

Q: This is March 22nd, 1996. Tilghman Island. Workboats.

MAYNARD LOWERY: [00:00:11] [unclear] in fact, out here right now I've got two... in the past five, six years I hadn't done anything [unclear] boats [unclear] been boats that [unclear] and I wanted to... I hadn't built many wooden... I mean work boats in recent years. But I'd build a little Cape Cod catboat. And I'd sail it. And I'd sell it. And do things like that, you know, and so I had... I built a Cape Cod catboat about 10 or 12 years ago and I'd sail it about eight years. And a guy came in touch with me and wanted to buy it. So I sold it to him [unclear] don't know. My wife? My new wife. I think I'd been married about seven years [unclear] and she liked sailboats. And so I built another catboat called the *Catnapper*. And I've sailed it for the past three years. But in that interim period I decided [unclear] project so I was doing [unclear] so last fall I had another one finished. These are time-consuming boats. They're state of the art boats and they're desirable for [unclear].

Q: And they're wooden boats.

ML: [00:01:58] And they're wooden boats. And they're sailboats.

Q: And what length are they, what size?

ML: [00:02:02] These boats that I've got here now are 16-foot. And they're what's called Cape Cod catboat and they were designed by a man with the name of Fenwick Williams from Marblehead, Massachusetts that was considered the foremost catboat designer of the country. So I decided to build by his drawing and it would be a boat that you'd have with this reputable designer and also it would be built to state of the art, and it would be, you know [unclear] sell. If I wanted to sell it. So that is what I did. And so last fall man came along and bought the newest catboat and he wanted me to take care of it for this winter. And get it ready for the spring [unclear]. In the meantime, another guy came in and he wanted to buy the *Catnapper* which I'd sailed for two or three years. And I sold him the *Catnapper*. And inside the shop here I started to build boat about over a year ago for a man from New Jersey. It was a little 18-foot outboard cruiser boat. Little cabin [unclear] and he died and so after his demise I settled with the widow and took the boat and all through last summer I didn't work on it and it was about [unclear] last fall when it started to cool off some I started working on it and I decided to sell it. And so I've sold it and it is now being finished for a man who lives in Washington, DC.

But that's the kind of stuff I've been doing. I may start a boat and I don't have any market, any customer for it [unclear] and I have a fishing boat that I built my new bride called the *Honeydo* and she'll actually [?] get back on the fishing seat [?] which I call throne.

Q: Is it *Honeydew* D-E-W or *Honeydo Honeydeedoo*?

ML: [00:04:36] [unclear] D-O.

Q: D-O. *Honeydo. Honeydo.* You do this and you do that [unclear].

ML: [00:04:40] [unclear] honey do this, honey do that, you know [unclear] job.

Q: The first time I've ever heard that.

ML: [00:04:47] [laughing]

Q: Since my brother. My brother had always his wife was honey do. Honey do this. Honey do that. I never heard the [both speaking-unclear].

ML: [00:04:58] [unclear] I got the story to tell you. I got out of the service in 1946. I had a man [unclear] boat. Had a young wife and a little boy. So I built this boat for him. And he was a perfectionist and he kept in contact with me through the years, it was a 36-foot boat, and as years went by his first wife, at that time, Mrs. Hall [?], she passed away. And one day he came down, introduced me to his new wife, and she was just a damsel, and I met her, and

she went her way. And years roll by, and the telephone rang one day, and this... it was Mrs. Hall. She said, "[unclear] Hall passed away and now I'd like for you to help me sell the boat." I said, "Okay, Mrs. Hall." So I didn't get much input into that. Somebody came along and bought the boat. But she told me. She says, "I've got a lot of stuff up here." In Baltimore, in her home. Said, "And you might be interested in some of it." So I went up there and that man had been collecting stuff all of his life and it was artifacts of marine stuff and paints and things that would have been my interest from the cellar to the attic. Well, I bought some stuff from Mrs. Hall. And sometime after that Mrs. Hall would call me up say, "Mr. Lowery, I've got a couple compasses up here." Said, "Would you sell them for me?" I said, "Yes, ma'am, I'll try." And so Mrs. Hall would drive down in her Oldsmobile and she'd get out of her car and she'd bring the compasses in and I'd take her to lunch and she'd get back in the car and she'd start up the road. Well, every week Mrs. Hall would call me up and she'd have this to sell and that to sell and it finally dawned on me that Mrs. Hall had designs on me.

Q: [laughing] I guessed that.

ML: [00:07:15] And so I said to my brother, I said, "You know that woman has got designs on me." And I said, "I don't

need anything like that." Well, she wouldn't let up. So she came down and she took... she wanted to go sailing in the catboat that I sold to the guy in New Jersey. And I took her sailing. So we got back. And she [unclear] coming to the shop and she said, "[unclear] I got to get rid of this woman." And she said, "You know what?" [unclear] she got ready to leave, she said, "The Cupid has shot an arrow in my breast." Oh boy [unclear] something to do with [unclear] romance or something you know, so away she went. The next thing I know I got a card from her from Nags Head, she was down there, she loved to travel, and she was down there with her niece, and she told me it was her birthday and I had to give her a birthday present. And I mean this thing was getting out of hand, you know [unclear] brother. We were building the boat [unclear] so finally I knew that this woman had designs on me and she had all this stuff up in Baltimore and [unclear] no end to what she could bring down here. So I just figured I might as well. I'm too old to run so I might as well capitulate.

Q: [laughing]

ML: [00:08:45] So I get in. And she got me.

Q: Love it. I love it.

ML: [00:08:51] So, she got me and I got a picture of the boat up there. And the boat is still in service and it's... I

believe it's over in Cambridge now but the people that bought it, maybe the second or third owners, you know, I don't know what. They fixed it up and they've got it.

Q: Is that the boat that you sold to her husband?

ML: [00:09:13] That's the boat I built for her husband, yes.

Q: That you built for her husband.

ML: [00:09:16] For her, yes.

Q: I don't think you ran too hard. Did you [unclear].

ML: [00:09:22] No, I tell you. Between you and I, I was interested in where that arrow went.

Q: [laughing] I love it.

ML: [00:09:33] [laughing] If I hadn't been too inquisitive about where that arrow went in at, I wanted to find out where it penetrated.

Q: [laughing] [unclear].

ML: [00:09:33] And I never found the scar yet.

Q: Wonderful. Wonderful story. So great. Tell me. I love your name, Maynard. Maynard, is that how to pronounce it, Maynard?

ML: [00:09:57] Yeah.

Q: Maynard Lowery. How long have you been building boats?

ML: [00:10:02] Professionally I started in 1946.

Q: And unprofessionally?

ML: [00:10:09] Prior to that I did a lot of boat work as a

youngster around here. I went in the service for five years. When I got out I had an ample amount of experience. I go... I grew up around it. My grandfather and father and different ones were boatbuilders. And so I didn't know what I was going to do, you know, it was after the war, and a guy said to me, wanted to know if I wanted to build a boat [unclear] sell them [unclear] the first one *Burt* [?] and the second one was for her husband [unclear] Hall. Then I moved down here and I've been building boats here ever since.

Q: The second boat that you built was for her husband?

ML: [00:10:57] Yeah.

Q: So it's quite a while ago.

ML: [00:10:59] Oh yeah, it was back in 1946.

Q: Okay, so she had been in touch, she had her eye on you for a long time.

ML: [00:11:05] Well, she didn't come in his life till years down the road. When I first built the boat, his first wife was with him. And she passed away and I don't know what year it was but she was married to him about 16 years and then [unclear] passed away [unclear] older than her. And then I told her, I said, "That boat was, that boat I built Al Hall [?]," which was her husband.

Q: Al Hall?

ML: [00:11:35] Al Hall. I said, "That boat that I built for him was instrumental in you coming in my life, and I guess you'll be round here when I build my last one," and so every time I [unclear] get to the point where I say, "Well, I guess this is about it, I don't [unclear] more boats," then I think about what I stated, and I, man, I better build another boat.

Q: [laughing] [unclear].

ML: [00:11:58] [laughing]

Q: She'll [unclear] keep to your word.

ML: [00:12:00] Yeah.

Q: Are you folks from Tilghman? You said you moved over here, where'd you move over here from?

ML: [00:12:05] I was born and raised in Tilghman but she was an old Baltimorean.

Q: Okay. Where were your parents from? You said your father and your grandfather were boatbuilders. Where?

ML: [00:12:13] Right here.

Q: Here in Tilghman. Lowery. What was your father's name?

ML: [00:12:19] My father's name was Lon [?] Lowery. My grandfather's name was James Lowery. And he had built a number of log canoes in his early days. Actually, he was from Baltimore. He was... his father, I understood, had a fleet of [unclear] schooners.

Q: Now is this your grandfather? This is your grandfather.

ML: [00:12:44] This was [unclear]. And he came down the bay here. And he got in a storm and he came into this harbor and harbor here at Tilghman. And he ran into my grandmother, which was a Covington. And he married my grandmother and he decided to live here. And he had his children and raised his family here and it was a rather large family and most all of them were boatbuilders.

Q: Sid Covington.

ML: [00:13:22] Sid was my grandmother's brother.

Q: Okay, then you were probably related to John B. Harrison.

ML: [00:13:30] Distantly, and also John North, Judge North.

Q: Judge North.

ML: [00:13:37] His mother, she was a Covington I think. And John had... old man John had married her and young John came along. But my grandmother's sister was... old man John used to come down and visit her a lot and he called her aunt, and he was [unclear] because I think his mother was her sister.

Q: All tied in here and then there was there was two.

ML: [00:14:06] But Sid [unclear] he was a log canoe builder, he built [unclear].

Q: [unclear] line.

ML: [00:14:13] And my grandfather Lowery, he built the *Mary*

Rider [?] which is now gone but she was [unclear] dug up out of the marsh in one back in the '20s I think. Or early '30s. I think it was in long about that time. And they raced her. Won the first governor's cup. For that particular kind of racing.

Q: I've written a lot about the family and I wrote [?] about John B. Harrison through Sam McRae [?]. And now I'm kind of in contact with Dave McRae [?]. And how that all came.

ML: [00:14:51] [unclear] John B. I remember him well and my father used to work for him.

Q: Out on Devil's Island [?]?

ML: [00:14:58] Out on Devil's Island. And see, when I first came down here after the war after I built [unclear] Hall's boat, I didn't have any place to build boats and the old Devil's Haunt [?] was out there. And I went to Captain John B.'s widow Miss Lottie [?]. And I asked her if I could rent the place and build boats out there. And she said, "Sure." And I [unclear] out there and I built I think it was about three boats out there. Then this place became available in 1970 [unclear].

Q: You say when you moved over here. But you were born here.

ML: [00:15:41] Oh yeah.

Q: So you've been here.

ML: [00:15:42] Well, I'd been away in the service for five

years and I was in Baltimore when I built the Hall boat.

Q: I see.

ML: [00:15:51] And then I after that, I moved back here.

Q: Right.

ML: [00:15:55] Which was my home.

Q: Do you have any idea how many wooden boats you built? It looks like you kept records.

ML: [00:16:04] Well, really I haven't. You know, I used to say this is just temporary thing with me, I'm only going to build boats for a little while [unclear] do something better.

Q: [laughing] What's better?

ML: [00:16:16] And the years just rolled by and here I am.

Q: [unclear].

ML: [00:16:21] [laughing] Anyway I would estimate about 100 boats. All boats. All [unclear] about 150 boats. I've been building here since 1950 which makes 46 years. All told [unclear] 50 years. And three boats. Average three boats a year. Would be. And some boats took me year to build, some boats I would build three and some boats I... some years I'd build more.

Q: Were these mostly work boats?

ML: [00:17:01] There was many many pleasure boats in the late years. Early years start off they were commercial boats.

Q: And have you worked in the boatyard by yourself? I know your son was in with you when I came down looking for you.

ML: [00:17:18] And since 1984 was the last big job. Big boat that I built. And I haven't employed anybody since then except maybe in the spring of the year when I get brushed up [unclear] get [Paul up with] something. I get some help.

Q: What's the biggest boat that you've built? You just said that was the biggest [unclear].

ML: [00:17:41] That was the last big job. Biggest boat I built was 50-foot, 53-foot. Was [unclear] I built that for Roger [?] [unclear] that [unclear].

Q: Wow. And that was what? Pleasure?

ML: [00:17:54] That was a pleasure boat [unclear].

Q: Pleasure craft. And the most, the largest most recent one that you just said [unclear].

ML: [00:18:01] It was a commercial boat. I built for a man in Kent Island by the name of Banton [?] and that boat he didn't use it much and he sold it. No, he didn't sell it. Yeah. He sold that boat and the buyer was a guy from Washington, DC, I think. And he used it and then he turned around and gave it to the Chesapeake Bay Foundation and they've got it. And they used it as one of their boats doing the kind of work [unclear].

Q: Have you touched fiberglass?

ML: [00:18:40] The only fiberglass experience I've had is I've worked... I've customized two three hulls that were built by somebody else [unclear] fiberglass boats [unclear] now. I don't like fiberglass. I don't like to work in it.

Q: Sure.

ML: [00:19:00] I've worked. I used it to a small degree such as cabin tops and decks and I have this little boat inside here. She's... her bottom is covered with fiberglass [unclear].

Q: Do you cover it or do you buy the hull elsewhere? Do you do fiberglass work in your shop?

ML: [00:19:21] [unclear] only if I'm building a wooden boat and it's plywood tops like cabin tops, I might cover it with plywood fiberglass. But as far as building [unclear] fiberglass boats out now, no. The boats that I have customized, the hulls were built by other people.

Q: What do you mean customized?

ML: [00:19:42] Well-

Q: [unclear].

ML: [00:19:44] To make a yacht out of a hull [unclear] you know, there was people that were building like that outfit there in New England. Called Bruner and Stillman [?]. They were building a down-easter boat. It's about a 40-

footer. And in late years before Roger Moore's [?] demise he bought a hull from them and had me customize it. Which made it into whatever he wanted.

Q: Right.

ML: [00:20:18] And it was powered by diesel. Twin diesel. And it was [unclear] spacious cabin. And he passed away before it was complete and finished and the estate sold it to a car dealer in Delaware. And I had some work to do for him. And the boat still... the boat is in Florida now.

Q: [unclear] how many children do you have?

ML: [00:20:50] I have two, two sons.

Q: And do they both work at the boatyard, or did they?

ML: [00:20:54] The youngest one worked for me some and he's very good with his hands. He's a good [unclear]. But the other one was more inclined to do other things [unclear].

Q: So they didn't come into the business.

ML: [00:21:11] No.

Q: It's been your business. I'm just amazed at how neat you keep your office. I used to sit. Yeah.

ML: [00:21:21] [unclear] I knew him but not too well.

Q: [unclear] that's interesting that Tilghman is pretty much separated from the Cambridge area and everything and from Dorchester County. And so you...

ML: [00:21:36] Yeah. I got acquainted with Jim. See, I went

[unclear] museum for a few years. For a year and a half in the '70s. And I started the restoration of *Edna Lockwood*.

Q: *Edna Lockwood*.

ML: [00:21:54] And I did the major restoration of her and then I quit and came back here.

Q: I talked on her for...

ML: [00:22:02] [unclear] I got a pain in my shoulder. I got my "awfulritis," my son used to call it.

Q: Awfulritis.

ML: [00:22:09] Awfulritis.

Q: [unclear] went on here at the boatyard over the years.

ML: [00:22:16] Well, this little story might be of interest.

As a young boy I lived on the island back in the Depression days. And I'd go to the store and I [unclear] wooden orange crates. And I was taking it apart and I decided I was going to build a boat instead of making it out of solid block wood I was going to build this boat out of little planks off this orange box. And next door to me is a man and his wife and they had no children. And he was a policeman, there wasn't Department of Natural Resources then but he was [unclear] policeman [unclear] police captain. And he was working out of Claiborne. And he said to me [unclear] he said, "Boy, what are you doing?" And I said, "Getting ready to build a boat, Mr. [unclear]." He

said, "Don't use that stuff." Said, "Tomorrow when I come down the road I'll bring you some lumber." And he was working out of Claiborne and [unclear] police boat was up there. So between Claiborne and here the Out [?] Lumber Company [unclear] the old [unclear] there and [unclear] had this little car with a rumble seat into it. And when he came down here was this nice pretty little board sticking out of the rumble seat and this little bag of nail. So he gave me the lumber and I built the boat and I named her the *Bullet*, a little flat bottom skiff about eight feet long. I don't know how or why I got the name *Bullet* but I got the name *Bullet* and I named her and painted her all up and the years went by and Jake [?] retired and I'd be up here building boats up to my neck and I had to expedite a boat [unclear] say, you know, I had quite as much work as I could do for the time to do it in and it was spring was coming on and the owner was on my neck and Jake [?] would come in and I was sweating and going on and [unclear] to build the daggone boat and I'd say to Jake [?], "Jake, you're the guy got me into this, if you hadn't bought me that load of lumber and that bag of nails I wouldn't be a boatbuilder." And he'd laugh, you know [unclear] that's just a little story that came to my mind.

Q: And that was way back when. That was when you were...

ML: [00:24:47] That was way back when I was a youngster but I was quite proud of that boat, the *Bullet*. But when he brought those... that them little boards I [unclear] cypress boards, half inch thick, six inches wide, eight feet long.

Q: Are these some of the boats that you've built?

ML: [00:25:09] That's some of... the few of many.

Q: Has anybody [unclear] I'm sure.

ML: [00:25:13] They came down one time when I was building that boat in '84 [unclear] big one.

Q: A television company. I lost that one. Television, go ahead.

ML: [00:25:21] It was a television outfit. They wanted to make some kind of a program and they did show it on the air and it showed us sawing and the big keel [unclear] off the truck and it was a 40-some-foot boat. It was [unclear] big boat and in the interview they asked me when I was going to retire and I said I didn't know. I don't... the only retired boatbuilders I know is down in the graveyard.

Q: That's right.

ML: [00:26:01] And they froze me right on.

Q: [laughing] [unclear] that's the truth, that's absolutely the truth [unclear].

ML: [00:26:07] [unclear] that happened sometime before that.

When they started make this museum up here in Saint Michaels.

Q: Right.

ML: [00:26:16] It was a well-to-do man was interested in it, he came down and he wanted to know if I knew of any retired boatbuilders around and I told him, I [unclear] then I said, "The only retired boatbuilders I know is back down in the graveyard." But I... that reminds me a story, I built... this man wanted me to build him this boat, the same man that came down and asked me. His name was Barnard and he lived up here on Mulberry Point. And we built the boat and the day for launching came and Mr. Barnard and Mrs. Barnard was to come down for the launching. So I said and the boat was named the *Lady Nell*. So the boat was right down ready to go in the water. And we were waiting for the tide to rise. And Mr. Barnard had his movie camera so he leaned up against the shop and started to run the camera and I didn't have any help to help launch the boat. So I looked coming around marsh and there was two young strapping Coast Guard boys. They were... the Coast Guard station was up here then. So I asked them if they'd help hold this boat on her feet just to when she went down in the water. Sure, Mr. Lowery, yes, indeed. And I look coming and here came my father which was sort of retired,

incapacitated, and my old uncle. And they wanted to help too so I got the two old men on one side the boat, the two young men on the other, and I got under the bow the pry [?] and Mrs. Barnard got her bottle of champagne and I said, "Mrs. Barnard, when you... when I tell you you hit her." She said, "All right." And Mr. Barnard was running his camera, you know. And I said, "Okay, Mrs. Barnard." And she says, "I christen you the *Lady Nell*." Well, she missed the boat and fell over upside down and her fancy lace on her skirt and everything was flying in the air. And I didn't know whether she got hurt or not but while I run to her, Mr. Barnard sat there grinding away.

Q: [laughing]

ML: [00:28:33] And then I heard these two old men my father and uncle hollering, "Let it [unclear] let us up. Let us up." Well, the boat had rolled over on them. And the Coast Guard boys, instead of pushing down they pushed sideways. They pushed these [unclear] then [unclear] old men were trying to hold the boat up. Mrs. Barnard was down in the marsh upside down. And Mr. Barnard was taking the pictures.

Q: [laughing]

ML: [00:28:59] And I finally got Mrs. Barnard up. Got the old men out, got everything on her feet. Got the boat back

straight and I said, "Boys, you got to go down not sideways with a boat." And brushed Mrs. Barnard off. She wasn't hurt. And down the boat went. But that was a memorable launch. [laughing]

Q: [unclear] a launch [unclear] [laughing]. That was great. Do you know any other boatbuilders who are building wooden boats?

ML: [00:29:31] Really the only man that may be building something out of wood was Eddie Cutts [?] [unclear].

Q: Yeah, I've already done Eddie Cutts for the same magazine, he was hard to do, do you know [unclear] is that a... looks like a Piper Cub. Or what is that?

ML: [00:29:50] No [unclear] Aeronca. A derivative of the Aeronca. It's a Champion.

Q: It's a single.

ML: [00:29:56] Single engine. Two plates. And a seat.

Q: [unclear].

ML: [00:30:01] And I bought two of those when Bill Noonham [?] the airport fixed base operator that was up there a few years [unclear].

Q: Right.

ML: [00:30:09] When he sold out he sold to [unclear] name of Micheline [?]. And those... that airplane and another one was up there that he used to fly from time to time and I

bought them from Micheline. And I had a boat down here because they needed restoration. And I sold one before I did anything to it. And that one I made a conversion. She was [unclear] tricycle gear [?] if you know what I'm talking about.

Q: No, I really don't but I believe you.

ML: [00:30:47] Well, anyway she didn't have a tail wheel she... that's what's called a tail dragger but be it as it may I made a change. Which necessitated a permit from the federal government called 337 permit. And I did all the work which had to be inspected and signed off by a licensed inspector and... but we couldn't get the permit. Eventually I got it. Through contact out of Cleveland, Ohio. Well, the time I got the airplane ready for flight I decided I was wore out with it. And I decided that my flying days was pretty well over. So I would sell it. So I advertised it in trader plane [?] and a man from Wisconsin.

Q: [unclear] your head or do you do a [unclear] model?

ML: [00:31:52] [unclear] a plan.

Q: You do draw plans, you don't make a half model.

ML: [00:31:57] I...

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