

Interview Log

Interviewee: Larry Lauterbach

Tape #: OH166

Interviewer: Kelly Feltault
Ceres Bainbridge

of Tapes: 1

Date: March 29, 2001

of Sides: 2

Location:

Topic: Recreation on the Bay/Charter Fishing Project

Corresponding Photography Log #:

Comments: While Mr. Lauterbach's voice is loud, I had some difficulty discerning some words, especially technical ones, due to his speech patterns.

BEGIN SIDE A

C.B.: Is that little fan heater on?

K.F.: Is that on?

L.L.: It comes and goes on.

C.B.: Oh, okay.

L.L.: Maybe if I close this door - will you get mad if I close the door?

C.B.: Have to get over it.

L.L.: We can turn it off. Are you all too cool?

K.F.: Yeah, that would be great.

C.B.: No, I'm not cool. I just was thinking the -

L.L.: if it's comfortable, it won't come on.

C.B.: You know, the vibration just -

L.L.: Okay, I'm sorry, you can come back here.

C.B.: Look, she's up.

L.L.: You want to come in?

KR: All right. Let me have you say your name and the date.

L.L.: Okay. It's Larry - Larry Lauterbach, it's March the 28th, 2001.

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

L.L.: I was born in Portsmouth, Virginia.

K.F.: Oh, okay. Great. And how did you get into this sport?

L.L.: I was born into the sport. My father did it.

K.F.: Oh, really.

L.L.: He started designing and building race boats in 1947, the year I was born. And he has been - he competed in the 50's as a driver, and then I started racing in the early 60's, I've been racing ever since. I've been building them ever since the early 60's. I started working with him in 1963, and we worked together for 18 years, and then he kind of semi-retired, and I just - also at the time, I was involved with a young lady who took a job in Annapolis, so I moved up here and built a shop up here, but I had my own shop down there at the time. I've been on, since 1982, been in business for myself.

K.F.: Okay. And what was your dad's name?

L.L.: Henry Lauterbach.

K.F.: Henry Lauterbach. Okay, all right. And well what did you learn from your dad? I mean how did he -

L.L.: Basically, everything I know. But my dad came from the old school, and came up through the depression, and he was self-taught, so he assumed that everybody should be self taught. So he never took me ^{by} my hand and said let me show you how to do anything. But what I have learned as far as boat building, boat design, I picked up from watching my dad, and then just working with him for 18 years. And then that's just the way he did things. If you didn't, if you didn't pick it up then, you know, shame on you because he felt everybody should be the same as him, you know. My dad's a genius. He's - he's a living legend. And he's, he quit high school in his 12th year, senior year, had like four months to go and just decided he wanted to quit school and go building boats. But he is, by far, the smartest man that I know and ever met. He - I'm still I awe sometimes the things he can do, and the things that he knows and it's just - and he was

self-taught. My father reads a lot. He read a lot about ergonomics, and studied a lot. He knows a lot about - he's very good at algebra and geometry and all that. Studied angles and figures and all that. And when he started designing boats, he figured out a formula from what he had studied and all that would work and been very successful. The most successful hydroplane designer in the world, by far. I mean his boats - our boats, I keep saying his because I worked with him for 18 years and still, I still carry on the Lauterbach name. I don't put Larry Lauterbach on, I put Lauterbach on, because we've always been Lauterbach Custom Boats, and we won over 300 national championships and world records. I mean there's a, there is a - a friend of ours, Tommy Daease (phonetic), has put facts and figures together, all the boats we have built, built over 200 and some boats, and all the title we won, records we've set and all that, so it's just nobody can come close to it. Pretty proud of that.

K.F.: Yeah, I mean that's an amazing family legacy really. When your dad started out in this business, I mean how many boat designers of this kind were -

L.L.: There's been over the years a handful that were really - probably only been like three or four who did it full time. Like my dad's done it full time all his life. I've done it full time, that's all I've done all my life, is build and design race boats. There's only been like two or three that have done that. There have been some part-time boat builders, people that had other income that would go build a race boat, you know, and then be successful at it, have a fairly good design on it. But there was a gentleman named Ron Jones, and then his son, Ron Jones, Junior, took over, they're - west coast, they were full-time boat builders. And there was a Les Dodacre (phonetic) in Detroit. And then his son, John, came along and built boats for about 10 years, and John got out and found that there was no money to be made in race boats. And then my dad, that's about it. We had some part-time boat builders. Kelsons and Carlsons and Sueys (phonetic) on the east coast. Dick Sucky. But there's only been about three or four of us that did it full time for a living. And that's probably why we have been as successful as we have. We've devoted our whole life to designing and building race boats.

K.F.: Right. I'm sure you guys came up with innovation on the design. Can you talk to us about some of that?

L.L.: Yeah. It's - as the years went on, it's - the propellers back then weren't what we are today. I mean props now are a big issue, a big development. Back - we had to work on the boats to make them faster because we were stuck with one propeller, and that was an Italian, we got them all out of Italy. Everybody bought a set of propellers. So we had to work on the boat. So we came up with the bevel sponsons, which wouldn't mean a thing to you, but we beveled the inside area of the sponsons so it slides through the corners easier, and it made the boats turn a lot better. So then we went to, I was moving - from up under the boat to the back of the boat. And then we're not ashamed to look at somebody else's stuff too. If we get beat by somebody, we're going to look at their stuff and see what they're doing and pick up some of their innovations. So the cab over was - I wouldn't say it was a - it was a move because the cars with the re-engines, the Indianapolis cars were always roadsters, and all of the sudden, they went to a re-engine car. And I think the boat people felt the boat should be the same way. We have to go to re-engine boats. Now my dad was a hard-headed German. He said that the boat doesn't know where in the hell the driver's sitting. And they don't. It's a piece of wood, and if

you balance it out, it doesn't know whether the motor's in the front or the back. But he was just stubborn enough, I'm not going to build a cab over boat. We don't need it, you know, and we had the prettiest boats. We could still beat the cab over with our boats, I'll run with them, you know. But it seemed like the cab overs were easier to drive, so he newer drivers coming along, they could adapt quicker to the re-engine boats, so then I started building, and then, oh, 10, 12 years ago, they mandated these reinforced cockpits where you had to strap the drivers in. Let me back up a little bit. The unlimited boats back in the mid-80's, Bernie Little, Ms. Budweiser, we were killing a lot of drivers in unlimited boats. We were knocking two or three a year off. In fact, we had about four or five killed in one year. So they came up with an idea of strapping the driver in and let them ride it out, because they noticed every time the boat crashed, the cockpit area wasn't hurt, but the boat was tore up. But the way the driver sat was usually, 9 out of 10 times, there was no damage there. They said well let's strap the driver in, let him ride it out. Especially up front. If the driver's sitting in the back, certainly that's where the boat always breaks off and all. So with the cab over boats, they decided let's strap the driver in. And they never had an accident with a driver strapped in until Bernie Little came up, let's put a capsule on him, a canopy and cover him up, fully encapsulate the driver. Therefore, if he is, if he does crash, well then the canopy will protect the driver as well. So that was a great innovation. And you got Jim Masero (phonetic) and Bernie Little's team, Ms. Budweiser team, Jim Masero had the Atlas Van Lines team at that time for strapping drivers in and building a cockpit that would withstand a crash, and then encapsulate the driver. Then they were crashing boats, and drivers were walking away, and we still expect to. So then myself, personally, I started doing it in smaller boats. I said well - 'cause I was driving the bigger boats and like the feel of being encapsulated. I felt safe and secure. So I started doing it on my boats. And then other builders have followed suit now, but most of them are just putting open cockpits. They would stick a cell on a boat and strap a driver in, but he wasn't covered up. And I said no, if I'm going to do it in my boat, I want to do it all the way. So I fully encapsulated my boats and put a trap door on the bottom so the driver can get out if he's upside down. We're breathing air all the time now, so safety innovations have come a long ways, and I was pretty proud to be part of that in the limited boats. The unlimited boats was where we got the ideas from, but we incorporated into the smaller boats. And then the cab overs, like I said, they're easier to drive. I don't think they're any faster, but they are easier to drive. And now they seem to be safer because we can encapsulate the driver. You can't encapsulate a driver sitting behind the wheel. That's why my boat was outdated when I built the newer boats though. So safety features have come a long ways. I lost a brother in this boat by not being strapped in and covered up. Should've walked away from the accident. I mean the boat landed right side up again. Had he been strapped in, he wouldn't have gotten hurt. So that's when, and I was - at the time, I was already involved with unlimited hydroplanes and driving the encapsulated boats. So then I thought well, you know, we need to do something for the smaller boats_ ^{And} that's when ^I started - when you lose a brother in this boat, it hits home, I guess. And you never get over it. You get around it. But you can try to - you kind of get going with life and I thought well, let's make these boats, the smaller boats safer. So I started doing that. And so far, we've - it's come, we've come a long ways. Haven't had any problems, as far as with fatalities.

K.F.: Right, right.

L.L.: So.

C.B.: How about materials changing?

L.L.: Oh, materials have come a long ways. I don't know if it's for the better or not. You know, the older boats were built out of spruce framing and marine plywoods, mahogany and birch plywoods covering it all. They were actually fun, the boats, to build. Now the newer boats are all composite materials, carbon fibers, and I buy these honeycomb fiber panels from Boeing Aircraft, and we build the sill sections out of that. I have to make the sponsons and the mould out of carbon fiber. You've got to have vacuum systems. And it's become very high tech and very expensive. It's put the average racer out of business. They can't afford to buy them. And the people still building wooden boats, but most of them, to be competitive, you've got to have composite boats. You can crash these composite boats and sometimes race them the next day, where a wooden boat, if you crashed it, it would just tear it all to pieces, you'd have to wait weeks to get it repaired, you know. So now we, like I say, we are using a lot of composite materials, and epoxy glues over the old well wood powder glue - excuse me - and everything costs so much now, the canopies, all the safety features runs the cost of the boat up probably 8 to \$10,000 as far as the safety features on a boat now. We cry, we got to - we don't have to have the canopies, but if you're going to strap a driver in, I want to cover him up. You know, I don't, I don't trust not covering a driver up. Now there are guys who are crashing these boats and surviving without a canopy, but I don't like it, you know. If you're going to do it, do it all. So my boats cost more than probably another person's boat would cost because I won't build one without all the safety features on it.

C.B.: What kind of range is that?

L.L.: Oh, an 18 foot 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ modified complete boat would run. about 50, 55,000. Those - odd boats, I'm talking just for the hull; no engines, no trailers, and the boats, Bobby Murry's boat ran about 65,000. Then he put a \$35,000 engine in there, and a \$12,000 trailer, and \$2,000 propellers. I mean it's just escalated the cost of racing where the average person can't really afford it, to do it competitive. We still got guys we were racing in the old wooden boats, and you know, running on a limited budget, and they're there to make the feel, more or less. You know, they have fun. They party and socialize and meet all the people. They are involved in the sport, but they're not a contender to win.

C.B.: And how does one become competitive then? Where does - is it only rich people, or is it sponsorship, or what -

L.L.: Well, I hate to say it, but yeah. Only the people that can afford to buy the best are going to be competitive. I mean that's - I mean I hate to say that. That's the way it is. But, fortunately, we have folks who are still happy just being there and being a third or fourth-place boat. I mean it takes all kinds to make this sport run. So it's the same thing in any competitive organization. Nascar has their high-finance teams, and the same ones, you look, you got 43 cars there every week, but only have four drivers win all the races because they're the best financed teams. Money, money wins. (Dog barking.) My dog wants outside. (Laughter.) Let me let her out. You want to go out? Come here. (OFF RECORD.)

K.F.: Well we were talking about the corporate sponsorship -

L.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

K.F.: -- of some of the teams. How do you get a corporate sponsorship?

L.L.: It's difficult, especially in the smaller classes. It's kind of hard because we don't have television coverage. And first thing, when you go to a corporate sponsor looking for some help, they'll ask well how much TV time do you have, you know. And that's the first thing. Now the larger boats that I race, the unlimited boats, when I drove for R.J. Reynolds Tobacco with the Winston Eagle and all, they had - all of our races were delayed telecast on ESPN. I mean you can't - it's hard to show a boat race live because of the weather conditions, or if you have an accident, you got 35 to 45 minutes of downtime getting the boat out of the water and all. So it's not like Nascar where they put a hook on it and drag the car to the pits and keep running around the track. Boats, you got to shut the whole racecourse down so rescue teams can get to it and all.

So what they'll do, they'll have a filming crew come in and they'll film a race, and then they'll edit it down to a one-hour program, just show the highlights of each -- and all. And we're doing that now with the limited boats. But like I said, they're on Speed Vision, which not everybody gets, and so it's hard to get a corporate sponsor. Now it helps a person like myself that has been around so long that I've had the opportunity to meet a lot of people, I've been very successful with what I've done. So, naturally, if you've got a good record, track record, well then they - everybody likes to be with the winner. So it's easy for a winner to get a sponsor as opposed to a newcomer coming to the sport. So, you know, most of these race boats are business people who just want to be involved, and they buy their own boat and put their own company name on there, basically. We've got some outside help with our program, but he's a friend of mine. He just wants his name on the boat. It's not like he's really reaped any benefits from it. He just wants to be there, be involved in the sport and see his name out there. And then, it gets in like Chesapeake Bay Magazine, a picture of a boat in there, or Propeller Magazine, which is the American Power Boat Association's monthly magazine. So and the local newspapers and all. So it does get some exposure, but these people here, Botanical Treasure, sponsored me for two years. And they were a garden supply place here in Queenstown. But - and John got a little benefit out of it. We would take the boat down and put it in front of the store and it attracts people and all that. But by and large, it's just friends of mine. He was a friend of mine, you know, that want to do it. So our sport right now is really, I think, in dying need because we're losing a lot of race fights because we can't get people that races on, so right now the sport is not that healthy, unfortunately. And I don't know what's going to happen to our sport. Again, I think a lot of it is because everything has gone up in cost. The boats have gone up in cost, traveling's gone up in cost. To put a race on there, you've got to have all these kind of sanction fees, you've got insurance, you've got legal things, you know, you've got to bring in cranes, you've got to bring in rescue, you've got to bring in volunteers, and it's just a lot of work to put a race on. We do it in Kent Island every year, and it's a lot of work. So, but right now, we still got plenty of races, so we'll still be out there until something happens.

C.B.: Well why don't you tell us about some of your races. Do you have them categorized in your mind like the most exciting?

L.L.: Well I've been racing 36 years. I can probably tell you every race I ever ran.
(Laughter.)

K.F.: Well how about the first one you did?

L.L.: The first one I did was when I was still in high school. And I was racing, my dad and I had built this, what we call a ski boat. It was a flat bottom runabout type boats to run marathon races down to Miami. Miami had a race down to Miami every year for the owner's boat regatta. It was in conjunction with the whole Orange Boat Committee. It was a nine-hour race. You went there and raced for nine hours. It was an endurance race. So he and I will take turns. We go out and run two hours at a time. You know, we had pit stops and all that. And it was a runabout. So in the summertime, I would use it for competition boat, you know. And it wasn't designed for competition, but I could run on a local scale, you know. I could compete pretty well and win a race every now and then, but always be in the top three, you know. And that was how I first, I was 15 years old. I'd drive anything back then, you know, I didn't care. And then a week before I was to graduate from high school, I was racing down in Williamsburg, Virginia, and the engine on the boat blew. And when it blew, it locked up. And when it did, the propeller jammed sideways because we couldn't turn it. It was motor locked up. And it pitched, the pitch of the propeller made the boat tip over and just pitch pole. And I graduated out of high school on crutches. And I said, you know, I don't think I want to drive flat bottoms anymore. So then I started driving the hydroplanes and got involved. That's what we did anyhow. That was just a novelty deal for us, the ski boat. We built that and all. So I graduated out of high school on crutches because of a boat accident, and then I got involved with the - well shortly thereafter, I pulled two years, two tours of Vietnam, got drafted to the Vietnam War. So I missed two years of racing there, and then I came back and have been racing ever since in the hydroplane categories. And worked my way up the smaller classes. What we - back then they called the 280's, which are now the 5 liters, they run about 100 miles an hour. And then I went to the modified classes, go 120, and then 130, then 140, 150, right up to the 200 mile an hour unlimited boats. I just took my time and graduated in each class rather than getting out of a slow boat to a real fast boat. I just worked my way up through all - and I had a couple spills along the way. Young and dumb, trying to be foolish, you know. And I'll show these guys I can drive a boat, you know. And damn near killed myself in 1969.

K.F.: Can you tell us about that?

L.L. I had just gotten back from Vietnam, and pulled two tours over there, figured well I survived - the gooks didn't kill me, these race boats ought to be a piece of cake. And I was, first boat I built when I got out the service was a 225 hydroplane, N40, I got one, picture of one on the wall somewhere, my wall of shame out there. And friend of mine, I was actually building a boat for a friend of mine in Miami. And this boat was further behind. I was working on mine like on weekends and nights and all that. And he was getting sick because the summer had come around, and his boat wasn't ready, and wasn't even about to be finished. We'd done a lot of repair work and all. Anyhow, Charlie said, you know, I'd like to drive a boat this year at the Nationals and - I said well, Charlie, I could probably get my boat finished quicker than I can yours if you can find me an

engine for my boat. So he went and bought an engine for my boat. And we got mine down there. So Charlie drove it to Nationals, and we won the first heat, but they threw him out and said he jumped the gun. Well, he hadn't. They had him mistaken by another boat. But nevertheless, we didn't - then we came down to Hampton, Virginia, and Charlie drove it on Saturday and flipped the boat. It was a fast boat. And but the boat didn't get hurt, and he didn't get hurt. So then I was driving it on - so I drove it the second heat on Saturday. Actually, the boat landed right on its bottom. And while I knew Charlie was okay at the hospital, I called over the hospital. I said is my buddy okay? Oh, yeah, he's fine. So I started getting the boat ready. Well Dan said what are you doing? I said I'm going to run the next heat. I said hell, Charlie's all right. So I went and tied the world record on Saturday.

Well, of course, that got my - but the boat was real loose. It was that high off the water, you know. I was 20 years old. I didn't know any different, you know. So the next day, I was putting a friend of mine, this gentleman right over on that picture by that little car over there, Garland came by my dad's shop, and I'm taking a sandbag, filling it full of sand and putting it in the head of the engine up here to hold the bow of the boat down with weight, you know, put about 20 pounds of sand up there. And I changed propellers, went to a little bit bigger propeller to get the back of the boat up higher. And Garland, I said Garland, you coming over to Hampton today? He said no, son, I'm not coming over there. I said why not? He said he's going to - you're going to hurt yourself today. I said no, I'm not. I'm going to get a world record today, Garland. He said I'm not coming over there, son. He always called me son. He was like a step-father to me and all. And sure enough, I went over that day, and I was running three miles over the world record for two laps, and the boat got away from me and flipped. And it - I mean I was never knocked unconscious. I was in shock when they came to get me, you know. They went to fish me out of the water, I was hurt all over. And they got me in the hospital. And, in fact, the ambulance had an accident going to the hospital. I said this is worse than the boat ride. The ambulance, we were going down Interstate 64 to the hospital, and somebody pulled out in front of the ambulance, and it was doing donuts down the road, and all everybody in the ambulance was falling on top of me. I said, damn, this is worse than the boat ride. But anyhow, I broke about eight ribs, punctured my lung, my lung collapsed. My wrist was broken, my ankle was broken, spleen was all messed up. I didn't know I was that bad off. They actually had given up on me. I mean I was wondering why all my family was hanging around. (Laughter.) I guess they figured I was going to die any minute, you know. But I didn't know I was that bad off. And about Wednesday, I started getting better, and they took me down for more x-rays, and the radiologist down there says I never thought I'd see you in here again. He said we gave up on you Monday night, Sunday night and all. I said well, sorry to disappoint you, but here I am, you know. So it was a pretty bad accident. I laid in the hospital for about two weeks, and about three months before I was able to race again. But I was back racing again in December of that year. That was Labor Day, and I was racing in December that year in the Orange Bowl Regatta. And then just about, just about a year to the day, the following September, I crashed a boat down in Raleigh, North Carolina. And same class, 225. That was just cut my legs all, cut my knees and everything. And then I went from

'70 to '79, I was testing the boat actually for a customer in March. '79, I didn't - it was my six months anniversary. I was married at the time. Been married six months. I was over behind my neighborhood there testing the boat down in Portsmouth, Virginia, and the boat got up, came on its nose and that time broke my back and broke my shoulder. And that one about done me in. (Laughter.) But that was the last wreck. I got past - in 1979, I got smarter then and learned that you can drive fast but not so reckless. Actually, when I tested that boat, I wasn't driving it reckless. I was - we were trying to see how fast the boat would go. And we had made some changes in the engine, and then propeller. And we were just testing the boat. I just happened to hit a roller wrong, and that boat got up and came in on its nose. But the first two were my fault. I mean I was just racing over my head for the conditions. But now that I've been since 1979 without an accident. And I'm pretty proud of that feat, and have driven a lot of boats, set a lot of world records since then. And I set some before then too. I set some - actually set my first record in '77, then I set another one '79, the year I got hurt, a year later on. Then I set one in '82 and one in '84. Those are UIM records there. There's my house. Then I got all these records here from the - boat. I've been pretty lucky, been pretty fortunate that - unfortunately, I guess, in this sport, you've got to run them hard at a young age to see how far you can push them before you turn them over. And I survived those crashes, and that's what got my brother. He was a late bloomer. He was in his 40's when he tried to start racing. He was overweight, out of shape. I said you're too damn old to start racing. You got to crash these things once or twice to see how far you can push them. I says, and - oh, but he was happy. He said well, you know, I'll be all right. You had to know my brother to appreciate him.

C.B.: What does it take, you raised my interest in what is the combination you're looking for in conditions, and then how you ride the boat? Can you describe like what you're trying to achieve, the balance between -

L.L.: Yeah, sometimes it can be too calm. I like a four to six-inch chop on the water. A little four to six mile an hour breeze because the boat is, what we call - the water's dead calm, we call it too sticky. The boat won't get airborne and get air under it. It just kind of stuck to the water. So if you've got a little chop, then the boat is freer, and the boat's, we design the boats, I design my boats, a lot of guys put wings on their boats and all to use that to get the boat up or down. I designed the whole, the whole boat as a wing effect, and use that for lifting the boat up. And I learned that from my dad. And we don't, I don't - you don't see any wings under my boats. So we try to put lift in the deck area, of the boat, pick it up at a certain area where it picks the boat up level. And you want, like I say, about a four to six-mile an hour wind blowing, a little chop. And then you try to, you gear your boat by your propellers and, as far as race course size. In other words, if you got a short, like Kent Island got a real tight turn, and you got to use a lot of acceleration there, so you put a smaller prop on. You get to a course like the Bush River over here where they got real big sweeping turns, you can kind of ease your propeller size up because you keep your boat speed up going around the corner faster. So some boats have gear boxes, but most of them now are direct drive. So if you've got a gear box, you can play with the gear box, your gear ratios and do that. But we try to design the boats, at least I do, to run fast, but also to corner real fast. Now some guys are just concentrating on cornering. And that's where Wheeler and I differ - he likes to be on real wide boats

'cause he goes through the corner better, keep air under the boat easier. But the only problem, you got to get to that corner first. So it's a happy medium there, and you've got to build a boat wide enough to get air under it, but they also build it narrow enough where it doesn't blow over. Now this gentleman blew this boat, this new boat over, but that was just a lack of experience. Kid never been in a 150-mile an hour boat before, and he knows that he got in over his head. And it was just a deal there where it was real windy. It was very windy that day, and he was pushed outside by a yellow boat, by a buddy of ours, and he got kind of real far outside. When he did, he tried to pull it back left and got to the right side and the wing got under him. So it's just, I think, an inexperienced driver, let it get upside down. Now I could flip one tomorrow, don't get me wrong, but I haven't flipped one since 1979, and I think it's because I've got a good feel for them, and I design my boats where I build them to run loose in the water, but you also build them to run level on the water.

C.B.: You mentioned a local rivalry.

L.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

C.B.: And we've already interviewed Wheeler Baker about his experiences on the Chesapeake Bay. And I think it's interesting that you two have this rivalry, and it's a friendly one.

L.L.: It's a friendly rivalry. Like I said, we kid all the time about the island getting smaller and smaller. Because Wheeler, Wheeler and his brother, Tom, actually Tom and I go way back because Tom even used to race with my uncle. And Tom and I raced Grand Prix's together, and Tom was the first Baker boy to race. And then Teddy'd race a little bit, and then Wheeler was a late bloomer. Wheeler didn't come on, and them boys, until about 1978. Well I already had, you know, 15 years' experience on Wheeler by then, you know. And but - and when I moved up here in 1991, I guess it was, I've been here for 10 years now, you know, everybody knew the Baker boys. They thought they were the only people who could race hydroplanes. Well then when then when they found out that Lauterbach raced the hydroplanes and knew, you know, the more I raced up here and the more it got in the papers who I won and all, you know, the island got - it was a little, I guess, between the Bakers and myself- well between Wheeler and myself, never between Tom and I. Tom and I have never had any problems. So there's, you know, when a new guy comes on the block and takes a little bit of your thunder away, that was a rivalry starting. He wants to beat me, I want to beat him, you know. It's - it's a friendly deal. We socialize together, you know, and I go by the store all the time and, but -

C.B.: How are your styles different when you get on the course, how you approach racing?

L.L.: Well that would be unfair because, you know, I consider myself the best out there, and I'm sure Wheeler feels the same way about himself. But I also race for the fun of it. Don't get me wrong. I want to win. I want to win every race I run in. I'm a very competitive person, but I will never endanger another fellow racer to win a race. And, unfortunately, Wheeler will. And I hate to say that. He, he has just about hurt me bad a couple times. And just to win a boat race. I mean a perfect example was over in Essex, Maryland back in the early 80's. Wheeler had his seven liter boat, and I had a friend of mine who had a boat out of Florida that his driver couldn't make it up here, so he asked me to drive the boat. And I beat Wheeler four heats in a row with a boat I've never

driven before. I just got in the boat, and I beat him four heats in a row, two on Saturday, two on Sunday. And every time, I was on the inside, and Wheeler was on the outside, and we would deck it out, deck to deck, and I'd beat him. But then we had a free-for-all, a Grand Prix race late in the day, and it paid about 10,000 money. Paid like \$100 to win the other races, then pay \$1,000 to win the Grand Prix. And Wheeler cut me off for \$1,000. I mean, you know. And that blew me over. And he could've killed me back then. We weren't strapped in back then. We were just sitting in the boats and all. But anyhow, I got over that, and now I realize that Wheeler is - he'll - but I won't do that to a person. I will not cut a driver off to win a boat race. That's my style. I'd rather beat him fair and square. And I think Wheeler has grown out of that. I think now he realizes that, you know, this is a dangerous sport. And he was back then, there again, it was, you know, Lauterbach stepped on my territory up here. I got to show my guy. Back then, we didn't have the Kent Island races. That was like Wheeler's hometown race, Essex was. And I beat him four times in a row. So I wasn't looking to - he had all his fan club over there. So he was bound and determined to beat me that following heat. And he did. I mean I didn't expect him to do what he did. I just was sitting there on the inside of him, ready to drive under him, and he moved over. So it kind of caught me. That was the first time we had a problem. And so I kind of realized, okay, now I know how you are, you know. And I told him about it. I said you drive a little different for \$1,000 than you will for \$100, you know. And, of course, we call him sugar mouth. Because he said well, gee, Larry, I thought I gave you enough room in there. We call him sugar mouth on the beach, we the fellow racers, because he's such a nice guy. I mean you got to love Wheeler, you got to like him. On the beach, he's the nicest guy in the world. But in that race boat, he's a different person. (Laughter.) I guess. We call him sugar mouth. And that's, you know, that's the way he is.

C.B.: So do you - what would you tell a young person who wanted to get into the sport today?

L.L.: Gee, I don't know, because it's so hard for a young person to get into it now, unless you're a son of somebody. Like I've got a son that's 20, and every summer he says gee, dad, I'd like to go racing. But he doesn't show any interest in it. You know, when I was down in my dad's shop, I was the third son my dad had. You know, it was two older brothers and me, but I was the only one that really showed interest in it and learned the boats, worked on them all my life, and that's how I got involved in it because I showed interest and learned about boats. Now my son, my son comes - he wants to go play golf, and he's summer vacation and all. And he had a job over at the Mears Point Marina running the fuel dock for them, which was a great job for a kid. So he didn't want to come - he says dad, I don't want to be a boat builder. You work too many hours, you work too hard, too long hours. But, yet, he wanted to go racing. I said no, you come in this shop and learn how to build boats, and then I'll build you a boat and we'll go racing. But that's because that's who I am. Now you take somebody like Wheeler, if he had a son that wanted to race, it would be easy because Wheeler never, you know, never built boats or anything, and he would say okay, if you want to race, come on, we'll get you a small one, like his daughter did, and try it out. Well she didn't like it, you know, but that's the only way I know a young person can get into the sport is either be a son of somebody or be a good friend of somebody. Like I've got a protege picked out. I've got

a little, a guy in town here that - and he raced a little bit before the cost escalated, and he's a good little driver, and I've kind of got my eye on him as far as maybe being my replacement, you know, when I decide to quit, I'll put this boy Chris Euell (phonetic) in the boat. He's a good little driver. He's not racing right now because he can't afford it and his grandfather and step-father put them in a boat, and they can't afford it anymore. So he's just kind of out of business now. But that's, you know, he was fortunate enough to get in there a little while and show he had a little talent. So it's hard, I don't know how you would tell a young kid now to get into the sport.

K.F.: Well do you have anybody now apprenticing with you to learn how to build the boats?

L.L.: No. I'm afraid that when I'm gone, the Lauterbach name will be gone, 'cause my son don't want to do it. And I, you know, he's down in college down in VCU in Richmond, and I said learn computers.

K.F.: I went to VCU, and she taught down there.

L.L.: Oh, really? Well that's where he is, the VCU. He's in his third year down there, and he works at the Omni Hotel in his off days and all. And I'll see him tomorrow, I'm going down there this afternoon. But so I don't know.

C.B.: Could you tell us a little bit about the different race courses around the Chesapeake Bay that you've raced on, what their differences -

L.L.: There's not a good one in the area. They're all rough. (Laughter.)

C.B.: Really?

L.L.: No, but they're fun racecourses. Yeah, of course, you got Cabers (phonetic) down there which is down at - off, it's a little body of water, I forget what they call it, off the Choptank down there. And then they've got a bad rap of being the worst racecourse on the Chesapeake Bay, and it's not. Last year we had the best water they've had there in years at Cambridge. And, of course, Kent Island is right there in - you know, off the Chesapeake Bay, but it's a fun racecourse, but it's the turn from hell, we call it, in the pit turn there. Nobody can get through that pit turn smooth. I can't. I've tried every angle and every approach to that corner. But it's a fun racecourse. I mean the other end down in - where it's protected, you can go through there wide open. But when you come down by that whole row of spectator boats and start lining and all, you better hold on because it's going to be some rough ones in there. And the boats are going to get off the water. And the turns, it's just so tight, you can't get through there. But it's a fun racecourse. And we have the best social events going at Kent Island, as far as things for the kids to do while the boats, you know, are racing, there's always downtime, you know. The kids, we've got the clowns, we've got rides, we've got pet, you know, petting zoos over there. And then we've got the best food on the circuit. Of all the races we go to all over the country, Kent island has the best food. I mean our food, our concession stands are the best by far. I mean we got crab cakes, we got the best pit beef and reasonably priced. We have got the best concessions of any race in the country, by far. And then Bush River's coming back. That was a race we ran back in the 50's and 60's.

That's over in the Harford County area, and that's a fun racecourse, probably the best racecourse we're running on now. Kind of took the Essex course and put it down in Bush River, off the Back River. But there again, it's a new race, so it's just be its third

year this year. So they're just getting their sea legs under them, more or less, and every year they're learning how to put the race on better and better. We've been doing it here for like 10 years now back in Kent Island. So Kent Island has the best organized race on the Chesapeake Bay. Cambridge is a fun race, but it's not as organized as ours. But now the activity for the kids and the family to do, and Bush River is the same thing. They're learning it. Coming along. But Chesapeake Bay is drawing more and more boats. We're very, you know, the crab feast, we feed - all the races, the big crab feast on Saturday nights. So a lot of them come just for the crab feast, you know, just for that, you know. So there's a lot to do around at our race sites. So we've got the yacht club is very cordial, let us, you know, use their yacht club, 'cause we pay them, we rent it and all, but still, they let us use the yacht club and the lounge, you know, and the facilities and everything. So it's - the best race on the Chesapeake Bay is Kent Island race.

K.F.: When does that happen?

L.L.: First weekend in August. I think Cambridge is like the middle of July, and Bush River is going to be Labor Day. But those three are the only three right now. We used to run, years ago, we used to run St. Michaels, Chestertown. In fact, when I was racing in my earlier years, you know, we ran, ran Ocean City once or twice. St. Michaels was an annual event, so was Solomon's Island. We had races all around years ago But they've all kind of just kind of dropped off.

K.F.: Where did you race around St. Michaels? Was it in the Miles River?

L.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Miles River Yacht Club. Now you talk about a tight course. We run out into the bay area there on one end, but the pit turn was right by the yacht club, and it wasn't as wide as my shop hardly because of the turn, it was tight. But back then, boats weren't running as fast either. We were slowing way down. We'd get them around, and we'd go off out to the ocean, to the - not the ocean, but the, what, Eastern Bay I guess it is out there? What is that, Eastern Bay?

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

C.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

L.L.: Yeah, whatever it is out there, yeah.

C.B.: I'm interested, and I think the listeners might be interested too in some of the - you mentioned safety of the boat. But how, like I get the idea that early on you just jumped in in your shorts and took off.

L.L.: Oh, yeah, yeah.

C.B.: And then -

L.L.: There's a picture right there, short sleeve shirt on, J-444 boat, I got a short sleeve shirt on, I was getting ready to go racing, you know, and that's a 150 mile an hour boat.

C.B.: How's that changed?

L.L.: You know, I look around all these pictures I've got in my shop here and all, and I think either I'm either the luckiest man in the world or the best in the world because, you know, I've survived - not survived, but I've raced many a race sitting out there in the elements just holding on, running 160, 175 mile an hour, depending what class we were in, 140 mile per hour, you know. But now, like I say, and it took some fatalities and, you know, to open everybody's eyes up. I mean you kind of accepted it that it could happen, and it still could happen, don't get me wrong. We could still have fatalities, but it kind of goes with any kind of racing that you could have a fatality. And but now that we've

come along, incorporated these enclosed cockpits and reinforced sales and all, it definitely saves a lot of lives. So we're fortunate that our sport now is not - at one time, it was probably the most dangerous sport in the world. I mean above automobile racing and anything else, and it was just a hobby. I mean we don't make any money doing this. And I wouldn't call it a - well it is an amateur sport because we're not professional. I mean we're professional in a way, we get paid, but it's just basically a hobby, something you do on weekends. You don't make a living, excuse me, you don't make a living at it like you do car racing or any of that. Now the unlimited boats, we make a living at that. I made pretty good money the more I raced those. That was still a part-time job. I'd only rent 10 races a year. Then I had to do P.R. work for the different corporations, whether it be Anheuser-Busch, or R.J. Reynolds, whoever and all. But the safety - the safety features now have definitely saved lives, and we feel a lot better now. I think the families are more at ease. Even though it's always been a family-oriented sport and a fun sport, when there was a fatality, of course, it hit home to a lot of folks, and mostly the wives and kids, you know. And the racers would kind of accept it. But now, when you see a boat wreck, you expect to see the driver come out of it and walk away. Of course, your heart's in your throat until you do see the driver, but you expect to see the driver pop up now. We don't expect to have anybody, lose anybody now. So that's the good part about it, I guess.

C.B.: Have you ever been afraid?

L.L.: No. No, no. The day I'm afraid is the day I'll quit. Like I said, one day I'll sit down in one of these boats, and I'll be strapping myself in, and something will come on and say, Larry, why are you doing this? And I'll get out, you know. But right now, I love it. I mean I thrive on it. I'm 53 years old, and still love to compete. And can't wait till the next race.

C.B.: What does it feel like when you get behind the wheel?

L.L.: It's the most fun you can have with your clothes on. I know that. (Laughter.) By far. But it's, I don't know, the feeling's hard to describe. It's a combination of things, you know, the sensation of speed, the competitive part of it where you look around, you got fellow competitors on each side of you that you want to beat, and then all of the sudden, it's just the rush of the speed, and air bound - the boat's airborne, and you pay attention to that, you don't want the boat to get upside down, you don't want the boat over. But yet, you just can't go faster. You keep pushing the pedal further down wanting to go faster, and it's just, it's just a feeling that's hard to describe. It's like, I don't know, probably be like riding a surfboard with a, I don't know, what's that kind of horsepower most - these boats are, these boats are awful fast, and they're getting faster and faster. But, yet, we can't wait to get in them and drive them fast, you know. We know we got a piece of equipment that can hurt you, you know, real quick, but yet it's just something we want to do. I don't know. It's just as hard to describe what the feeling is. It's just a rush. I mean I've never done any drugs in my life, but I can imagine people who get high on drugs, this is my high, you know. When I get in that race boat, you know, I'm just smiling ear to ear, you know, and can't wait to get out there. There have been days, the unlimited boats, when you know, you got a 200 mile an hour boat that you look out there and there's three foot waves, and they say all right, you got to go, you have to go. Where these boats here, if it's rough, I won't run it. I'll bring it back in. That's my own

personal boat. But those days, I was working for a corporate sponsor, and I had to go. I was never afraid, but I was saying, you know, I really don't want to go out there today. Some days, you just don't want to go race, but you had to because that was your job, you know. And you get, you know, you learn to get through that. But I've never been afraid to get to a boat, or never been scared or anything, you know.

C.B.: How fast have you ever gone? Obviously -

L.L.: Two hundred and eight miles an hour is the fastest I've ever been, 208. That was in the Winston Eagle. That's pretty neat.

K.F.: I can't imagine what that feels like on your body, on your bones.

L.L.: It's a lot of G-force. You go, those boats are weighing 6,000 pounds, and you go to the corner at 200 mile an hour, and I've actually turned one wild open at 200 miles an hour, work just right. You go down to the corner, we're strapped in with seatbelts, and you strap them in, and the whole time you're out there during the five-minute warm-up, you're steady pulling those belts, get them tighter and tighter. And when I was driving those boats, I'd get to the corner, of course, you're sitting down driving, lay down, and you go through a turn at 200 miles an hour when you turn the boat, all the sudden, the steering wheel's over here, it's the G-force have got your body, you know, you've got seatbelts on, you're about a foot away from behind that steering wheel. And then when you straighten the boat back up, then all the sudden, you're back in the middle of the boat again. I mean it's unreal, the G-force. And you're banging your head against the side of the cockpit and all. Boy, I'm having fun now, aren't I? Isn't this fun? (Laughter.) But that's what we do, you know, we love it. You know, it's a rush. But you could - even the smaller boats now, these boats here, they weigh probably 1,500 pounds, they're running 150 mile an hour. You turn one over, it slams you against the side of the boat, even though you're strapped in there and all, that's a right good G force in there. I don't know that I've ever measured it or not to see what it is. But there's another one, why in the world are we doing this? This is crazy, but it's fun. (Laughter.) Oh, gosh.

K.F.: Well let's talk a little bit more about some of the designs of some of the boats you're doing now.

L.L.: Okay

K.F.: And you were saying the materials have changed. What have you kept from the older designs?

L.L.: Well, basically, the ratios and your - in other words, you're plane - the overall length of the other boats, it's kind of hard to describe, but if you've got a 20-foot boat, well then you, in the older days, 55 percent of that would be after plane, which would be the way a boat rides. From the sponsons to the strut. And 45 percent of the boat would be forward of the after planes, you know, the forward part. With the cab boats, it's basically the same thing. I've gone over a little bit more. I've gone probably 58 percent after plane, and 43 percent or 42 percent forward of the boat. Get a little more, because of the re-engines and these bigger prop, running straight - now, we need more weight in the back of the boat to keep the props in the water, so I've had to change my ratio of after plane for the overall length of the boat to get more weight aft to keep the propeller in the water. But as far as my bow rise, and my angle of my tacks and my sponson bottoms, they're the same. You could take, you could take a cab over it, put the boat - put the engine in - I mean the engine up front and the driver in the back, and it would still be the

same. So I really haven't changed that design, other than my after plane lengths, and a little bit more weight aft, and then to get - 'cause we've gone to three-bladed props, which creates more lift. In fact, I've run four-blade props on some of my boats, I've got some four-bladed props. And the more - the more blade you get on the prop, the more it tries to pick the back of the boat up, so you've got to keep putting weight back to hold that prop in, but the more blades you've got, the faster you go so -

K.F.: Right.

L.L.: So actually, we haven't changed them that much. Now we've gone wider than the older days, but I haven't gone to the extreme some people have gone to for width. I don't like them too wide because, there again, if the boat's too wide, you get too much air under them, and away they go. So I build mine at a happy medium there where I can go fast, but then they'll still stay up in the corner. But actually, the overall designs haven't changed that much. I mean you could, you could take my old - this 8711, the one I was telling you about, the conventional boat, what we call conventional with the driver in the back, I could take that boat and convert it to a cab over real easy.

(END SIDE A.)

(BEGIN SIDE B.)

L.L.: Adding all the safety features has made the boats heavier. So that's why we went to composite materials, which are lighter. So those are about the same weight, but we've got a lot more in the boats now as far as safety features where I run, like for a 3,000 pound, not 3,000 pounds, but a 3,000 pound air bottle, which weighs about 30 pounds, it's got 3,000 pounds of air in it. And you've got, you know, seatbelts, and your trap doors and your canopies. We've added probably 150 pounds to the boats for safety. So I had to make the boats 150 pounds lighter to be competitive. So we've gone to the composite materials and things of that nature. And they are stronger. The composites are a lot stronger. I mean when Bobby wrecked his boat, he didn't hurt the boat at all. It cracked the decks loose, and popped the wood part of the decks, but the boat wasn't hurt at all. It was no damage at all. Where in the olden days, a wooden boat, it probably would've broken the back of the boat off, and it would've been a very extensive repair job.

K.F.: Why do you keep the wooden decks?

L.L.: Just for the decks, I like the looks better. I just don't like all painted boats. And also, I get more shape out of my decks that way. In order to get shape out of a composite, you've got to do molds, and then vacuum back down in there, and it's just, the expense, and I've changed my designs back in the boat now so I can, a little bit here and there so I wouldn't - it might change the length about four inches, I might change a little bit here and there. So cost got to be too much to build deck molds. And the people who are using composite molds, I mean composite decks, the decks are all flat and that's why they get in trouble 'cause they can't bend that stuff. I'll show you the panels in a minute, the panels I use up there and all. It's very strong, very light, but you can't bend them. So I build the decks out of wood so I can get my shape that I like. I build a lot of shape in my decks. That's my wing *effect*. And so the wood is better for that. I think it's prettier too.

K.F.: Wow how do you start building one of these? I mean where is the starting point?

L.L.: Well the starting point is you've got to design, you have to loft it out first. You design it. You build a composite boat just completely backwards from the way you build a wooden boat. A wooden boat you would build upside down. You would build your engine stringers, and your frames, and put them on a jig upside down, and then you would start building your sides and your bottom, and then you would build your sponsons, and you flip the boat over and finish it that way. But these composite boats, all the stuff that made our mold, sponsons and all, so we just build the center section up, right-side up. I just, I build a jig for the shape of the bottom that I want. I've got a certain amount of bow rise in the bow on the bottom, you know, so I build a jig that angle, and then the - off the back, and then I build, set out my frames and motor strings and all, build all of that, and I just left my sponsons on it, you know, and go from here. I run spars through the boat to hang them on, and that's how we build these composite boats. They're a little bit simple to build, but they're more time consuming because you have to do all the gluing process, and fiberglass taping. And every time you put a fastener in a composite boat, you got to put like a insert in it, because if you don't, it will just crush. It's like cardboard. Where the old wooden boats, used to drill a hole in it, stick a bolt in it and away you go. So they're a lot faster. But the composite boats, once you get them built, they are much stronger. But they're all a lot of trouble.

C.B.: How many boats do you build a year?

L.L.: One. It took me nine months to put that boat together. We're working - you know, the only thing I can build alone, I can build probably two or three wooden boats. But it took me nine months to put that one together. Then I do other work in between. I got little repair jobs coming and going and all.

C.B.: Do you have a favorite boat that you ever built?

L.L.: Yeah, probably be the Edelweiss. This boat, this red boat right up here - right through there, yeah, probably that one. That was probably my favorite.

C.B.: Why?

L.L.: I don't know. It was the winingest boat in the history of that sport. Won more races than any other boat, and I set two world records with it. And just had a very - and then I sold it to a friend of mine in Canada, and he continued to win tradition with it. He won a lot of races with it, set a record with it. And the boat is now - the boat now is hanging upside down a sports car in Canada. It's like on display now.

C.B.: That's the boat we need.

L.L.: That's the boat you needed? It's hanging upside down at a sports bar. (Laughter.) In fact, it was funny. The sports bar caught on fire about a year ago. And the first fire fighter on the scene was a volunteer fire fighter, was a boat racer. And he steady wet my boat down, not mine anymore, I call it my boat. And the whole sports bar burnt down, but that boat was left in tact. He saved the boat. (Laughter.) It was funny. That was probably my favorite boat, though, was that Edelweiss. They're all kind of special in away. This Gemini was special. The one I got now from Sandy Thompson 'cause it was the first cab over I built for myself, the first composite boat I built. That's special. It's been, like I say, three time national champions. It's - and he and I are just the best of friends, but it's been a great boat for us, and we still plan on doing a lot with it this year, you know. So I guess the Edelweiss was my - that was the first, in fact, that was the first Edelweiss, the J-444. I had a friend of mine back at home, John Starbore (phonetic). We

built that boat first, then we built that boat next. We had two boats in a seven-year period. Had that one there three years, and that one four years. So both of them were kind of special. I guess the Edelweiss were my special two boats. He's a great owner, and still a good friend. I've been lucky. I've met a lot of nice folks in this sport. Been successful at it, and I've often told my dad, said why in the world didn't you build a racecar instead of race boats? I looked at Ricky Runn (phonetic) and those guys, Ricky Runn and I are good friends, and I could be a multi-millionaire right now if I was driving cars instead of boats. If I'd have been half as successful in cars as I have been in boats, I'd be easy street.

K.F.: Well is there any connection -

L.L.: But I wouldn't be sitting here talking to you guys, see, now that's the thing.

K.F.: Well, there you go.

L.L.: That's the way I look at it. I mean I meet a lot of nice folks doing what I do.

K.F.: Is there any connection between the Indy racing and this kind of race?

L.L.: No, like I say, other than the fact that when the Indy cars went to re-engine, the boats went to re-engine about a year or two later. I think that was the only connection there. Everybody felt that, well, the cars went re-engine, maybe the boats need to go re-engine. You know. But there are, like I say, these boats are easier to drive. I call them, I call them a bunch of wusses. You all a bunch of wusses. I say you all don't know what racing is. Sit your butt down in a race boat behind 1,000 horsepower running 175 mile an hour, holding on, and that was racing, you know. But I wouldn't dare do it now, you know. And there's - most of your guys who are racing now, they never raced the conventional boats. They couldn't drive one of the boats. Wheeler Baker tried to drive one. He couldn't drive it. It scared him to death. Because you're sitting back, you see the whole boat doing all this dancing and everything, where up front, you don't see all that. So these boats are easier to drive. And they're also easier to get into trouble with, I think, because you can't feel them. I mean I can feel them, but it took me a while to feel them, and a lot of folks can't feel them still because they don't know, you know, what the boat's doing. When I'm sitting in the back of the boat, you could read what the boat was doing. It was, you could see it getting up and down. Of course, sometimes you didn't care. You just said it'll come back down, you know. Wrong. Usually if it tells you it's going over, it's going to go over. But that's about that.

K.F.: Well why don't we look at some of the boats you're working on now.

L.L.: Okay.

K.F.: And we'll just take this with us.

(OFF THE RECORD.)

K.F.: Okay.

L.L.: It'll be pretty when I get it all finished, get it on that tape. That's the red - up there, I just kept it - I got the red - I painted it black this morning. I hope it didn't run all on the floor in the cold weather out there. I had to repaint that too this morning. That's the old one. Got hurt in the crash there and all. That's the canopy there that goes over, that piece will go right over here.

K.F.: Okay.

L.L.: And that will sit on a hinge, and opens and closes right in there. And the red cal sits in, sits right in here, and the red cal goes right in that area there. That's out back behind my shop.

C.B.: How heavy is the engine?

L.L.: The engine's all aluminum. It's not that heavy. Probably weighs 300, 350 pounds maybe. I - both of them are in Indiana right now being worked on. I got mine and - I got a company in Indiana builds my engines for me, and both - engine I sent out last year after the wreck, it's been sitting out there all winter. I set mine out there about a month ago, the four -- I say mine, Sandy's mine, the four-cylinder motor for my two and half modified out there, and when it's ready, I'll go pick them both up, bring them back. But it's -

C.B.: Is this composite - with the plywood top?

L.L.: Yeah, the only thing plywood - the only wood are the decks here. The rest of it's all honeycomb material. I buy the panels - well it was when I was working - see, it has aluminum core, with fiberglass face. See how strong it is, and how light it is?

C.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative).

L.L.: That's what the whole boat's built out of.

C.B.: Skis are made out of something like this.

L.L.: But the only problem, see, if you drill a hole and put a bolt in it, it would just crush.

C.B.: Right.

L.L.: So you got to, what you have to do, you have to either, they got what they call inserts that you could drill a hole in there then glue the insert in there, and then put your bolt through the insert, and then the insert won't crush. Or what I'll, sometimes I'll do, I'll counter board to the back side of one of the other faces with a counter board and then put glue in there. When it gets hard, just drill back through the glue. That's about the same thing, you know. But it's time consuming. It's about a three-step process.

K.F.: Right.

L.L.: And then, 'cause all the hardware stuff- all aluminum. All the hardware, the rudder and the - make it all on the machine over there, all what we call anodized. See where some of the stuff is. Like this is the - we call the - what we call the skid, hangs on the side of the boat. That's all machined out of aluminum, and then everything's anodized. That goes on the side of the boat so the boat, when it goes around the corner, won't slide. And -

C.B.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). How heavy is that?

L.L.: Pretty heavy.

C.B.: Yeah, for aluminum.

L.L.: But you don't want it to bend on you. All this is all the pieces of the boat are up here, of Bobby's boat. There's the rudder right there all wrapped up, and it's all anodized. These are the, this is a locking mechanism for the canopy. This bolts right along there. I have a handle here pulls that, and then the canopy comes out and locks right in there. This was inside the boat. And then I got a handle that goes on it. And you pull this, it's all spring-loaded, pull it forward, pull the canopy up. I have to make all that stuff right here.

C.B.: Really?

L.L.: So everything, everything is time consuming. Everything is made right here.

C.B.: Yeah.

L.L.: Only thing I don't make here is like the engine. I have a company in Indiana. This is the strut that goes on the back of the boat. I just had it polished. That goes around the back - goes through here. And the olden style, the strut was on the back of the boat, up under the boat. The old style. But this is a new style. We put it on a transom of the boat. In the old days, the strut was bolted. This was the strut on the old boats.

K.F.: On the bottom.

L.L.: They were on the bottom of it. That bolts right here. It was underneath the bolt. Well nowadays, we put the strut on the back of the boat. I took some pictures, you can see it better. That's all covered up now. And that's when we get the boat lower to the water, the prop's out behind the boat, so you get a lower center of gravity there.

K.F.: Right.

L.L.: That's- we call a low profile boat. You get the boats lower to the water.

C.B.: So this is, what are you doing to this boat?

L.L.: I'm getting, well I restored it. I put a new bottom, took all the decks off, and all the sponson tops off and put new batons in, new frame, put new dash on it, refinished the hole inside, now I'm getting ready to paint it. I just got my fiberglass on the deck. See this has got a fiberglass coat on it. And now I put a board right here to give me a guide to put my paint scheme around it. I put a white scheme around for the guy, and it'll be blue and white when I get through. All the sides will be white.

C.B.: How old is this boat?

L.L.: The boat's 26 years old.

K.F.: You were saying a lot of people are purchasing these boats and having them restored.

L.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Right.

K.F.: Why?

L.L.: For the value of it. I mean it's just like old antique cars. People - Lauterbach name has been around for 53 years. And our boats are the most popular ones that are being restored and sought after because - well the guy who owns this, he had one of my boats back in the 70's, and he couldn't find it. So he found this boat, which was same class. And he says why don't you restore it back to my boat, paint it back like my boat was. And so that's what I'm doing. But both of them try to find the original boat. Sometimes they've been discarded for some reason or another, or maybe were wrecked or whatever. But they have these shows that take them - they have a big race, per se, they call it up in Clayton, New York every other year. And they'll be 2 to 300 hydroplanes show up in there in different classes and all, old and vintage boats. And people just stand by them like this and say look what I got, look at my old boat, you know, and it's just something they can do and all, you know. Hey, this is, I used to race this boat 30 years ago, you know, stuff like that. And they put it in the water, let them ride it around, they don't race nobody, they do what they call fly-bys. They could drive the boats, go out, ride them around, let people see them run and all. It's just fun to watch. It's a great deal of interest in them now and all. And people spend a lot of money trying to find old famous boats to restore.

C.B.: Are all the boats named?

L.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). Yeah. Now used to be I would write the name of the boat in the keel when I was building it for a customer, and the year I built it and all. But I didn't start doing that until like in the 70's, I guess. I should've done it all my life. My dad should've done it before he did it, but we didn't. Of course, then the boats would change hands and change names, you know. Like this boat here was originally built for a fellow in Kentucky. And it was called the Coal Cat 'cause he was in the coal mining business. So he called the boat the coal cat. And that's the name of the boat was, where it was built, and the years, and then it changed ownership, and the name would change. Now these people have bought it, and they're going to call it the Blue Special (phonetic). That's what this boat's called. He's in the - that's the name of his company, the Blue Water Yacht Sales in Hampton, Virginia. But - see, this is, this is a kind of very - these are the old style prop we used to race. They were all two blades, they were cast, they were made in Italy. And now these are your new Mercury three-blade props we run.

C.B.: Oh, I see.

L.L.: So that's the difference in the propellers over the years. We've gone from that to this, and I got some four blades. Of course, you see after about three races, you break them.

K.F.: Oh, my God.

L.L.: That's \$1,200 out the window right there. That's a door stop now. (Laughter.) It's an expensive hobby. It's a dumb hobby. (Laughter.)

K.F.: Well it's just amazing that something that small is going to make you go 200 miles an hour.

L.L.: Yeah, that comes off of my boat, this is a 130 an hour prop here. Bobby's propeller's really there. A little bit larger. That black boat has a bigger prop. It has a 12-inch tine, this one's only 10 1/2.

K.F.: Right.

L.L.: But it doesn't take much to push you that fast. The boat's are out of the water, that's why they call them hydroplanes. They're sitting on top of a cushion of air, and they're scooting along, along the top here.

C.B.: You talked, you talked about the wing shape that you get with the wood.

L.L.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). See how much shape we got? See back here on these boats here? On any of these, see how it came this way, had the boat that came this way, and the longitude, got lengthways, even got more - you can't take that material, it would stay flat, there would be like flat areas everywhere. So I put the wooden decks in there to give it that effect of spilling the air. See what I do, I put lift, you can't see it, but right along here is about the high point of this deck, lengthways. I got that boat with a lift, the whole boat, my lift, you get your lift just after your highest point in your deck. So it'll create a lift area right here to pick this boat up. And then we've got air going under the boat, and I put bow rise in that to pack enough air that I think it needs underneath there. If you get too much air under there, it's going to blow over. So you got to, there's things you learn over the years, and trial and error more or less, and then we get - after we go too far with the error, we come back to the trial. So it's just a trial and error that you learn over the years, and after 30-some years, my dad's got 50-some years, so we got 80-some years' experience between the two of us. So we can, we learned a lot over 80-some

years of experience, putting it all together and all, and we create a design that we think works the best, and we've been real successful at it. So but you build your, you build your hauls with your lift where you want it to be. And whenever I see a wing on a boat, I say well, they're trying to correct a mistake. They made a mistake, they didn't know what they were doing, so they put a wing up front to divert the air some other place, you know. That's just - I've been fortunate that I was taught by the best, and I've been pretty lucky.

K.F.: What's your dad doing these days?

L.L.: He's got a shop down in Suffolk, Virginia. He still piddles around, and if I need some hardware made that I can't do, he'll make it for me. Excuse me one minute.

K.F.: Sure.

(OFF RECORD - TELEPHONE.)

L.L.: -- forty years in a warehouse, and somebody found it and got my dad restoring it. So that's what he piddles around, stuff like that and all, us that's my old dad there.

C.B.: Okay.

L.L.: But he doesn't do much anymore, he just kind of- I'm going down this afternoon, I'll see him tomorrow morning. I'm going down to Virginia this morning. I'm going to spend tomorrow with him down there.

K.F.: April 2000.

L.L.: Yeah.

K.F.: Fished that out of the library.

L.L.: Fished that out of the library. (Laughter.) Rocket Man. He's a mess.

K.F.: Is that a nickname everybody gave him?

L.L.: No. But I don't know why she put that on there because that boat, he says - she called him up, Wendy called him and said what are you doing down here, but she did an article on him about two years prior to that. And he said well, I'm working on a red rocket, so she called him the rocket man. That was the boat he built. Because the boat he built back in the 50's, Miss U.S., and I remember the boat, built for a guy in Detroit. And he just, I'm working on a red rocket here, so she called him the Rocket Man that day. I don't know why she did that. He's a mess. Do you know Wendy?

K.F.: No, Huh-uh (negative).

L.L.: Wendy Clark? In fact, she called me, she wants to do an article on me. She called not too long ago. She said she wanted to come by and see me pretty soon. But he's a mess. He's, he doesn't slow down much.

K.F.: No?

L.L.: Like I say, if I need something made, if I'm in a hurry - make me a rubber, oh, okay, a rubber. (Laughter.) He says I don't like to work too much anymore. I say I know you don't. But I'm giving you plenty of notice.

C.B.: A neat picture.

L.L.: Yeah, that was -

C.B.: You can really see the air under there.

L.L.: That's how they run. That was in Decatur, Illinois, when I won the nationals. That was the boat - actually, that was my uncle's boat originally. This guy in Bellingham, Washington bought it from my uncle, and I drove for Don Ryan for a couple years. Set two records with that boat, two world records with that boat.

C.B.: It looks like the -

L.L.: This is the one about killed me right here. This is the one that did me in, the N-40. That was the first time back in it after I - that was in Miami at the Orange Bowl at the Marine Stadium. We had a flat tire on a trailer going down here, and the tire came out and knocked the whole sponson top, had to tape it up to race the boat, but that was December 1969 on the Orange Bowl down there. This was, this was Kyle Baker, Wheeler's brother. He and I raced many a years, this is the Grand Prix class, about 26 of them - this is my uncle in one my dad built, and that was me in that boat. We competed against each other all the time, Tom and I did.

C.B.: Great.

L.L.: That was in New Hampshire. Littleton, New Hampshire for the Nationals.

K.F.: Let's take a few photos, and then Ceres, why don't you write down any of these photos you might want to copy.

C.B.: Would we be, would you mind if we made copies of them?

K.F.: Would you mind if we made copies of them?

L.L.: Of course not. No.

K.F.: Okay.

L.L.: I got some more in the house that might be easier. I don't know. These are all dirty and everything. If you want me to take pictures of them, I don't know how you - I don't know how you get them down. What, do you want to take them with you?

K.F.: Yeah. We have a guy who'll make copies for us, and then we send you your original back.

L.L.: Okay.

C.B.: I almost feel like - is it on still?

K.F.: Yeah, hold on.

C.B.: Cut that off.

(END OF INTERVIEW.)