

Interview Log

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BEGIN SIDE A

P.L.: Today is Wednesday, September 8th, 1999. We are interviewing Mason Shehan. Interviewers are Pete Leshner and Ceres Bainbridge.

M.S.: I'm William Mason Shehan, with one E. I was born here in Talbot County first day of June 1914. My father and mother were also Talbot Countians, and my first sailing experiences were at Peach Blossom Creek with some people named Lutril (phonetic), who had an old dingy, and we used a buggy top, like a surrey with a fringe on top, and we'd row upwind and sail downwind. And that progressed to a man named Worth Holden (phonetic) who lives here in Easton who had a very nice knockabout, and we sailed in that up and down the Peach Blossom Creek, slowly learning. And we, I hate to admit it, used to steal watermelons down at the mouth of the Peach Blossom Creek from a man who thought he had them hidden (laughter). And from there, my father bought me my first boat, which was a double-ended Smith's Island crab skiff, flat bottom. Had a little jib on it similar to the ones the Chesapeake Bay canoes have, and a speed-type sail for a mainsail. And in that boat, I learned to capsize and survive. It was a capsizing boat. And the thing would reach — it sailed windward pretty well, but it was a reaching thing, it would fly. Well in about 1928, the Johnson Brothers won the world Star Boat Championship at New Orleans, and I had known them slightly before

that, but then I became very well acquainted with them. Used to pedal my bike down there almost every day that I could get away, particularly on weekends during the school year in the fall, and they really took me under their wing and taught me to sail and race. And in due course, Lance Johnson (phonetic), who was the crew, wanted a boat of his own and built one, a Star Boat, and Graham, the skipper, took me under his wing and I crewed for him a couple, three years and really began to learn the intricacies of racing. My next step in this sailing business was with Patsy Rascobb Burmer (phonetic), Dr. Burmer's mother, a remarkable sailor. She was 12 years old, and I was 17. She won a Star Boat, the boat, Star Boat Ripple that the Johnsons had bought to defend the championship at Gibson Island. I think that must've been in 1929 or '30. And Graham said "We're going to send Ripple up the Chester River to the Rascobbs, do you want to go with it to be crew?" and I said "Sure, that'd be neat." So I went up there and got acquainted with Patsy and the Rascobbs and crewed for her for about four years, and that was great fun. She was a remarkable helmsman, and she doesn't like me to refer this way to it, but she had the nerve of a burga (phonetic). She wouldn't hesitate to put the boat in almost impossible situations. It kept me busy in the front end of it. We won the fleet championship here in Talbot County and went first to the World's Championship, it was called the Internationals in those days, International Star Boat Championship, at Southport, Connecticut. That was 1932. And we didn't do badly. We were 17th in a fleet of about 30 boats. And some of the locals up there were a little incensed that a 17-year old girl -- I mean a 12-year old girl was up there with a 17-year old guy sailing in their world's championship. And we beat some of them, so that quieted that down. Sailed with Patsy there. We went out to Long Beach to race next year, and there was too much wind out there for us. We didn't disgrace ourselves.

All the time -- I sailed with Patsy until, I guess, 1934 when I got my own Star Boat. And I was so proud of that. The name was Armageddon, and it stretched all the way across the stern (laughter). So we changed the name to Star Dust (laughter). In any case, it was a Portman (phonetic) boat -- well, I shouldn't say that because -- Portman boat would sail pretty well, and I won a first Chesapeake Bay Championship in that boat. I've forgotten the date of that. But any case, that was held over

in Gibson Island, and it was, obviously, one of my favorite series from then on, and I subsequently won three more championships, not with that boat.

P.L.: Did you buy that boat new?

M.S.: No. It was a used boat. It came from Shelter Island, Long Island. I think the name of the people who owned it were Poore, but I'm not sure, P-0-0-R-E, I guess. It was not very well built. It leaked. My brother crewed for me in those days, and he complained bitterly the second season about how bad it leaked, and all he did was bail. So I sold that boat, and we bought a boat called Flapper from a guy, a fine Star Boat sailor from Norfolk, and we had good luck with that boat. That was a very fast boat. We had just very good luck with it. I might hesitate here and say that I was still pretty young, and I had my favorite alibis. If it didn't do well, of course, the wind was too light or too heavy, had the wrong sails on, somebody got in my way, all that nonsense. And finally, I refined it to in later years where someone asked me why I didn't do better, well I just didn't go fast enough, and that covered all the alibis that were so painful in my youth. Any case, my brother stopped crewing for me. Well, he crewed for me up to when I sold the Flapper, I guess, was the name of that boat in 1939 and went in the Navy. And I was a Naval aviator all through World War II. During the war years, I was stationed first in Pearl Harbor, and the Dowcetts(phonetic) were Star Boat sailors out there, and they took me under their wing, and I crewed for Laurie Dowcett in a Star Boat in Hawaii for several years -- not several, three or four years, I guess. Also crewed in an S boat for Mrs. Dowcett, who was a fine lady sailor. And most times, it was a significant breeze out there, it was pretty good trade wind breeze, up to 18, which is enough for a Star Boat.

P.L.: Where would you sail out there?

M.S.: Right off Waikiki in the summertime, winds, northeast trades would come in and they blew against the waves, which made a fine surfing situation, and I learned to do that too. I enjoyed that a great deal. And in the summertime, they moved around to the Alowai (phonetic), kept the boats there and we raced out in front of Waikiki. In the wintertime, they moved back to the Pearl City Yacht Club where they introduced me to -- when they took me under their wing. And we sailed in Pearl Harbor.

There's enough room for that. In those days, that's the way the weather stays the same in Hawaii, the wind comes in from the south, and they call it the Kona breeze, and we raced there in the S Boats and in the Star Boats. Very pleasant experience. I got to know Ducon Emoco (phonetic) the great swimmer, and sail with him several times, and that was an adventure and a lot of fun.

I was fortunate to survive the war and came back to the Eastern Shore in 1946 and bought another Star Boat. Surprise. And that boat was the Duchess. John Tydid (phonetic) brought it from Southern California, and it was a very fast, upwind boat. And we won a few races with that. One day up on the Chester River, I had gotten a little lead and -- down the weather mark and a guy named Lippincott came roaring past me on an either reach or run, and opened my eyes to Lippincott boats. I sold the Duchess shortly after that and bought a Lippincott boat and was sailing their boats then for the rest of my career. We had good luck with those boats. In 1946, I think we went up to Chicago, yes, to race, and we finished sixth in the world there, which is the best I've ever done in that class racing. And we won a trophy for doing the best in that regatta, and never placing first, second or third (laughter), so I don't know what kind of trophy that is, but we won that one.

In any case, I've forgotten the names, really have forgotten the names of some of the boats. We went to Toronto to race in the North American Championships, and we must've done something, but I wasn't real well, good in that race. We went to -- I guess we ought to backtrack a little to just before the war. I think the last year I raced was 1939, we went to Rochester to race. And the most remarkable thing about that was it's the coldest I've ever been in any boat anywhere. Cold front came through, and fresh water evaporates faster than salt and took all the heat out of my body and every place else. Any case, I'm rambling now about my bygone days. In 1952, the Italians paid the freight on Star Boats to the World's Championship in Naples. We went to Naples. A fellow named Dan Hubers (phonetic) crewed for me over there. And it was just a very enjoyable experience. It was just great. The Italians taught us, or treated us so nicely. Straulino, the great Italian sailor, was defending, he was a Naval officer, an Italian Naval officer, so the Italians really ran the regatta, I mean the Navy did, and we were invited

up to the Chief of Naval Operations apartment, the most beautiful apartment I've ever seen in my life. He had paintings and draperies and rugs that you can't imagine, and the thing looked out on the Bay of Naples with Vesuvius to the left, and it was just a grand experience. We were second in the first race, and I thought we were really going to do something, and we retrogressed from there. I think we finished 12th or 15th. (Laughter).

We had good luck in the bay races here. We won the Lipton Trophy a couple, three times, and that's at Oxford. Oh, I want to talk about John Charles Thomas a little bit. When we formed the Eastern Shore fleet, the Johnson Brothers raced in the Gibson Island fleet. After they won, we formed a fleet over here. That was based up the Miles River at their home, the Johnson Brothers' home. And we kept the boats in the water, tied to stakes, and raced in the upper Miles River. Taught you how to tack on the puffs and the shifts. Any case, I was sailing my boat alone one day down the river, and John Charles Thomas, who was the son-in-law of a gentleman who owned an estate on the edge of the water, saw me come by and hailed me down and said "Hey, buddy, take me for a sail." And I said great. So he got in the boat, and he didn't know anything about sailing, and we sailed around, and he thought that was pretty nice. He raced motor boats, incidentally. And we became acquainted that way. I took him sailing a couple other times, and one day he said "Now what can I do for your sailing?" I don't know. They don't have a trophy at the Miles River Yacht Club. And hence came the John Charles Thomas Trophy at the Miles River Yacht Club, which we were able to win a couple times.

Any case, it was at the Miles River Yacht Club racing for that trophy that I probably got the greatest lesson of my sailing career. We had just come back from winning at Gibson Island, and I was all puffed up and very painful to everybody around me. And Robert Gibson, who lived up the river, was a marvelous light air sailor. You know, I thought I was going to do pretty well. We were dead last in one of the races, and he was over against the east side of the Miles River just flying along, and we finished last, which was a good thing, straightened me out (laughter). And I asked him when we came ashore, I said "Robert, how did you do that?" And it was no wind. I mean it was just almost flat calm. And he

said "Didn't you see that cut over at the cornfield over there?" "No, I didn't see it." He said "Well, the wind rises off of those, and it comes off the river, goes over the cornfield and up it goes. And its strength is the air on the water." Simple lesson. (Laughter). I used that later sometimes, particularly when you're sailing up a river or something like that. But he was a great guy, and I crewed for him early on, and then I raced against him many years.

So I sailed those boats for 30 years, and then I went ocean racing. And I like that, but it was hard work, and I'd begun to get older then, and I really missed the tactical sailing. Ocean racing was fun, the crew was nice, sailed nice boats and all that good stuff. But you don't have the tactical situations. For instance, starting the Bermuda race, you're messing around the starting line, dose order sailing to start off. First night out, everybody disappears and you're out there three or four days by yourself, essentially, until you're close with the island. And I like to navigate, and that was good fun. But I like tactical sailing in the One Design classes. In any one race, you would have 30, as many as 30 different situations that required knowledge of the rules and how to apply them, and how to stay out of trouble, and successfully finish the race with a lot of -- I referred to it as a moving chess game, and it was, with 15, 20, 30 players, and having to think ahead and see a situation developing up ahead that you can solve or not solve. That's why I enjoy about that kind of sailing. And so it tapered off in the ocean racing. I guess my last effort --

P.L.: Did you sail your own boats in that, or were you crewing?

M.S.: No, I was crewing for Mark Ewing (phonetic) most of the time. I went to Bermuda once in a Cal 40, I've forgotten the guy's name. And the rest of the time, the other four times I went down there as watch captain for Mark. And we did pretty well. We won our class one time.

P.L.: Were those the Annapolis to Bermuda races --

M.S.: No, Newport to Bermuda. Newport to Bermuda. And then we raced up and down the coast, you know, from Annapolis to Newport, you know, a lot of bay races. One of the -- I was with Clayton in this instance. We raced down the bay in November, I think it was the old Cedar Point race, and Clay used to bring some teenagers along for training purposes, and I would well, it's not navigating in the bay, it's

pilotage, and somewhere along the race, he'd say "Where are we, Mace?" And I'd say "Oh, I don't know," (laughter). And these kids' eyes would get as big as quarters. And it was dark. One time it snowed. We got a great deal -- of that kind of nonsense.

I forgot to tell you the very first instance of major sailing was when I was a teenager, and you'd have to go back to the very first part of this interview for this. My father, he was a lawyer, he was a half owner of a bugeye called the M.A. Summers. It was a big one. That boat was 90 feet overall from the end of the bow spit back to the boom. And captain named Captain Lyn Collins (phonetic) from Tilghman Island, of course, dredged oysters in it in the wintertime. In the summertime -- incidentally, when he was dredging oysters, he had oh, I guess, six or eight guys in the waist of the boat and the captain. In the summertime, he ran wheat and watermelons and tomatoes to Baltimore. And he managed the boat, that size boat, with one black guy. And my father arranged a trip with Captain Lyn to go to Baltimore. And I boarded the boat down in Trappe Landing with a load of wheat to go to Baltimore. And, running and reaching, we went up there possibly in a day. I don't remember spending that night on the boat.

And two remarkable things. I was over-eager, of course, and wanted to run everywhere on the boat to do what I was supposed to do. And he finally said, "Now, Mason, on this boat, we never run." (Laughter). So that was one lesson. Well, we ran on up the bay, and he sailed it right into the dock where we were going to unload, and I thought they'd start the yawl boat, you know -- no, indeed. Ran it up, ran it up, and the boat stopped where he could hand the lines to the guys on the dock, and he didn't run to do that either. And so he dropped the sail, and they put the vacuum overboard, pumped the boat out, and we started down the bay, I guess the same southerly we'd come up on. And we weren't making much headway. So he decided well, we'll go in -- call it the Magothy River -- go in the maggoty river. So we went in the maggoty river, and we lay there two days, mostly asleep. And he was in no hurry. And the wind -- front passed through, the wind came westerly and off we took, went back to Trappe Landing. So that was my first, really first sailing other than up and down the creeks. And Captain Lyn and I got to be great friends, and the black guy too, whose name I can't remember.

P.L.: You were pretty young at that point?

M.S.: That was before I started Star Boat racing, so I was probably 14 to 15, maybe 16, somewhere in that neighborhood. That was fun, and I got hooked on the whole thing. Going back to the Johnson Brothers, they built their own Star Boats. One down in New Orleans in a boat called Eel that they had built, and they sold that, and they bought Ripple, the boat that I later crewed in with Patsy Burmer. And that boat, well, I helped build the boat, actually. My share of building it was they riveted there with their (indiscernible) and I held the weight while they buried the rivet over. They had a big lead fishing weight that I held while they -- so that's how I helped them.

P.L.: That was on Ripple?

M.S.: Well, they built several of them. They built the boat that's going to be, that's being rehabbed here --

P.L.: Escape.

M.S.: Escape. And I knew the Grovenors real well, we used to stay with the Grovenors in Gibson Island when we raced there, and Mel was a good friend of mine, and Gilbert -- most anxious to come to this affair -- crewed for me one time when the Chesapeake Bay Championship was held at -- well, any case, there was a regatta held at Sue Island up in Baltimore. And we knew the Grovenors quite well. As a matter of fact, Mel had a place in Florida close to where we stayed, and we had him over, the last party he went to because he went home and died a few weeks after that.

P.L.: You got to help with a number of those --

M.S.: Yeah, several of them, yeah. As a matter of fact, I think I was going down there when they built the boat that John Miller owns, an 18 footer, isn't it? Yeah. Claire de Lune. I can't remember my own name, and I fished that -- (laughter). A senior incident.

P.L.: Now you kept the whole Eastern Shore fleet up at the Johnsons.

M.S.: Well, for several years. Well, that's another little item that could go in there. Johnson (phonetic), who had the Johnsons build a boat for one of his daughters, gave us a big cabin (phonetic) from off a steam -- a major ocean-going steamer, and we installed it at Oxford and put a chain hoist on it and started sailing the boats dry, which you had

to do to be competitive anywhere else you went. And we moved the fleet over to Oxford at that time. That was, oh, I guess in the 50's probably. No, the late 40's, I guess it was. For a long time, we kept them at the Oxford Boatyard after we moved the fleet over there, but that cost us money to put it back and forth, so we got a chain hoist and put that in. And that's what really, we had 18 boats at the Eastern Shore fleet at Oxford at one time. Now there's not one. Somebody is going to refine and edit this thing, aren't they? (Laughter) I'm rambling all over the place remembering instances.

P.L.: When you were keeping the fleet up there, you also got involved in the maintenance of these winter storage and that sort of thing.

M.S.: Oh, yeah, sure. And I learned a lot about boats, watching them build them and taking care of my own boat. One of the funny things -- we used Baltimore Copper Bronze which was very good in these warm waters, no barnacles and --

P.L.: This was your bottom paint?

M.S.: Yeah. And I used to rub the heck out of it when the boat was out of the water. And it really turned out like a sheet of bronze. He would say you rub -- paint's very expensive, now you're rubbing it all off (Laughter). But it was smooth bottom. Matter of fact, the time we went up to Chicago, and I don't think it's still so, but in the early days, they made you keep the boats over during the whole regatta. There were five races with one lay day. Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday's lay day, Friday, Saturday. And you didn't drop a race out. My boat was painted with bronze, Duchess, at that time. And it kept fine. And the boats that were enameled blistered in the four or five days they were overboard.

Another kind of an interesting thing was the fads that develop in sailing. I watch them with a great deal of amusement. But Harry Nye, who was President of Murphy and Nye Sailmakers in Chicago, a fine, fine Star Boat sailor, and he was a tight rigging advocate. Wait, I take that back. He was a slack rigging advocate. And his rigging was so slack, we used turnbuckles above the -- the turnbuckles would hang in, so when you tacked, the whole rig would flop over, flop over this way and that way. And he was very fast, so everybody had slack rigging. We went to Italy,

and Straulino was a tight rigging advocate. And I mean it was tight. I mean it was a wonder it didn't pull the chain plates out. You could hit the shroud, and it would go bong (laughter). In any case, everybody had to have tight rigging for a while. Those boats went the same. I mean it really depended on who was sailing them, and the same way with the sails. But it was a great deal of fun, and I loved the competition. And we had competition here too. I mean Billy Myers was an excellent, excellent light weather sailor, and heavy weather sailor too. Sean Todd (phonetic) won the Bacardi Trophy down in Cuba one winter. That's rough sailing. I never raced in that series, I'm sorry to say. We had Barclay Trip (phonetic) fine light air sailor, graduated (indiscernible). So the competition was good there, but I was also an advocate, and I figured two things. The parents would gripe about the kids going and having to sail against the semi-professionals, the sailmakers or somebody. That's good. I mean you're only going to go as fast as the fleets you're in. If you don't come up against some really good sailors that go fast, then you're not going to learn how fast you're going and get faster. And that's why I think it's proper for the young guys to go away and race against other sailors who are possibly better than they are.

P.L.: Over the years, which fleets did you race? You started off with the Gibson Island fleet?

M.S.: No, we raced over there before -- I was crewing in those days with Patsy. I've forgotten what year the Eastern Shore fleet was born. And that was my fleet for the rest of my sailing career. It moved from Miles River over to Oxford.

P.L.: You stayed with Star Boats except for your ocean racing time and the brief time in Hawaii. You didn't go over to Comets or any of the other --

M.S.: No. (Laughter). I don't know whether you saw that famous newspaper article three weeks ago where the guy said I designed the Comet (laughter). Of course I didn't design the Comet. Lance Johnson designed the Comet. There was another statement in there that wasn't quite correct. And that was my last effort at Star Boat -- what, two weeks ago?

P.L.: This summer, end of June or something like that you were out there?

M.S.: Yeah, we were guest skippers, supposed to be. And the fleet here in St. Michaels was supposed to invite guest skippers. Well, Bud Mullen, a long-time friend of mine, invited me to sail his boat, his crew, who was excellent. And we finished second, which is certainly far more than I expected to do. God, I had a miserable time getting under the boom. And when I ended up sailing, the boom were two or three feet off the deck. Now they're right down on the deck. And with my old bones, man, I had a hell of a time. I got caught in the back of the cockpit a couple of times (laughter). Once, we had to abort the tack and go back on the old tack while I got untangled.

P.L.: Have they just lowered the masts in the fleet?

M.S.: No. The measurement is quite precise on the luff of the mainsail, and the roach of it and the foot. They've just made the gooseneck longer, I think, so to get it down. And when I first started sailing, nobody had ever heard of a Cunningham, and that's to adjust the tension on the luff. And they make the sail bigger and overcome the biggest in light -- in heavy weather by taking down the Cunningham.

P.L.: So the sail area has actually increased.

M.S.: Yeah. Well, I don't know whether you can say that or not. No, I think they hew to -- the boat was designed in 1911. Up through the 30's, they had a short rig in them, and then they went to this taller rig, shorter boom, still keeping the same sail area. I hesitate to quote how much it was, 270, 280 square feet. Don't put that down there, I might be like designing the Comet, a little inaccurate (laughter). And the guy that really kept the Star class alive and made it the class it is, it isn't the design of the boat. George Elder was real hard-nosed, and he set up the rules and specifications, and reporting system so that even the foreign people could report the same as we would in this country and stuff like that. And that's what made the Star -- and he was tough. Anybody that (indiscernible), boy, you were through. And that's really what kept this class going all those years. The boat was a good design. Isn't any question about that. It's still competitive. But it wasn't the greatest design in the world. And by hewing that close to the specifications, that's what kept this class

going from 1911 till now. And there's been some great skippers. I mean not myself. Please don't put that in there. But Dennis Connor, I've sailed against him in the past. Almost all the America's Cup racers have been Star Boat racers. And really, it's where you learn the tactics and the strategy.

P.L.: Did you ever get involved in any of the administration of these races, either as committee, protest committee?

M.S.: Well, I was fleet captain here, and I was rules and appeals committee for the Chesapeake Bay Yacht Racing Association for 10 years. Not much. I was, I think, some sort of vice commodore or something at Tred Avon Yacht Club, and I didn't want to be commodore. You know, it was just a step up. So it was all great fun all those years. And I look with -- every now and then I get the itch to buy another Star Boat, and then I think, God damn, excuse me, I'll finish back there in about the 15th position and I won't be very happy with that nonsense (laughter). I hope you edit this now. Don't make me -- or make me sound a little more modest than I did this and I did that. I should've used the editorial we all through this thing.

P.L.: Did you get involved in cruising at all, or --

M.S.: Yeah. We -- on a Ludis 33 (Phonetic), which is a beautiful cruising boat. We took that to Florida two or three times and cruised here in the Chesapeake. And then the mast, for the same size boat, the mast kept getting higher, and the work kept getting heavier, and we went to power boats. I've just given one to the museum. So that's about --

P.L.: Tell me about, I know that when you get in these competitive situations, you end up filing protests, you end up doing circles to take off penalties and that sort of thing.

M.S.: Well, that's the modern way. Now I was taught if there's any doubt, drop out. And I've always -- by that. I don't think I've ever done a 270, it is. Who did I have one time, Howard, I guess, Lippincott, one of my best friends. And there's no question about it. You just drop out. I've been involved in protests. I didn't have to. When we were in Italy, what really fixed that series for us, the Greek gentleman, who was a very nice man, we all started on a starboard tack, and he, for no reason at all, tacked right in front of me. And I

couldn't avoid him, I hit him. He dropped out. But I've been witnesses in instance such as that, but we were taught early on in sailing -- I've got a little anecdote, let's see if it's amusing. We were racing at Oxford, day racing, a Sunday or something like that, and my cousin, Sally Grace Willis, Kenny Willis' wife, was sailing with Monty Myers (phonetic), and it was blowing smartly. And they were in a scrappy cat, and that was not a jibing situation, and we had the right-of-way in the Star Boat, and I was wondering what the girls were going to do. Pretty soon, my cousin, Sally, stood up and she said "ladies first", (laughter), and I gave way. I thought that was so great that I let her go. They probably would've capsized the way it was blowing that day.

Let's see, another anecdote. I was with Doug Hanks, I think, a sailor from Oxford. He had one of these boats that they raced over there before One Design racing came in, and we were going in another (indiscernible) by Bellevue, and the boat had a little jib on it, on the pivot, like a Chesapeake Bay Canoe. And Doug got in the water, and we capsized by -- well, it wasn't a capsize, it was a turn turtle. We turned where the bow went under and the mast went ahead (laughter), we turned over that way. But that was pretty exciting. I haven't done that since. I've read about these ocean racers in the real bad ocean racing turning turtle. Man, I wouldn't like that in a big boat.

P.L.: In a typical race down at Tred Avon or over at Gibson Island, how would you dress?

M.S.: (Laughter). That's another one of my not a pet peeve, but we wore khaki pants and a tee shirt, or just khaki trunks for years. Now all of a sudden, you've got to have a blue and yellow, a blue and green, and you've got to be spandex, and you've got to have boots. Oh, you've got to have boots these days, you can't hike without boots and all that stuff. I couldn't afford to race. Uniforms are more expensive. And they really are. They serve one good purpose. If you go overboard, somebody's going to be able to find you by the color. But that lace race I sailed, I sailed in khaki pants and a shirt. That's true of all sports, though. The skiers have to get all dressed up. Yeah. And we had foul weather gear, that's true. Matter of fact, the foul weather gear I had in Italy, I gave to -- when we were in Italy under the guidance of the Navy, we had paid hands. And they were sailors from the Italian Navy that came and

took the sails off and washed them after the race, and dried them and cleaned up the boat and all that good stuff. And the young man that we had was a very pleasant young fellow. I gave my foul weather gear to. Incidentally, it was an old set of Navy foul weather gear. It had U.S. Navy on it (laughter). I don't know how he coped with that. He was very proud of it, though. He thought that was great. I don't know. I --

P.L.: Going back to some of your early experiences in sort of learning to sail, you were, I guess, Worth Holden was sort of a neighbor of yours, and about our age or something?

M.S.: About my age, and he's still alive. He lives in Easton. I don't know whether you know him or not.

P.L.: I do.

M.S.: Yeah. They lived, as you crossed Peach Blossom bridge, they lived on the left up there right where Holden Lane is. And I think that house that they lived in burned, and then they moved down the creek four or five places below the bridge. And coincidentally or incidentally, Patsy and Steve Burmer bought that house and lived in it one time. So we sailed up and down, and his little knockabout was called the Oriole class. I don't know who designed it, but it was a neat little boat. We turned it over one day in November, and Ms. Holden, we came ashore and we were wet and cold, and she offered me a drink. I'd never had a drink of whiskey in my life (laughter). I didn't know what to do. I didn't like it very much. Burned my mouth.

P.L.: Did he sort of teach you to sail, or were you sort of learning at the same time?

MS.: Well, no, he knew how to sail. He was a pretty good sailor, got up and down the creek very well. But I learned from him a lot, and he let me sail the boat. But I guess I learned the most from the Johnsons, though.

P.L.: And you came to know them because they were in the news after --

MS.: Oh, yeah. Ram (phonetic) died in a boat in 1931. That was a mistake in the Star Democrat. They said he was sailing his own boat. As I remember it, Barbara Marsalis (phonetic) was one of our star sailors. And he was crewing for her because she hadn't been -- don't put this in there -- hadn't been doing very well, and he was trying to help

her go a little better. And he died in her boat. I know that's true. That was a great-- that was 1931, that was the year I graduated from high school, 16, I guess, 17 maybe. But a lot of instances I can't, you know, little things like that. Not little. But in any case, it was about -- I think I had my own boat, '34 I guess I got that Star Boat. Paid -- my father paid 450 bucks for it with a suit of sails, and not a trailer, but a cradle. And now a good Star Boat, a (indiscernible) or a Lillia or something like that, 30,000 bucks with a two-wheel trailer and a good suit of sails. Isn't that something? For a small open boat.

P.L.: One other boat I want to ask you about is one that I guess you owned only later on. It's one that you gave to the museum and that we kept in the collection here, and that's the Widget.

M.S.: Oh, yeah. That boat was built by Lance Johnson as a skiff to cruise in. He was a small man. And as you know, it has those two little hutches. One of them is just about that high up on the forward end, and the other one -- sitting on the bottom, you had sitting head room, and he cruised in that. He took his sleeping bag and cruised in that boat. It was, what, 15 feet long?

P.L.: Something like that, yeah.

M.S.: And when he died, &get, his widow, called up one day and said how'd you like to have Widget? So I got it. We were living up in Dixon's Creek outside of Easton, and I used to principally use it for rowing for exercise. It rows very nicely. And they taught me to skull, that's another thing. All of the skiffs or small boats they bought had a little cut-out place in the stem you could put the -- it's a skull. And I learned to skull that way. We kept the boats on stakes there, and I think Widget was one of the skiffs they used -- no, it had a (indiscernible) in it. Other skiffs similar to that. He was up and down in it, and he never rode, picked up one, put it through the stern and skulled out. And that's how I did that. And one time we were racing in Nassau, and I always remember the Prime Minister wants everybody to come back to Nassau, British pronunciation. The black guys down there can really skull. Oh, man, they could make a boat go like a power boat. And they skulled with big ones. I mean they were using 20-foot oars, you know, back and forth like this to get those boats underway that way.

One other little memory. Harry and I again, we were racing. I was crewing for Stan Ogilvie, who was a very able sailor from Long Island. We got in the dead heat. Only dead heat I've ever been in or ever heard of in a sailboat race. We were down there sailing the midwinter championships. And we came down 1st and 2, and you know the boat's going this way coming down. And so help me, we went across the starting line -- finish line, absolutely -- and somebody taking a picture of it somewhere, only dead heat I'd ever sailed in. I'd never heard of one in a sailboat race. That was good fun. I don't know. Anything else you can think of you want to put in this --

P.L.: You did get to use Widget a little bit then before --

M.S.: Oh, yeah. I think -- I had to go off to work in Washington, and we moved up there in 1954. No, I kept -- no, I had it when -- it was in '72, we built that house on Dixon's Creek, and I was using it still then. I've forgotten what year Lance died.

P.L.: '71 -- January '71.

M.S.: Well, it was after that then, that I had it comparatively lately. It just sailed nicely. It was a good sailboat. A little jib, a little mainsail. You had to cut the mast off to put it in. That's part of an old Star Boat mast.

P.L.: Oh, really?

M.S.: Yeah. And Lance made his own sails, incidentally. The first sail they had on that boat was an old --

BEGIN SIDE B

M.S.: Can't remember his name now. I'll remember it in a minute. They changed the Magic, the canoe Magic, from a power boat to a racing canoe there. And I remember that.

P.L.: Bob Wilson.

M.S.: Bob Wilson, right. And he took the engine out of it and put the centerboard trunk back in it. And they had taken the after -- I think I remember they left the mast for the -- I mean the mast, where it went through the deck up forward, I think that was (indiscernible), and they had taken the (indiscernible) out. So they built those back in, put centerboard trunk back in, and I can remember going for a sail. It

may have been the first sail after the boat was put back as a sailboat. I remember that -- I'm not sure it was the first sail.

P.L.: Did you get to do much sailing on log canoes?

M.S.: Yeah, I crewed some. When I first started, I crewed in the Johnson -- there were two of them, the J.D., John D. Williams, funeral director (laughter), had one built by John B. Harrison. And Johnson Grimes had one built they call the Flying Cloud. And he sailed it some, but a guy named Buck Richardson, a watemian, sailed it most of the time. And I went on that when I was pretty young. I was a bail boy. I was allowed out on the boards when it blew hard enough. And then I sailed the J.D. for John North in a couple of series, one series here, I think. And I crewed. I don't think I ever crewed Magic. Crewed in both the boats J.D. and Flying Cloud. I wonder what happened to Flying Cloud. It's not around, is it?

P.L.: Yeah.

M.S.: Is it?

P.L.: She's being restored down in Dave McQuay's boat shop right now.

M.S.: Which Dave McQuay was murdered by his son? Now I knew the Dave McQuay that --

Pi.: That's a different one.

M.S.: Yeah. Because when I sailed J.D., Dave McQuay was a big help. He was handling the jib, and he knew all the intricacies of the boat, which I didn't know. That was good fun. We won one -- we finished first in a race. It was a series three races. I think we got one first -- or boat-for-boat we finished. I forget. Conveniently, I've forgotten the days when we didn't finish first (laughter). I tell you, this memory business is good fun (laughter). You just have to know how to --

C.B.: Kind of like hearing. When you don't want to listen, you say you didn't hear it, right?

M.S.: That's right. My brother went for a hearing test. I think this is an old story, but it's true. The doctor got all through and said, "Mr. Shehan, I don't see anything wrong with your hearing. He said "how long have you been married to Emma?" He said "35 years." He said "That's the trouble." That's a terrible story.

C.B.: Not listening.

M.S.: See, you girls just don't emphasize enough to tell us guys what to do.

C.B.: We emphasize what we want to.

MS.: And we better mind too.

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

M.S.: I don't know.

P.L.: I can take it off for now.

(Off the record)

P.L.: Getting all the weight off the boats.

MS.: Worked the mast down till it was really small and terribly limber. And we didn't win many races that summer. I spent all my time watching the rig to keep it from falling out of the boat. And I put a new mast-- put it back in it. But you can overdo it. And, of course, the weight of the rig is most sensitive to heavy weather. I mean that's when it's most useful. Well, that and the thing was so small it wouldn't stand heavy weather. That wasn't a very good experiment (laughter). We bought, as I said, a series of boats from the Lippincotts, and I bought one, just the hull, and I finished it myself and got Frances Newman to help me put the keel on and get that straight. And I was going to pick the mast up in April. The boat was finished down here. I'd finished it, it was ready to go. So I called up Bob and he said "Oh, yeah, the mast is ready to go." So I got in the car after work, drove up there from Riverton, New Jersey. Got there about 5-- well, 6:00, and I walked in the shop, and I said, "Bob, where's my mast?" "Oh," he said, "Up there." Here it was just bare as it could be. Not a fitting on it (laughter). They did put the fittings on it, and I left there about 2:30 in the morning with the thing on top of the station wagon sitting way out. And I was worried all the way home, it was going to break or fall through. Well, I'd intended to bring it down. But when I got there and looked at that mast, not a fitting on it, I thought going to be up here another day.

Oh, and I tried to sell, the year we went to Italy, I think the boat was named Glee, G-L-E-E, or we wanted to leave it there. Needed the money, to begin with. And Prince Suharto, I think it was King of Siam? No, this was his son, was sailing Star Boats, he was there. And he said he

would buy the boat. I thought that was fine. So latter part of the regatta, maybe the last day, next-to-last day, I went over to where his boat was being kept. Wasn't there. And his aid -- oh, and he had camp followers you wouldn't believe. Beautiful girls. Man, I'm telling you they were something else. He was living on this great big chartered yacht. Must've had 8 or 10 camp followers. And he had this secretary, so-called secretary, and I said I want to be able to give you the boat tomorrow. And the guy said well the Prince doesn't want it. I said what do you mean he doesn't want it? He said he wanted it. He said -- and he was embarrassed. He was rolling his eyes around, didn't want to look at me. And he said it's named after a detergent in our country, and he doesn't think that would be proper for the Prince to have a boat named after a detergent. I said I can get the name off there in about 5 minutes. You can put anything on it you want. Oh, no, that's bad luck. Which is a myth that goes through yachting forever.

C.B.: About changing the name of a boat?

M.S.: Oh, yeah. You're not supposed to do that. And any case, why, the sale didn't take place, I brought it back. I couldn't sell the boat because it was named after a detergent.

C.B.: Soap.

P.L.: Which was the -- what was the name of your boat at that time?

M.S.: Glee, G-L-E-E.

P.L.: Glee.

M.S.: Glee. Yeah, I know it was Glee. It was a Lippincott boat. All sorts of things. Well, I've talked enough. Look, I want you guys to edit this thing down with not so many l's, will you please?

C.B.: We're going to put it on national television unedited.

M.S.: I believe you.

(Off record)

P.L.: Jack Streeton (phonetic)?

M.S.: Uh-huh (Affirmative). I met him 1935 racing out of Newport Harbor in California. And we really had really neat competitive races. Well, this particular day in Oxford, he had me covered up. He was right on top of me, and I wasn't able to do anything. We, I don't know, it could've been 180 degrees, which if it wasn't, it was at least 90. And we

went from here to here just like that, and I was right up on top of him. He called me a blue deck SOB (laughter). That was -- my boat had a blue deck. And it was wooden boats in those days. If you hit the deck, it sounded like a drum. And he hit the deck with his big old hand, "You blue deck SOB" (laughter). I said I didn't do anything (laughter).

Another time, we were racing at Rye in the North American Championship where we did well there, we got a 4th. And we're beating him. Three races, we're beating him boat for boat. And this particular race, the 4th race, he was ahead of us by quite a bit, and we were back in the rook somewhere. And he decided to come into -- which was a bad mistake when there's a big fleet. He decided to come into mark on the port side. And we were all coming, 20 or 30 of us coming on the starboard tack, almost heel to toe in spite of the back wind. And he got in that corner between the mark and this bunch of starboard tack boats, kind of -- and he was in there like this. And they wouldn't, nobody would let him in, of course. And he was jibing around (laughter), and trying to find a place to stick his nose in there, and everybody on the starboard tack wasn't going to let him in. And we came by, as far back as we were, we passed him. And Tommy Stevens, who was crewing for me, gave him a lot of lip. And he stood on the boat, and he cussed at us, and he ended up -- "I got a knot in my God, damn main sheet," he says. And he did, he had a knot and he couldn't jibe properly either. He was just going around in circles getting knocked down as he went (laughter). We were triumphant even as bad off as we were.

C.B.: You weren't last.

M.S.: That would've even been better if we were last -- because he would've had to fall in behind us then. Shucks, I had a lot of good times racing with him. Harry Nye was a good -- a good story. I can't tell it with you here. I can. It's not a bad --

C.B.: Please. Go right ahead.

M.S.: Okay. We were racing in Olympic trials up at Sandy Hook, up at Bill Lyons' home fleet. And we were having close races. This particular day, it was the other end of the fleet. We were leading, and Harry was second. And one of the ways of jibing a Star Boat is to hold his tiller between your legs and wiggle your fanny and push the -- this was at the jibe mark. And we jibed around, and I looked

around, Harry was all tangled up. What had happened (laughter), you would just die, the tiller had gone in his pocket and came out through his fly (laughter). Oh, shoot. Here he was trying to get the tiller out of his pocket and complete the jibe. And in the meantime, it really looked pretty amazing. That probably was the funniest thing that almost ever happened to me in a Star Boat. And then a couple guys passed him, of course, while he was going through these gyrations. Oh, boy. Couldn't have done it if he'd wanted to. Yeah, we had a lot of fun doing that.

C.B.: Do you sail much anymore?

M.S.: No, not now. I don't even have any boat right now. I'm beginning to try to find, I think one of these 15-foot Herreshoff type boat like that fish class, 15 1/2 foot. There are several different classes they call it. The Bullseye is one of them, or similar to it. Some of them are just similar, drift around the creek in, something like that. Yeah, I miss it. I love flying. I thought that was great. I get the urge to go flying, but there's no living reason why I should go flying, I guess, other than (indiscernible). Well, that's the story of the sailing days.

C.B.: Well, we thank you for sharing with us.

M.S.: Well, you know, you appeal to my ancient ego (laughter). Then I get to running off at the mouth and I can't stop. You guys have done yourselves a bad favor.

P.L.: Well, thank you.

M.S.: Well, it was good fun. He was very good, and that was fine. But in my longest long time crew was a guy named Footsy Jones (phonetic), Robert Jones. He died. And he was excellent. He crewed for me for a long time. And his name was Footsy because of big feet. One day, we were starting, and we were early, and he dragged his feet overboard, and we got -- back there (laughter). They couldn't find any law against it. I think there's a rule that says you can't use mechanical means to slow the boat down, like putting a paddle overboard or a bucket or something like that. But it was just his foot, and his foot's about like so.

C.B.: Slowed you right down, huh?

MS.: Yeah. And another time, we ran aground over on the Benoni Point side of the Tred Avon River. And the boat draws, three-four. Footsy dropped right overboard, pushed the bow around, and then gave it a push, kind of running on the bottom. So we got a lot of noise about that. That time, we dropped out (laughter). And then I had various crews, like Gil Grovesnor (phonetic) crewed for me one time. But the other notable crew was Tommy Stevens. He had been crewing for Street. I don't know why he came over to me. He was a school teacher, very smart, but he was fast. Gosh, his hands were so fast. But he was light. He was a small screw, good light-air crew, but when it blew, we were kind of overpowered. But he was a long-time crew with me. I guess those are really the -- well, and then I crewed for Howard in Portugal one time, Howard Lippincott. Crewed for Bill Lyons down in New Orleans, once. So I kept on crewing even after I was a skipper. That's where we sailed against Connor. Another anecdote. You ever know Jim Merrill, the sail maker from up in New Jersey?

P.L.: No, I don't.

M.S.: His address was Delanco, New Jersey. I think that's where it was. But any case, Jim had a peculiar sense of -- well, he had a short fuse to begin with, a peculiar sense of humor. And it was not pleasant to cross. He was really -- but he was a good friend of mine, we got along well. Two stories. We were at Gibson Island. On Saturday night they have really a beautiful buffet there, and we were all invited, and Jim was a real trencherman. I mean he could eat. Roast beef and three or four different things. And he had his plate piled just about like this. And we got down the end and they had lobster, steamed lobsters. And Jim set his plate down and you could see his mind working, how am I going to get this lobster on this plate? He was in his nice blue jacket like we always used. He picked up the lobsters, put one under each arm, picked up his plate and went to his place, ate the whole dam thing. Roast beef, lobster, the whole thing.

And another time, he was crewing for somebody down in New Orleans, and something irritated him. And we were actually sailing out from the start. We were leaving this pool where they keep the boats, and we're going out past the yacht club. And damn if Jim didn't get mad at this guy and jump overboard and swim ashore (laughter), leaving the Star Boat by

himself. He said well, he didn't like what he was doing. When I asked him later what the heck were you doing, he said I didn't like what he was doing. Left. (Laughter). Oh, shoot, we had some characters in that class. Well, okay, I guess I'll get underway and go and try to irritate a dove.

(End of interview.)