people at the power squadron meetings, then at the Baltimore Club House. When we went to Fairview, some of them were there.

Incidentally, not all people taking power squadron courses have boats. A lot of them are interested for all sorts of reasons, maybe with the intention of eventually getting a boat, or maybe going out when they're invited for boat rides, or just plain interested in water. But when we got to Maryland Yacht Club, we did become very friendly with the people who kept their boat right next to us. It was Paul Flaugherly had the 40-foot wheeler that you have the picture of. Actually there was a boat dealer who's active in the club, of course. He's a nice guy but, he was selling boats. But it just happened that he had this boat for sale, this wheeler docked next to us, and we had these prospects, this nice old couple. Clarence asked us if we would go out and help entertain them. And we thought well what would we do with this nice dignified old lady and gentleman? But we found out they liked fun as much as anybody else.

(Laughter.)

J.R.: Leave it at that. We became -- anyway, next to us we became very close friends with them. He was the treasurer of the Sun Paper. If I don't make this too long, Paul had a great sense of humor, and something he would've loved, when he died a few years after that, of course, there was a big funeral at one of the Catholic churches downtown, and we were all in a procession going slowly through the city. We were stopped for a traffic light. And one little colored kid called into the window, who's supposed to have died? Paul would have loved that.

(Laughter.)

J.R.: Anyway, another family there, couple we became quite friendly with was Walter Wilkinson, who was a very successful commercial artist. They were older people too, but we became, well all of our life, we had no children so -- and fortunately, we had a little more means than the average young people. We were mostly with older people all of our life. So Walter and Paul were good friends, and we were good friends with both of them. In fact, when we moved here, we all came down here and on Walter's boat, they had a fast Chris Craft and put them up here. I think we had to drag mattresses out of somewhere, and it blew like terrible that night, but that's digressing. You had people anywhere from, at Maryland Yacht Club, with relatively simple boats, small boats all the way up to quite wealthy people. It was August Stinger who had a huge marine derrick in the harbor, he had a 46-foot boat, Stewart Mitchell who was a big roads contractor had a big Chris Craft there, Neil McCartal who had a stationery business and became controller of the city, he was son of a politician obviously. Jack Hubbard was a Jewish -- had a Jewish metal manufacturing plant, he had a nice bit boat. There were mostly gentiles, but a few Jewish people there all very friendly together. I mean no question of any discrimination or

anything of that sort. In fact, there was little or no discrimination between economic classes. Everybody was friendly with each other, everybody had their own friends. So what else?

K.F.: Well I'm wondering, the people that you met through the yacht club, did it help you in your own business?

J.R.: No.

K.F.: No?

J.R.: No.

K.F.: Sometimes those social connections, you know, go through --

J.R.: I understand what you're thinking about, but I can't think of any instance where anybody called on me commercially, we'll put it that way, for anything, either business or personal. Actually, the only instance I can think of offhand, the one chap worked for a millwork company, and I knew that, and we talked, it was called Ready-Built Fireplace Company, and I bought the mantles for the fireplaces here from him. But he, I went to him, he didn't come to me. No, nobody was there trying to sell anything that I was aware of.

K.F.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Well let's talk about some of the politics of the yacht club. (Laughter.)

K.F.: And, first, maybe you better lay out, you know, how you get voted in or whatever, and who's who and the various roles you can have in the yacht club just so we know, and in the future, people listening to this will know.

J.R.: Well at Maryland Yacht Club, you needed a -- I guess you needed a sponsor, but sponsors were easy to get unless there was something wrong with you, they were glad to have new members. I mean there was no limit on the membership. And if you look at this old Catch Anchor here, and then look at the membership list, you can see how many they had. The fleet was huge at that time. If you were there and had a lot of friends, you would become known, of course. If you helped out in the various affairs, that would help. And outside of that, I don't know how you would go about actually politicking. For some peculiar reason, Seral Mann, who as I said was membership chairman at that time, he brought me, and he was also vice commodore at that time. So the year that I came -- next year I came in, he asked me to be his fleet captain. We had a nice boat, and Seral was a very successful and strict businessman, he probably wanted somebody that he knew that he could control, because I was just around 30 at that time. So I was his fleet captain. I forget the sequence of this. Somewhere along the line, I was -- because they had to find somebody who would do it, I was the editor of Catch Anchor, got this thing together. Of course, it was a guide, and you'd have a committee and that sort of thing. Was I fleet captain the next year or -- okay, all right. The next year, a commodore came in who was sort of controversial. The board didn't like him too much, and he wouldn't --

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

J.R.: -- and ordinarily you go up the line. So I run for rear commodore, but I was still so young, that somebody else, one of the members, in fact, he was one of the race drivers who was very, very popular, he decided he wanted to be rear commodore. So, of course, if there's a two-man race, naturally I lost. No, no, no, no. I ran against somebody and I won, rear -- I was rear commodore for one year. Then when it came to vice commodore,

then this event happened. Somebody else ran in and he was older and more popular, and so on. So that was that. But I've been commodore of two others.

K.F.: Well let me interrupt you for one second and ask you two questions. What does a rear commodore do and a vice commodore do?

J.R.: Essentially, the vice commodore and rear commodore do very little. They are waiting to become commodore.

K.F.: Okay.

J.R.: But they -- well they would be particularly active in club events that need some activity. The fleet captain really has a job to do. He, with consultation with the commodore and the board, they just decide on the places to go on the cruise, cruises, and perhaps rendezvous. I don't remember Maryland Yacht Club having any rendezvous, but they had an annual cruise. And then it would be the fleet captain's job to visit these places that they contemplate the cruise, and make arrangements for slips and all accommodations.

K.F.: So as the fleet captain then, you got to see a lot of other marinas and places on the bay.

J.R.: Yeah, all the way down to Solomon's and all the way up to Northeast. I think one time when I first went to Solomon's -- up to Northeast, couple others, Seral and a friend, that was before he was our brother-in-law, and another couple went up with us in our car, and I drove 40 miles or so home in a terrible snow storm. Anyway, that's what you call anecdotes.

K.F.: Yup, that's what we're looking for, anecdotes.

J.R.: Okay, go ahead.

K.F.: You said the commodore was controversial. In what way?

J.R.: What would make -- I don't really remember. Maybe it wasn't so much that they didn't like him, they didn't like the person that he was proposing for a fleet captain. I've forgotten. That's been, you know, back here in the 50's.

K.F.: Okay. All right, so now we've got the structure of the various jobs in the yacht club. Does someone have to nominate you to be commodore, or do you just decide you want to run or something?

J.R.: Well the club would have a nominate.

K.F.: Nominate?

J.R.: Nominating committee. Yeah. Nominating committee. I suppose if you were politicking, you would shmooze with those guys, but I didn't. Just Seral picked me. That was it. Now a different set of circumstances, we told you the history of the way the Classic Yacht Club started.

K.F.: No, you haven't told us how that got started.

E.R.: You told me, not Kelly. Tell her.

J.R.: Well, okay. In 1969, prior to 1969, around that area, a local resident, Bob Lamden, who was an aggressive young man, fairly young man at that time, 40's I guess, put out a little advertising magazine called The Pinnacle. And in order to make it interesting, he had yachting stories in it and all sort of boating stories. And then he concocted the idea as a thing to create interest in the magazine to have a classic yacht club -- classic boat contest. And he somehow or another got the notices around everywhere. And the first classic yacht contest which he sponsored was held on the Choptank River at

the bridge at what is now, I think, called the Ferryboat Marina. We have a picture of that which Ceres has. But it was probably at least 30, maybe as many as 40 boats turned out. And Bob donated all the prizes. He had organized the whole idea as they would be -- the boats would be in classes based on size. I think there were three classes, and he gave, I think, first, second, third prize in each class. They had judges, people who were knowledgeable boating people. One of them was Bill Mathews, who had been a past commander of the Patapsco River Power Squadron, and who also had a little television on for a while called Six Bells on WMAR. And I forget who the other judges were, but they were knowledgeable people. And, of course, in our class, we won first prize. That was a very happy event. So he had it sponsored to begin in 1970 at Maryland Yacht Club, which you have a picture, Ceres has a picture of that. So then in 1971, I guess talk of staying together had started at that time. So in 1971, he had a rendezvous at his own home on Solitude Creek, I think it is, off of -- yeah, I'm pretty sure, Solitude Creek off of Broad Creek, and Ceres has pictures of the rendezvous there. And we just got together and had a club, started in '71. So Bob asked me to be first commodore, but that didn't seem right, so everybody agreed he should be first commodore. So he was commodore for the end of that year and then '72 and '73, I was vice commodore. So and their term was two years, so '74 and '75 I was commodore of Classic Yacht Club. And Bill Shelfenbine -- no, Grant Hood was fleet captain, and then Bill Shelfenbine. But that's -- at the same time, I was on the way up in Poplar Island's Yacht Club. So by that time, immediately following this in '76 and '77, I was commodore of Poplar Island's Yacht Club. Now that's a yacht club similar to Classic Yacht Club in that neither had real estate, but Poplar Island started out on real estate, let's put it that way, on Poplar Island as sort of a semi-commercial yacht club. And for various reasons, the owner, then owner of Poplar Island sold it and the club had to move off. But by this time, there had been such a camaraderie, if that's the correct word, developed between this group of people coming from both the Eastern Shore and the Western Shore that they decided they should stay together. And one of the active people, Dan Long, had a big home on Miles River, called everybody together there for a gathering, and Poplar Island started. That was two or three years, three or four years before we came in. We came in in 1966. And there was only one member came in prior to us. At this point, only one member -- no commodore living prior to my term, prior to me. But anyway, so -- be a pun to call it a floating yacht club, but it's well enough organized that we have -- there's a commodore's cocktail party and luncheon every spring.. They have regular officers, and the fleet captain arranges the rendezvous, and then a mid-winter party usually around Christmas, a dance and banquet and a formal affair, which probably is pretty unusual for yacht clubs. Oh, and they also have an annual cruise. All right, now it's up to two annual cruises. When I was -- when we were real active, it was always one annual cruise, and that was usually around, this is around the upper bay here. Since that time, the faster boats and braver people, now they extend it usually to go to Tides Inn on -- but anyway, that's -- if you will, a sort of an elitist club. It's mostly very well-to-do people, and it's limited to 60 couples, except the widows or widowers can remain, and I think we have at least one-third as many widows as we do have active members, I mean full members, not active members. So that's a very nice club and they have very nice affairs. Now they're usually at, maybe perhaps half the time or maybe a little more, on some member's home on the water. And now they even, after a few bad

experiences with storms, they always have a tent. So it's very nice, and people, well it got so popular that everybody was trying to bring their friends in, with or without a boat, I passed a rule that you had to have a boat that you could sleep on. You don't have to keep it, but you had to start out that way anyway.

K.F.: Okay. Well I know Ceres was interested in the connection between the Classic Yacht Club and the revival of interest in some of these older boats. And when did this revival of interest start?

J.R.: Well really, I don't know of any -- I did not then know of any other activity, organized activity that way. Bob Layman's idea was here. Now since, in recent years, I've learned of the -- they call it the Antique and Classic Yacht Club, which is actually a national organization. They seem to -- that seems to have been started around smaller boats, those beautiful mahogany runabouts that I'd love to have when I'm too old to have any more now. Too much maintenance. But they have larger boats also. The Classic Yacht Club started here, and that attracted almost entirely large boats, but then a few smaller boats and a few of the owners of the large boats also had small boats. Crazy people like us would have more than one boat. So as you may know, after we donated Isabel, we were without a boat for a couple years, and I finally persuaded Eleanor to let me -- well that's another story. We always admired the local workboats that run through the water so pretty. We were going to try to find one of those. I'll make the story shorter. We couldn't find anything that could be at all comfortable. We even looked at one down in Virginia, a manufacturer that would be -- that would've put in accommodations until it got to the point that he wasn't going to put a door on the head, just a curtain, and Eleanor said no way. So we went at one of the boat shows at Easton, we saw these Grady White boats. So this 28-foot boat has everything you need for two people. It's a very nice boat. We don't use it much, but I said to Eleanor the other day, I'm like the kids at the museum on these kids' boats there. I just -- even if I don't use it, I love having it. So where were we?

K.F.: Well we were just discussing, you know, classic boats and the revival. What do you think the interest is for this revival? Why do you think people are so --

J.R.: Well we are no longer active because -- well we no longer have a classic boat, but that's really hardly the reason. All of our friends died of . At the present membership, I don't think we would know more than two, possibly three people, and they are newer boats, but they're still within the limitation -- I think the limitation's got to be 25 years or more. But I think now they accept fiberglass too because fiberglass is over 25 years old now. And it's still going, but we have no, we're not brave enough to run any distances to rendezvous in our small boat, and I don't know whether our new boat would be too welcome, so we have dropped out for just practical reasons.

K.F.: Right. Well what about the general public? It seems like there's a big interest now in some of the classical boats.

J.R.: Out of all the shows, people love them. And at the boat shows at the museum, both the shows, the antique and classic show there, and whatever other -- oh, and when they had the wooden boat show there, and even the other shows, people admire Isabel tremendously. We sort of size people up, and those that are sincerely interested rather than merely curious, we invite aboard, and you would think they had an audience with the queen when we take them inside, and everybody oh's and ah's over it. But an interesting

thing there is this always gives them an opportunity to tell us about their boat. But it's -- helping with the maintenance there, and we are, at the museum, we are both volunteers and (indiscernible). But we're specialized. We only work on Isabel. But as I say, every, every show, every opportunity, as you can see in the pictures we've given Ceres, there's always large audiences. Everybody is interested. Of course, I digress a little. The reason we're so happy to have Isabel at the museum is, of course it's an ego trip, but having no family, we would have nobody to leave it to. And over the years, we've observed people relatively unfamiliar with boats, maybe they had some little boat or other, and they admire, they want a big boat, and they think they can get an old boat cheap. And they don't know what they've gotten into. I mean they -- it might be very defective to start with, unless they've had a survey, but even so, the maintenance of an old boat is tremendous. They may or may not have the skill to do it themselves, but after a while, like me, you run out of strength. And it just goes to pieces. So actually the agreement with the museum was that it was a permanent exhibit, and we're very happy with that.

K.F.: Ceres, did you have any questions you wanted to ask?

C.B.: Do you think -- one thing when we're talking about classic boats, do you think the boats that are built today will become classics, or is there a difference? Or what is the difference? What makes a classic boat?

J.R.: I think there's a whole different -- people that approach, probably in sociology, there would probably be a different word for it. But the competition between people way back was not so much who had the biggest boat, but who had the best boat, who had the prettiest boat, who kept his varnish up the best. Really the whole boating fraternity was like -- the classic idea is now to maintain the boat, and have it pretty and comfortable and maintain it. Today, the idea is pretty much who has the biggest boat and/or the fastest boat. Obviously, the newer ones have so many amenities that they are more comfortable in many ways, perhaps even safer. But those of us who like the old ones, we find very few of them pretty. It's hard to -- it's like they designed the accommodations and utility they wanted, they then built a boat around it. So I'd hesitate to guess on that question.

C.B.: And then what -- what are your thoughts on the Chesapeake Bay? Have you sailed or cruised other places, or has this always been your home port? And why is the Chesapeake so attractive to people, do you think?

J.R.: What I'm hesitating on, somebody mentioned that extraneously, is that the word? The other day, somebody -- who were we talking to? I don't remember, but he boated elsewhere, and he just wished that he could be on the bay because there are so many places to go, such a variety of places to go and, particularly, safely. This person was -- yes, I think it was one of the visitors on the Isabel. He had had -- in fact, he was from San Francisco. And he said all you can do is sail out of the bay onto the ocean. There aren't any nice places to go. That's what it was. And, in fact, the interesting thing was I think we had two visitors from California that day. But he said he'd loved to have been boating on a place like the bay with all the rivers and anchorages and nice places to visit, even historical places and so on.

C.B.: Do you have a favorite memory, or a favorite story, or anything that you'd like to tell us so that we have it, that we haven't asked?

J.R.: Right offhand, I can't think of anything.

K.F.: Well let me ask you, is Bob Landon still alive?

J.R.: The last I heard, Bob -- he has an interesting story too. He was a stationery salesman, I think, not in a store, but sold wholesale stationery, I think. And he had this nice boat, 38 foot or so, maybe 40. I don't know whether it was his idea. I guess, anyway -- somehow he was the first -- did he buy it from Jim Heikus or sell it to Jim Heikus? Well anyway, he was, I think, the first owner of the Patriot. He bought this commercial boat in, I think it was in the -- a shrimp boat on the west side of Florida and brought it up here and converted it, got the idea of a cruise boat. Yeah, that's what it was, at St. Michaels, and started the Patriot cruise boat. That was a lot smaller than the present one. And then after the development of Harborplace, he got another boat, a larger boat and got the concession to have a cruise boat in the harbor. And I think then he sold the original small boat to Jim Heikus, or did he have two of them. I think he had two, and he left one here. And over the winter months, he'd take one to Jupiter, Florida and run a cruise business there. But then he eventually sold this smaller one, and he had a large one built, a very fine one which is operating in the harbor today. And I think he had a water taxi too for a while. But I think he may be retired now. He's younger than I, but that doesn't make him young. And I think they had a home, they had sold their place here and had a home in, not Fells Point -- Federal Hill in Baltimore near the harbor, very nice area, an old area that's been restored. And he used to take one boat to Florida and bring it back. I've forgot all the details. He's probably retired now. A friend of ours talks of going to Florida and playing golf with Bob, Bob Landon. I mean those guys, I don't know, they maybe had a better idea than I had. But anyway, Bob was a real nice person, and we were always very fond of him.

K.F.: Anything else any of you want to add?

J.R.: Oh, back to boatyards, I don't remember whether you touched on this with Eleanor, you started off talking about the lack of boat yards and marinas. Actually, I think Eleanor discovered a point, an article in The Pinnacle where how few boat marinas there were. Thirty years ago, this was written in '70, 30 years, that would be 1940, there were only about 78 marinas serviced the entire Chesapeake Bay. Then he goes on to say in this article "yesterday's yachtsman was not concerned with the dockside extras of restaurant, pool, motel, et al. His demands were for the boat itself, that she be cared for when he was at shore, and in cruising shape when he was ready to cast off. Yesterday's luxury sport has come within credit card reach of the bulk of Americans in the middle class," and so forth. "And the growing numbers afloat, marina operations have changed drastically. As one operator amply phrased it, running a successful marina today is basically handling the individual boatman," and so forth. An interesting article, a book by Ralph Willey who was one of the early boat builders and boatyards in Oxford which is now -- they now sold out to Cutts and Case, about boat building. Ralph says in one of his sections there he saw how all the standard boat builders would lose money and they didn't know they lost it until it was all gone. So he decided he had to do something different, he had to build a different type of boat, which he did, actually on -- I don't, we have a picture of one of his boats, but it's so far off, and it's not a good picture, but he built, he had a different design and was very successful with it, and he built both sailboats and powerboats and those that are still around have a very good reputation. Oh, but anyway, we were talking on this thing, originally it started out that if you bought gas, you could stay overnight free. Then somebody got the idea that you could charge for that. And then this article in The

Pinnacle started saying, it mentions 10 or 15 cents a foot. Well I think before that, they had a flat \$2, he went up maybe to five. And then somebody got the idea of this charging per foot, and it's gone from there up until it's virtually a fair-sized boat. Virtually it's as expensive to stay in a nice marina as it is to stay in a motel, which not only do they charge you by the foot, then they add an additional charge for electric if you connect to the electric, which of course everybody has to. Electric, funny little incident, anecdote, if you will, at Maryland Yacht Club, I don't think -- they only put in here and there an electric socket at Fairview in the 1945 or six when that was. And by that time, everybody was starting to use appliances. And somebody would be plugged in, and when nobody was looking, somebody else would unplug him and put theirs in, there'd be some nasty little arguments about that. So I think the club eventually had to put in more electric. Probably one of the first nice expanded facilities that we remember was Great Oak up at Fairlee Creek, that's north of the Chester River, about half way between the Chester River and the Sassafras River. A wealthy man, storm window manufacturer, Frank Russell, I think he had a farm there with a mansion, with a big brick mansion house on it, and he built this marina, and a motel, and I think they had a little golf course with it and a swimming pool, and of course the restaurant, and he catered to -- well he charged high prices and catered to the high class clientele, which of course there was a lot of in Sassafras. And it's -- since our active time, it's apparently come down a level or two and expanded, and so the prices are not as high, but I'm sure it's still a very nice place. Another interesting thing, it's almost self-obvious, but the geographical areas that the boating people would be from, the Sassafras River, you know where the Sassafras is, up Georgetown, I would just hazard a guess that at least half the boats there belong to people from Delaware or Pennsylvania. At any rate, a great many of them. Down around West River, you'll have a lot of people from Washington. Here you've got local people, but you've got -- this area, one of the things we noticed most a lot of people from Wilmington.

K.F.: Okay.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

(END OF INTERVIEW.)