

Interview Log

Interviewee: Jim Richardson (& Mrs. Richardson - "Joan") Tape#: OH195
Unidentified Speaker (Speaker)
Also: Joe Valliant (J.V.)

Interviewer: Unknown (Q.) (Lila) # of
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Date: Unknown # of Sides: 2

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Comments: Early part of Side A inaudible. Transcription starts when
microphone is moved near
speakers. Side two includes a portion recorded in
vehicle with an interviewee other than
Mr. Richardson. He was not identified and is listed here
as "Speaker. The comments of
Mr. Valliant in relation to the interviewer's query
letter are included, though they are not
part of any interview.

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BEGIN SIDE A

Q.: That's what you call folklore.

J.R.: That's folklore.

Q.: Now at this point, I always stop to see if it's working.

(Off record.)

Q.: I think the camera distorts us because --

J.R.: (Laughter).

Q.: Really. I didn't look 29.

J.R.: I told Lila about this old gentleman that we knew a long time ago, and he did -- for his third wife, he met her by mail, and it wasn't too long before they had the correspondence about what she considered long enough, so she asked the old gentleman to send a photograph of himself. He went down to the studio. In those days, everybody didn't have cameras. Well, anyhow, he went down and had his self photographed. And in a few weeks -- I saw him on the street and said, George, your photograph has returned. Stop by in the shop and pick it up. So Mr. Meiser (phonetic) went down and said he'd come for the photograph. Mr. Plumey (phonetic) got it out, and he was looking at it, and looking at George, and then he would pass it to George. And George took a look at it, and he says that is a poor photograph if I ever did see one. Mr. Plumey grabbed it away from him. He looked at it -- he says I think the machine did very well with what it had to work with. (Laughter).

JOAN: Amen.

(Off record.)

Q.: -- tell me he doesn't know why people come down here to see him all the time.

J.R.: I said this morning, well there's one thing for sure, there won't be anybody visiting today. How right you are. How right you are. Anyhow, they're all nice people. Didn't get any shopping done.

Q.: You got no shopping done?

J.R.: No.

Q.: But people came all day today?

J.R.: Not this morning, not this morning. It started in about -
- well, I guess started in about
lunch time. Started in about lunch time and - until 4:00. A long day like
this.

Q.: Why do you suppose people come out to see you all
together?

J.R.: Evidently, they don't have a good book at home.
(Laughter).

Q.: What kind of people come? I mean who are they that
come all the way out here?

J.R.: I'm going to tell you what Ms. Chappelle (phonetic) said.
Somebody called it Chappelle's
first because you get to their land first -- well, anyhow, said we're
going over to Richardson's. She says
oh, you are, huh? Then there's no telling who you'll find there,

Q.: When I was here before, there was somebody here from
Maine who just dropped in.

People drop in from all over the country.

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

Q.: The world.

J.R.: No.

Q.: The country.

J.R.: Yeah, most - well, we have a lot going out like towards
Minnesota, in that direction, but
it's mostly the east coast, and sometimes it's around as far as -- it's
mostly this coast.

Q.: What do you suppose they want?

J.R.: I have no idea. I'm not able to find out.

Q.: Have they always come here to see you?

J.R.: More lately.

Q.: More lately.

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

Q.: Okay, well we're finished with that. You don't know.

What do people - what kind of
people usually come out? Are they people interested in -- are they boat
builders themselves?

J.R.: No, rarely. Most of them have an interest or imagine that
they have an interest in things
marine.

Q.: Like me. See, that's another dumb thing. See what I
mean? Well I was telling Mary -

(Off record.)

Q.: You tell me, let me give you a choice of what you can -- as I -- you said to Mary, people want to know where you're going to sail when you get the Jenny Norman finished, and what do you tell them?

J.R.: I generally tell them that I'm going to Oxford. And that's where I think I shall go.

Q.: That's Oxford, Maryland.

J.R.: That's Oxford across the creek here.

Q.: Across the creek.

J.R.: Yeah.

Q.: That's not Oxford, England. That's another Oxford. Just across the creek. How far across? Can you see Oxford from here?

J.R.: See the lights of it.

Q.: You can?

J.R.: Yeah, but (indiscernible) Point is in the way. But you'd be able to see the -- Tred Avon. When you go up an 80-foot mast, you can see the mouth of the Tred Avon from here.

Q.: Okay. You're not going to climb the mast to see her. You're just going to sail --

J.R.: I've already seen it. I'm not willing to do it just to see it. No, you're right.

Q.: So you think that you'll sail on over to Oxford?

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

Q.: What are you going to do when you get there?

J.R.: Turn around and come back.

Q.: (Laughter). Okay.

(Off record.)

Q.: You named the Jenny Norman after one of your father's girlfriends.

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

Q.: And you told me the reason that you named it Jenny Norman, but you didn't tell me why your father didn't marry Jenny Norman if he had such fun sailing the Jenny Norman. Do you know why he and Jenny Norman didn't get together?

J.R.: I will tell you this. When I wanted to discuss Jenny Norman, he was not in the mood. And if he wasn't in the mood and you were a kid, you dropped it.

Q.: But you knew when you were a kid there was a Jenny Norman.

J.R.: Certainly.

Q.: I find that rather interesting.

J.R.: And they remained friends for quite a while. I don't know that they saw much of each other, but on one or two occasions, she came down on the steamboat, and my father saw her.
(Off record.)

Q.: Okay. Any one of these things. Why did you build a bugeye rather than a skipjack?

J.R.: Of all of the bugeyes that were on the bay, Lockwood was the only one left. And when I started then, she was in sad shape. See, they rebuilt her in the interim. That was the first, that was the first thing. Now I thought, seeing how I'd made my livelihood from the Chesapeake Bay crab, that the last boat I build should be a Chesapeake Bay rig. Then the next thing to decide was what I would build. And, of course, with skipjacks being the only thing left, and bugeyes being reduced back to one, in sad shape, I thought it would be nice to build something that was going out fast and had already gone. Tried to keep a little something on the bay of what once was. But the overriding reason is that a bugeye is the largest boat that a man can handle single-handed. And, of course, I knew if I wanted to go sailing, I was going to want to go sailing, I wasn't going to want to look up a crew, so that helped me decide in favor of a bugeye. I like a sloop. I think a sloop is a more handsome rig, but one man can't handle a sloop, not of the size that I wanted.

Q.: And one man can handle a bugeye with the double mast?

J.R.: Sure. Yeah. Yeah. I told you about a distant relative of mine. I know I did. I told you about taking Marshall, didn't I? My brothers and all were sitting at the table, and we were discussing what was the largest bay craft that could be single-handed, and we all kind of homed in on the bugeye. And I said, this distant relative of ours sailed a 60-footer all his life alone, and surely that had to have set

some sort of record. And my mother showed up in the door. I knew she had something to offer. So she said "Now you boys must remember that Louis probably could've handled a much larger vessel if he'd have only have had both his limbs." He sailed a 60-footer, and he was a one-legged man.

Q.: Oh, for heaven's sake. Okay.

J.R.: (Laughter).

(Off record.)

Q.: -- Cambridge during Word War II.

J.R.: And before.

Q.: And before.

J.R.: Uh-huh (affirmative). I worked in Cambridge after World War II (indiscernible -- away from microphone). War had been over. War had been over a year or two. And how long was I with (indiscernible)? Five or six years?

JOAN: Yes.

J.R.: Seems longer. Might have been, might have been six or eight years after World War II that I came out here to go to work on my own. But I started off on my own in '33 or '34. Maybe '34 or '35, Joan (phonetic).

JOAN: (Inaudible).

J.R.: Well, I'll tell you why. Because I was making \$15 a week, and I told the superintendent that I was going to get married, and that I couldn't make it on \$15 a week. And if everything was agreeable, they'd give me a little bit of money, I'd love to stay on. If not, I was going out for myself. And in about two or three weeks, my raise came through, \$16.67 a week. I never could figure out what that was anyhow. I think it gets into (indiscernible) or something. But anyhow, and so that -- I must've been, then I must've been about 28.

Q.: What kind of a plant or job was that?

J.R.: Canning and manufacturing company. And it was a great place to send a boy to work. They had gristmills, they had basket factory, they had a clipper shop, they had a box factory, they had a sash and door mill, they had sawmills and the railway. And when they were -- when the sash and door mill, whenever you took next -- it didn't make any difference whether you were an apprentice or not, you

took the next part along the aisle, whatever. Sometimes it would be 50 in the plant. Well, you went to the barn, and you got your mule and wagon, went into the yard, pulled the rough lumber out of the piles that you needed. Took it in and -- prepped it and do everything from the rough lumber in the yard to the finished product. And it was good training, extra-good training. And they had five apprentice boys most of the time. And when they were working slack in the shop, they'd send the boys out. Some might go to the barrel factory, some the box factory. But somehow or another, I always got down to the shipyard. And I met those -- gentlemen down there (inaudible).

Q.: You met those great, those great old gentlemen down there?

J.R.: Down the shipyard, yeah.

Q.: So you would say that's where you got your training on - - would you say that's how you got your training in building, boat building?

J.R.: Certainly, it was initial. Certainly, it was the start of it. I was inclined that way though, somehow, because way before that, way before I went to work in town at 15, I had endeavored to build myself something that would sail me everywhere.

Q.: You built something for yourself when? When was the first boat that you built?

J.R.: Heck if I know.

Q.: You don't remember.

J.R.: But I must've been very young because I think my mother sewed me up a sail out of feed sacks, and my father fixed it so I wouldn't leak. So you know I was little, had to be, if I went to work when I was 15.

Q.: Oh, heavens.

J.R.: You couldn't stay in country school after 15 because if you were so stupid that you didn't get through the 7th grade by then, your parents put you to work anyhow. So you could either, you could either graduate through the 7th grade, or you could not graduate, but you still went to work by that age.

Q.: How did you get to Cambridge? Where were you living at the time when you were 15? Where were you --

J.R.: Right here.

Q.: Right here. Next door, right?

J.R.: Yeah.
Q.: In the family home. How did you get from Cambridge --
from here to Cambridge when
you were 15?
J.R.: Guess how.
Q.: I would guess that you --J.R.: Horse and buggy.

Q.: Horse and buggy.
J.R.: Sure.
Q.: Your very own horse and buggy, or other people picked
you up or --
J.R.: Well, my father worked at the same place.
Q.: Oh. Okay.
J.R.: I told you that. My father and I worked together in close
proximity of each other, almost
without a break, maybe five or six years, until I was 60. And I treasure
those years. I really do.
Q.: You told me that a long time ago and I didn't have it on
tape. Now I remember, that you
remind me, that you worked together until you were 60.
J.R.: Until I was 60. Yeah.
Q.: Can you recall, chronologically, from the time you were
15 where you went to work,
where you and he worked together?
J.R.: Well, that's easy.
Q.: Do it.
J.R.: (Laughter). I was -- during the time when I worked with
the manufacturing company,
from 15 until 26 or 27, I'm talking about until I was that age, not that
year, I was laid off only one time.
And then I worked around the neighborhood here. The only thing that
mattered was uninterrupted
employment at that company, until the year that I worked for myself.
Q.: What year was that?
J.R.: Well, we just went over it. I think it might've been
1934, '35 --
O.: '33, that's what you said.

J.R.: '33 is when we were married.
Q.: Okay.
J.R.: And it was a little bit after that.
Q.: Did your father stay on there, or did he also -
J.R.: He stayed on. He stayed on. And by then, well, of course we were driving a Model T.
JOAN: (Inaudible).
Q.: Some of your family?
J.R.: What? What are you talking about --
(Off record.)
J.R.: -- owned some stock in it, and he was superintendent of the yard.
Q.: Oh, okay -- Uncle Will Richardson.
J.R.: That's Pop's brother.
Q.: Okay. Now Pop stayed there, and you --J.R.: And I quit and went for myself.

Q.: Went for yourself in 1934. So how could you all have worked together --
J.R.: I said with the exception of maybe six or eight years.
Q.: Okay. For six or eight years, he stayed there. Did he come --J.R.: He didn't stay there that --

Q.: What did he --
J.R.: He didn't stay there that long. Joan, where was it? Oh, I know what broke him up from there. He had prostate surgery. He had prostate surgery and kind of retired after that. Well, he had to. It was -- it was a grievous operation in those days, and it took him a long time to get over it. He lost out so far as driving himself was concerned, you know. When I got married and went to live in town, he had children his own self and had problems. And after his -- after this surgery, well, then he didn't drive himself at all. And he didn't go back to work at the manufacturing plant then until World War II. Then he came in with us. Must've been 80 by then, Joan.
(Off record.)

Q.: Did your father ever build a boat?

J.R.: Sure. I asked him why he didn't keep on with it. He said it was an unprofitable venture. I knew that. (Laughter).

Q.: Did your father work here with you in the boatyard?

J.R.: Yes, yes.

JOAN: (Inaudible).

(Off record.)

J.R.: -- had his own -- his own tools, and his own work. And he worked when he pleased and quit when he pleased. I mean he didn't work regular hours. He had a bunch of work on his bench when he died.

Q.: And how old was he?

J.R.: He was -- he would've been 95 the next morning.

Q.: Ninety-five.

J.R.: Uh-huh (affirmative). Right on the eve of his 95th birthday.

Q.: And he was working here.

J.R.: Right up, right on up. His mind was a lot better than mine.

Q.: What was he working on? Was he helping you with boat?

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

Q.: He was helping you with boats.

J.R.: Uh-huh (affirmative). I never, ever realized until he was gone how much work he did. How many hours it took me to do the things that he did for me, you know. Made all our cleats, and all stuff like that. Kept everything sharpened. He could sharp my saw at 95--94. He could sharp my saw.

Q.: And he lived in the house next door all these years, which is the family home.

J.R.: He built it.

Q.: He built the family home.

J.R.: Yeah. He built it and lived in it for the rest of his married life.

Q.: Did you once tell me that your grandfather was a carpenter?

J.R.: Uh-huh (affirmative). And so was his father, and so was his father.

Q.: So that's five generations (laughter). So far, that's five.

J.R.: I don't know how far back.

Q.: You don't know how far back.

J.R.: No. We didn't keep track of each other.

(Off record.)

Q.: It squeaks. When I start taking you off the tape, you squeak. You squeak too. It's okay, you can squeak. But you got an honorary degree from Salisbury State College.

J.R.: Did I tell you that?

Q.: You told me that, nobody else told me.

J.R.: How come I told you that? What sort of a question did you ask me that brought that out?

Q.: I don't remember.

J.R.: Yes, I did.

Q.: Yeah. Why did they give you -- what year did they give you an honorary degree? Why did they give you an honorary degree? I mean you graduated from the seventh grade, and then without doing any more book learning -- oh, okay. Tell me about the honorary degree. What's the honorary degree?

J.R.: What? In what field?

Q.: In what field?

J.R.: In humanities.

Q.: What year did they give it to you? Do you remember?

J.R.: Dam if I know.

Q.: Dam if he knows.

J.R.: It's only been three or four years ago.

Q.: Several years ago.

J.R.: Yeah.

Q.: Did you wear a cap and gown, things like that? Did they take a -- he says yes, he shook his head yes. Did you give a speech?

J.R.: No.

Q.: No, he gave no speech. Do you have a picture somewhere in all those boxes and drawers? A picture?

J.R.: Yeah, there's a picture here, but I don't know, I don't think I've seen it for years.

Q.: Okay. What other schooling did you have after the seventh grade? Do you remember?

J.R.: Yeah. It really didn't amount to much.

Q.: It didn't amount to much?

J.R.: Huh-uh (negative).

Q.: Okay.

J.R.: I never did ever get a high school diploma.

Q.: You never got a high school diploma.

J.R.: Huh-uh (negative).

Q.: Okay. How can you build a boat when you don't have a high school diploma?

J.R.: What's a high school diploma got to do with building boats? (Laughter).

Q.: Exactly. Really.

(Off record.)

J.R.: Honorary degree from Salisbury State.

Q.: Did they?

J.R.: Yeah -- was in -- what do they call it, manual arts? Something --

Q.: Yeah. Well, that's nice.

J.R.: I was pleased.

(Off record.)

J.R.: I'm not sure, but I think I'm the only person in Dorchester County that's ever been so honored.

JOAN: (Inaudible).

J.R.: All right, who else has? Say it again?
 JOAN: (Inaudible).
 J.R.: I'm talking about an honorary doctorate.
 JOAN: (Inaudible).
 J.R.: We're talking about -- oh, no. I think that John Mole
 (phonetic) got one.
 Q.: An honorary doctorate?
 J.R.: I think so.
 JOAN: (Inaudible).
 J.R.: I said in Dorchester, but I was just going over -- Joan
 took the issue to me saying that I
 was the only one that had been so honored in Dorchester. I said I thought
 I was. I never heard of
 anybody else.
 Q.: Well, you said you were pleased.
 J.R.: Yeah. I was pleased.
 Q.: Were you surprised?
 J.R.: No. I wasn't surprised. I was dumbfounded. I can't
 understand -- those friends who
 worked very hard for me for it had to be -- no other way it could have
 happened.
 CI: You said you met Mr. Michener and you drove him around
 the area.
 J.R.: I said I met Mr. Michener, and we went through the
 marshes.
 Q.: Did you keep him all night here?
 IR.: No. Why did you say that, Joan?
 JOAN: (Inaudible).
 (Off record.)
 Q.: Did you work on the Jenny Norman today?
 J.R.: I worked on the foremast a little bit, in between my
 visiting.
 Q.: That's why we didn't come today during the way. We went
 down to Croshen.
 J.R.: Did you?
 Q.: Yeah.

J.R.: My very best friend in Croshen died the other day and was buried, and I never knew it until he was gone. Somebody told me he was dead -- Paul Jones. His father worked with us here all his life, and he was -- he was a great man, so far as things nautical. Of course, ACF was one of the largest yacht manufacturing places in the east, tremendous --
(Off record.)

J.R.: He was a tremendous asset. But he had retired then.

Q.: What is ACF? Is that the --

J.R.: American Car and Foundry Company.

Q.: American Car and Foundry Company. Is that in Cambridge? Where is that?

JOAN: That's --

Q.: Wilmington.

J.R.: Might be -- I don't know.

Q.: Okay.

J.R.: Right up there.

(Off record.)

Q.: We'll come to talk -- you can't continue to work, at least you can eat your dinner when we're here. That's why we didn't come earlier because I didn't want to disturb your work. What are you doing now on the Jenny Norman?

J.R.: Chopping the poles.

Q.: Chopping the poles.

SPEAKER: The mast.

Q.: The mast.

J.R.: It's going to take all winter. If I don't watch myself, it's going to take the summer also. I've hardly got enough done today --
(Off record.)

Q.: You can't chop like you used to?

J.R.: I seen a time when I'd run right down that thing. Now it takes me a day and a half.

Q.: And it used to take you how long?
J.R.: Well, I think that, I think that it takes me a day and a half to do what I used to do in a day.
Q.: Well that's not too bad. It's only a half a day more.
J.R.: Yeah, but I don't have that many days.
Q.: Who says?
J.R.: Well, everybody does who's young.
Q.: Okay.
SPEAKER: (Inaudible) Are you going to make yours less -- than the mast used to be, or are you going to be more upright?
Q.: Is he going to make them more raked or upright.
J.R.: Put my mast standing straight as Wadey Murphy's does. You know that.
Q.: How did you know she was talking about Wadey Murphy?
J.R.: Well, anyhow --
Q.: She was.
J.R.: Our fathers raked the mast so that a higher dock was -- back then in the middle of the (indiscernible), and that halyard was used for loading and unloading the skipjacks.
CI.: Really?
J.R.: Now that accounts for the much a little rake. Well, when books began to be written, then people said you need 2 inches and 10 feet, you need 5 inches and 10 feet, you need all this stuff that they want you to need. You'd never build a skipjack.
SPEAKER: And they never realized that the rake --
J.R.: It didn't make any difference what you told them. They couldn't hear it.
SPEAKER: It wasn't scientific. (Laughter).
(Off record.)
Q.: If people hadn't -- you know, a lot of people hadn't come today, it would take you less than a day and a half. Did you keep working while people were here?

J.R.: Did I keep -- somewhat, yeah. Every once in a while I'd stop and run my mouth.

Q.: Do you suppose that's what they come for is to listen to you run your mouth?

J.R.: Either that or they just don't have anywhere to go Sunday afternoons.

(Off record.)

Q.: Oh, that was my next question. Were they here today?

J.R.: Yeah.

Q.: No wonder they weren't at the meeting. Oh, they don't come to meeting anyway.

J.R.: They do not?

Q.: No. Marci Hawkinson (phonetic), this is Marci's husband, and her son -- Hawkinson? They were here today.

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

Q.: Paul was here last Sunday.

J.R.: Paul was here last Sunday chopping.

Q.: Was he chopping?

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

Q.: Did he do you some good?

J.R.: Sure.

Q.: Oh. Because I know Paul likes to come. Paul helped on the Dove, didn't he?

J.R.: Yes, he did. He went through the whole thing, started at the beginning and went through the whole thing. Then his sister came and helped me chop on the Constellation (indiscernible).

Q.: Now Paul came today. Did he come with his tools to work?

J.R.: No. He and his dad are down here visiting.

Q.: Oh. Well, how many people do you think might have come today?

J.R.: A dozen.

Q.: A dozen people in one day. I just can't understand that, people keep coming here every day from all over the country, and he says what's so special. And maybe after I finish the book, I'll find out what's so Special, why they keep coming here. Is it --

J.R.: In the group was Sid Dixon.
Q.: Sidney Dixon?
J.R.: You know Sidney?
Q.: Yes, I know Sidney Dixon. Yeah.
J.R.: All right. He brought a couple of friends with him. They're both Ph.D.'s, but I think the ladies are -- I think her major was biology. I don't know about the gentleman.
(Off record.)
Q.: When I turn it off here, I know -- I'm going to change the subject in just a minute and turn the tape over, and things like that. I wonder if it's because you are building a boat, building a bugeye, and it's something you've always wanted to do. I wonder if there's a tie in there, and people look up to you, and people think you're a good boat builder, and they'll learn something if they come out and look at you.
J.R.: Well the whole thing's gotten all out of proportion to its importance. And you can't control that. people come here and write a bunch of junk about me. It gets published, you know.
Q.: Like me?
J.R.: Yeah.
Q.: (Laughter). You're going to get to read all this junk. You know you're going to have to read it. It's going to be a column.
(Off record.)
Q.: -- writing about you, do you feel that people have just not gotten it right, that they sort of said what they want to say?
J.R.: No. There are some things that come out that are fairly accurate, and there's others with an inaccuracy in every paragraph. But isn't that to be expected?
Q.: No. It should not be.
J.R.: I told you, I told you about the two different words. Now why hadn't they gone over that with that -- if she hadn't gone over it with me, she'd be using the other word.
Q.: Give me the words again. I remember they were --

J.R.: I said traumatic, and she said you mean dramatic. Didn't mean dramatic. But you know she would've. I wouldn't blame her if she did. I was rarely, if ever, satisfied with the press. And I got so I wouldn't read any of it. And so far as saving paper clippings and all that kind of thing, what is it --

Women's Wear, ladies wear --

Q.: Women's Wear Daily?

J.R.: Women's Wear Daily.

Q.: Yeah.

J.R.: I got a clipping of me at a (indiscernible) from a person in California.

Q.: That's a little strange.

J.R.: Now that I thought was funny, but I didn't save it.

Q.: That is funny.

J.R.: (Laughter). Oh, Lord. I never have seen (indiscernible) -- I don't know what sort of publication it was, but it didn't make any difference.

Q.: Was there any that you liked particularly, any article written about you over the years that you thought was good?

J.R.: No, none that I thought was good, but right many I thought was fair. I don't mean fair so far as -- because I don't know anything about how you format and that sort of thing, that's not what I'm talking about. I'm talking about fair so far as (indiscernible). I wouldn't have liked the dirty laundry business (indiscernible) -- might have burned wood, I don't know. (Indiscernible).

Q.: Yes, he does. I have it.

J.R.: -- go along with his piece. He wore a pink shirt, and the mosquitoes would (indiscernible). (Laughter). I said -- poorly -- you don't ever have any money other than great things, none of the finer things, nothing like that. "No," he says, "I'm talking about these insects." I said "What insects?" "Musk-quitoes" he called them. I said "Oh, they are attracted by your shirt." He said "Well, what do I do about this shirt?" And I said "You wear one a real drab color, something that doesn't attract mosquitoes." Well, I thought we were joking, you know. But if he would've taken his shirt off, he would've been as pink as he can be -- they'd have bit him just the same. And he went back, and this chap went over and got on the other side of a whole mess of old lumber over on the other side of the

marsh and says the article says there is no road into this place where he's building this boat. This is the approach of it, this photograph shows the approach of it (indiscernible) lumber and that kind of stuff.

(SIDE B - new speaker)

Q.: Do you mind if I put this up?

SPEAKER: No, certainly not.

Q.: Okay.

SPEAKER: He actually envied me.

Q.: Why?

SPEAKER: Because, I have, of course, lived and worked aboard of a boat all my life, or the best part of my life, and I have covered just about every little nook, corner and cranny on the Chesapeake Bay, and tributaries for that matter. And Mr. Jim, his big thing is he has always built boats for people to do this, but he's never done it himself. And he wants so badly, he -- just even the innocuous places, the mundane, the ordinary -- for instance, the Choptank, he just wants to go up the Choptank as far as he can go.

Q.: I didn't realize that,

SPEAKER: Yeah, yeah.

Q.: I thought he had sailed.

SPEAKER: No, never, never. He has built boats all his life for people to sail, for people to go different places. But he, himself, has never done it.

Q.: And how sad.

SPEAKER: Yeah, it's terrible sad -- terribly sad. And I didn't realize this until one day this week, and I said, Mr. Jim, I said for crying out loud, you know, you've been some of these -- no, he said. He had not -- he had never been in the Little Choptank River, he had never been in the rivers -- the Magothy, none of the rivers on Chesapeake Bay -- or on the western shore, I mean. And it was heartbreaking, it was.

Q.: I cannot believe that. I just --

SPEAKER: Well, I couldn't either. I couldn't either, but it was true.

Q.: I didn't know that because I thought he had told me, as a young man, he had sailboats, and he sailed, but I guess he sailed - creek.

SPEAKER: I assumed that he had been all these places. But, according to him, he had been to none of them.

Q.: Do you want to close your window a tiny bit, and I'll open mine a little? You get more air-- that's okay, no, no, no. Come on, open it, open it.

SPEAKER: No problem.

Q.: No, open it.

SPEAKER: No problem. I've got plenty air.

Q.: I meant to put the -- I thought I had time to throw the dryer on my hair, and I didn't. Yeah, open your window some.

SPEAKER: No problem.

Q.: I'm just amazed.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I was too. I was just astounded. I couldn't make myself believe it, but he said he'd never been in any of these places.

Q.: So at 77 years old, this man is going to start -- take this big -- this bug-eye, which he can handle by himself with no crew, and he's going to go sailing. That's almost like The Old Man and the Sea, how did you catch that big fish.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

Q.: You've read Hemmingway's --

SPEAKER: He told me he's not really sure about his wife. He doesn't know that she will go with him. He hopes she will, but he doesn't know.

Q.: She doesn't particularly like the water.

SPEAKER: Right. But he said he does have quarters aft for he and his wife. And if their friends, if he has friends that would like to go with him, he has quarters forward for the friends. Yeah.

Q.: Uh-huh (affirmative). I have your reservation.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

Q.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: And he said what he wants to do, he wants to go in some of the local and work his way out -- some of the local creeks, rivers, tributaries, and go just as far as he can go, and if he can't, for instance, the Choptank or Tuckahoe, he wants to go as far as he can go in this boat. And if he can't get all the way in this boat, he wants to carry a small boat with him and get off in that and go the rest of the way. But he said he'd never been in any of these places. And it's so terrible, it really is.

Q.: That is terrible. It's much sadder than I thought it was.

SPEAKER: Yeah, yeah. And he's been so nice to so many people, as I told you myself. When I started over there, let's face it, Lila, I was -- I was broke. I didn't have two pennies to rub together. And Mr. Jim, Mr. Jim would actually call me up and say "Come on over for your boat. I'll have a clear place for you next week." And let's face it, that man was -- he had all the work he could possibly stagger under. No -- he wasn't looking for work. That's the last thing he was doing. And I would tell people, I would brag on how cheap my bills were at his railway. And it took me a long, long time to realize that my bills were actually too cheap. They were cheaper than --

Q.: Watch it, watch it.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I see. They were cheaper than they even could possibly have, you know, been under any circumstances.

Q.: And you didn't realize that for a while.

SPEAKER: And I didn't realize it, no. And what Mr. Jim was doing, just as sure as you're born, Mr. Jim was just trying to help me out. And a lot of his labor he was giving me. He was -- I know, by God, he wasn't charging me.

Q.: And how about leaving some of his materials too? I don't know.

SPEAKER: Well, okay. I do know, I do know he gave me -- he gave me a boom one time. I know that, because I never did get a charge for that, and I asked him many times what I owed him. "Well, I'll get it on the bill next time." And it never did come on the bill.

Q.: Never did.

SPEAKER: Never did. I never did see it.

Q.: Do you suppose you were one of the only ones that he did that with?

SPEAKER: No. Certainly not, Lila. Certainly not. Not that gentleman. You know, this is something I've found with people. If you find a person with a certain personality, they tend to -- if you can ever find out what that personality is, the people tend to continue with that same personality. It's awfully difficult for somebody to change. And Mr. Jim is a giving personality, not a taking.

Q.: Do you suppose that's why he doesn't have very much money?

SPEAKER: Sure, sure. Listen --

Q.: Why he had to build the boat by -- go ahead.

SPEAKER: With the reputation that that man has, you know yourself, the reputation that he has as far as what he can do in the way of a mechanic, a wood mechanic, oh, God. He could command any price he wanted. In fact, the bugeye that he just finished building, that thing is almost invaluable. You know, how are you going to put a price on something like that? He could ask almost anything he wants for that boat. What I'm basically trying to say is if he wanted money, I don't think there's any question he could have it. But -- well, okay. If he wanted money, that marina, that railway, he could have sold that for a small fortune. But instead, he's given it to his sons-in-laws and --

Q.: Is it sons-in-laws or is it just one? I have to ask that.
Tom Howell --

SPEAKER: Sons-in-laws.

Q.: Both of them are there?

SPEAKER: Yeah.

Q.: I didn't know --

SPEAKER: Well -- oh, now the other one is gone now. He operated it before Tom. I don't know if you knew it or not. Tom was a commercial pilot.

Q.: No. I didn't know that.

SPEAKER: Tom worked for the same company I did.

Q.: Oh.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

Q.: And you were a commercial pilot too.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

Q.: Okay, I didn't know that.
SPEAKER: You didn't know I was a commercial pilot?
Q.: No.
SPEAKER: Really?
Q.: Really. You look like a commercial pilot, but I didn't know you were one.
SPEAKER: Yeah. I flew for East Coast Air Taxi and Jet America.
Q.: Did you really?
SPEAKER: Yeah.
Q.: A jet plane?
SPEAKER: Huh?
Q.: Jet?
SPEAKER: No. I never did fly jets. But the company was Jet America. We did have jets, but I never did check out -- I flew pretty well everything else.
Q.: You look like a pilot. So his son-in-law was a pilot before he came on to being -- working with him.
SPEAKER: Yeah.
Q.: Well had Mr. Jim charged people for his labor and for his materials the right price, the proper price, he would have had some money in order to get some help to help with the bug-eye. But the only thing he has is social security.
SPEAKER: Lila, if Mr. Jim, if Mr. Jim had actually run his operation as a business, as a real business instead of as a charity organization, Mr. Jim would've been able to hire someone to build the boat for him.
Q.: I met somebody recently, and they said oh, sure, my grandfather owns all this property down by such-and-such -- he was a boat builder, you know. You know, some boat builders did make money, and a lot of money, but he didn't. That was caused partly because of the noise on this, I don't know if it'll catch it. When we get there, we can open windows, when we arrive.
SPEAKER: Yeah.

Q.: Well, we can -- you know, you can put it a little open.
SPEAKER: No problem.
Q.: When we get there, I want you to tell me what you told me earlier about going down to see him. I may or may not use it in the book, but --
SPEAKER: Yeah. You mean about this week?
Q.: This week. Yeah. And he acted that way with all of his other customers, I'm sure.
SPEAKER: Lila, yeah, I'm sure he did. Well, okay. I've heard the oystermen on Tilghman speak of him in just about the same way that I used to. And he was -- no one could understand how come for oyster boats, he was the cheapest repair place anywhere around, and the best. When I say cheapest, I don't mean strictly cheapest. He was the best. The quality of his work didn't suffer for price, that's for sure. Any time you went to Mr. Jim's, you got a good job. And until Mr. Jim got out of it himself, there was no question about the quality of the work that was done because he would inspect your boat, and you didn't have to tell him I want this done or want that done. He would inspect it and do what was necessary.
Q.: Yeah. Just brought it up there and left it.
SPEAKER: That's it, that's it.
Q.: Yeah.
SPEAKER: And he got out, he was not hesitant about working himself. He was there before everyone else, and left after everyone else.
Q.: Well, that figures.
SPEAKER: Yeah.
Q.: He puts in a 40-hour week now.
SPEAKER: And I'll be honest with you. I wish, I just wish with all my heart, that there were some way, some manner that his brain could be tapped, and some way in the world you could get something to absorb the knowledge that that man has.
Q.: There's really no way.
SPEAKER: Yes, but it's a shame, isn't it?

Q.: Yeah, because it'll go with him.

SPEAKER: Yeah. And that is -- that is --

Q.: And he can't sit down and tell it all to you because he doesn't know he's got it all.

SPEAKER: Well, yeah. This is the thing, this is the thing that upsets me. I see people, such as he, with this knowledge. And, boy oh boy, they don't even know they have it. And I guess maybe that's the terrific thing about it too. He doesn't know that he has the knowledge, the tricks, the understanding of wood -- and let me tell you -- the understanding of people that he has.

Q.: Yeah.

SPEAKER: He's so kind. You hear about Christians. And I don't really care what religion he is. By God, he is what I call a Christian. He's a Christian gentleman.

Q.: Even if he were Jewish, he'd be a gentleman (laughter).

SPEAKER: Yeah. I don't --

Q.: I know what you're saying.

SPEAKER: Yeah, I don't care what he is. He can be a Muslim or anything. As far as I'm concerned, he's a terrific man.

Q.: Yeah. He is the old gentry.

SPEAKER: Yeah.

Q.: Yeah. Oh, see, somebody else had it in mind too, and they're going to do it with a camera. These colors you don't get all the time.

SPEAKER: No, that's true.

Q.: And he's probably going to take those guys fishing there -- you have to sort of silhouette with this car -- and you know it gets deeper, and the moon gets wider, and the star gets brighter. Let me see. I have too much background noise.
(Off record - return to Mr. Richardson)

J.R.: If there's anything in a few minutes when I'm done, I might work you in.
(Off record.)

J.R.: -- other interests. Wasn't he, Joan?

JOAN: I've forgotten.

J.R.: I did too, but -- you're supposed to have your head scooted on you a little bit -- when you write (indiscernible). I had a -- who was a bachelor, sourer than an apple. Real, real sour. And I thought to myself I'm not going to grow up and be like that. My home life was just about as ideal as one could have. I never had any yearning to yea to leave home. Never had any reason to leave home. I had more reason to stay than anything else, as I was the oldest boy. And as I said, father and I were beginning to work together at that time -- but anyhow, as I began to approach 30, I thought I'm going to grow up and be like Dick (phonetic), next thing you know. That's not going to happen. And I knew this girl, and she was the oldest one of a family of 18 or 20 (indiscernible) or 8 or 10 of them, but anyhow, I knew that she knew what it was all about with all of those sisters. Used to have five sisters, Joan? Six sisters. So she was the oldest one of seven sisters. Five of them were nurses, and three of them married doctors. But anyhow, you just can't be the oldest girl in that big a family without having to know a little something or other about what goes. And she can put herself through (indiscernible). And so far as I'm concerned, she had a lot going for her. She'd already gotten over that tennis stuff, she was -- funny little things that some girls enjoy, you know.

Q.: (Laughter).

(Off record.)

Q.: I hope I'm recording now, but the thing doesn't seem to be working. I'd like to know what I'm doing wrong. I wonder if I'm fast forward instead of rewind.

(Off record.)

Q.: I think I'm recording now because I want to get some of this down for my query letter for John's Hopkins Press.

(Off record.)

Q.: I am recording now because Joe Valliant's coming over, and I want to know what he has to say about my query letter, because I'm just about ready to send it to John's Hopkins Press.

(Off record - more recording tests).

Q.: Anything that's said -- everything that's said now is going to be on tape.

J.V.: Third paragraph on your original manuscript, just to break that down into two sentences, you had one long run-on sentence with a lot of kind of extraneous information. So as I have rewritten it, it says "For over 50 of his 77 years, Mr. Richardson has constructed, repaired and maintained wooden workboats and pleasure craft," period. The Jenny Norman is the first boat of any size he's built for himself, and the last."

Q.: Yeah, that sounds stronger.

J.V.: Yeah. I did that in a paragraph, the paragraph at the bottom of this first page here, just cut out some verbiage, rearranged things a little. Stop that now because I'm going to read silently.

(Off record.)

J.V.: Three one-syllable words in the title, that's good.

Q.: Mr. Jim's --J.V.: Last Boat.

Q.: -- Last Boat.

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

Q.: Yeah, I like that better. I'll be honest with you

(End of recording.)