

Oral History Interview

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

“The Culture of Tugs and Tugs in Culture”

Interviewee: Mark Steinlein (M.S.)
DOB: October 18, 1950
POB: Galesville, Maryland

Robin Allison (R.A.)
DOB: September 30, 1944
POB: Baltimore, Maryland

Interviewer: Michelle Zacks (M.Z.)

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Transcription by:

Pearl Transcripts
P.O. Box 81
Woodford, VA 22580
410-310-5753
pearltranscripts.com
trevy@pearltranscripts.com

I N D E X

Page:**NAMES***People:*

Mark Steinlein	7
Robin Allison	7
Leslie	8
Mark Thomas	8
Sandi Pepe	9
Kim Ziegler	10
Neil Hartchee (ph)	11
Nancy Taylor Robson	13
Denny	14
Frank Lambert	23
Jerry McCammon	23
Eric	28
Betty Cook	32
David	32
Hans	32
Wes Green (ph)	34
Dr. Dorsey (ph)	34
Mike Ashford	34
Walter Cronkite	34
Betsy Cronkite	34
Tom Hanks	35
Jerry Smith	42
Jeff	43
Cathy (ph)	43
Zach (ph)	43
Caleb Clark Wheeler	46
Anderson	46
Stevie Mack (ph)	49

Businesses & Organizations:

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum	7
--------------------------------	---

Maryland Veterinary Medical Association	10
Trumpy's Yachts	10
Pile Drivers Union	11
Woodfield's Fish and Oyster House	13
JK McCammon Marine Transportation	23
Tidewater School of Navigation in Norfolk	24
Breton Bay Water Transportation	26
Perdue Chicken	26
Florida Rock Industries	26
Salisbury Towing	26
Vulcan Industries	27
SPCA	30
Yacht Yard	30
Marine Engine Sales and Service	30
Petersen Publishing	31
<i>Rudder</i> magazine	32
BMW	32
Tradewinds Yacht Charters	33
Fawcett Boat Supplier	33
Womanship Inc.	34
Eastport Yacht Club	34
Camper and Nicholson	34
McGarvey's	34
Royal Bermuda Yacht Club	34
SUNY	39
Vane Brothers	41
Express Marine	42
Dan Towing (ph)	42
BG&E	42
West Marine	44
Wheeler Transportation Company	45
Choptank Transport	46
Ward Brothers	46

Page:**SITES**

Galesville, Maryland	7
Chesapeake Bay Bridge	11

Calvary County, Maryland	11
Solomon's Island	11
Washington Channel	11
Washington, DC	11
St. Michaels, MD	12
Houston, New Orleans, Searsport, Maine	13
Texas, NY, Philly	14
Ft. Wayne, IN, Pensacola, Portsmouth, Norfolk	14
Intracoastal Waterway	14
Gulf of Mexico	15
Newport, Bermuda	15
Mississippi Gulf Outlet Canal	15
Woodbridge, VA	15
Tampa, Florida	16
New York Harbor	18
Delaware River	20
Potomac River	20
Salisbury, Cambridge	21
Langley Field	21
Naval Air Station Oceana	21
Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point	21
Naval Air Station Patuxent River	21
Dover Air Force Base	21
McGuire Air Force Base	21
Richmond, VA	22
Media, PA	23
Wilmington, DE	23
Lee's Creek, NC	25
Pamlico River	25
Seaford, DE	25
Tappachannock	26
Havre de Grace	27
Port Mahon	27
Annapolis, MD	27
Easton, MD	27
James River	27
Miles River	28
Montvale, NJ	32
St. Lucia	33
Martha's Vineyard	34

Peter Island	35
Goose Bay	36
Breton Bay	36
Woodrow Wilson Bridge	38
SUNY	39
Ft. Schuyler, Bronx	39
Newport News, VA	42
Brandon Shores	42
Great Lakes	42
Cape Charles	43
Breton Bay	43
Pocomoke River	43
Bahamas	44
Choptank	45
Maryland Avenue Bridge	47
Fells Point	47
Seagirt Terminal	48
China	48
Panama Canal	48
Port Elizabeth	48
Bergen Point	48
Newark Bay	48
Kill Van Kull	48
Indonesia	48
Walmart	48
Hart-Miller Island	48
Slaughter Creek	49
Sharps Island	48
Alligator Pungo Canal	53

TOPICS OF INTEREST

	<u>Audio:</u>	<u>Page:</u>
Mark Steinlein's father	6.06	10
First job outside of home	7.14	10
Working on Chesapeake Bay Bridge	7.59	11
Working on tugboats and barges	8.36	11
Working as a deckhand	9.51	11
Single screw tug c. WWII	10.06	11
Mark Steinlein's brother	13.04	13

<i>Progress</i> , tugboat	14.17	13
Nancy Taylor Robson, <i>Woman in the Wheelhouse</i>	14.23	13
<i>Tugging On a Heartstring</i>	14.30	13
<i>Nanticoke</i> , tugboat	15.08	14
Tramp work	16.01	14
Story about twenty-foot seas in a tropical storm, 1982	17.46	15
Another storm story	26.37	18
Story of the <i>Valour</i>	29.19	19
Changes in safety	30.30	20
9/11	34.06	20
Different types of barge loads	38.30	22
Able-bodied seaman	39.45	23
Working as engineer for JK McCammon Marine Transportation	40.51	23
Merchant Mariner's Document	42.22	24
<i>The Progress</i> , tugboat	45.11	25
Going to work for cousin Denny on <i>Quaker</i>	46.17	25
Laid off and back to work	52.49	27
Use of sand and gravel	54.45	27
Meeting Robin Allison	56.30	28
Beginning of Robin's story	56.54	28
Going to work for Mark	57.43	28
Robin's early story	60.00	30
Selling boats	62.48	30
Running service department for Yacht Yard	64.14	31
Ocean racing	66.02	31
Betty Cook, World Offshore Powerboat Champion	69.45	32
Working for Walter Cronkite	4.21	34
Transition to tugboating	9.35	35
Fitting in	12.26	37
Modern tugboats	15.20	38
Adrenaline junkie	19.39	39
Mark teaches Robin	21.34	40
Mark's current job on <i>Patuxent</i>	24.52	41
Fuel and the tugboat industry	27.31	42
Robin's current job	32.43	45
Future plans	32.55	45
A little more history on barge loads	37.00	47
Modern equipment vs. vintage	46.44	50

M.Z.: Today is October 17th, 2011. This is Michelle Zacks for Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. This is an interview for the upcoming Tugboat Exhibit. I am in the home of Mark Steinlein and Robin Allison over in Galesville on the western shore. Hello to both of you, and thank you so much for taking the time to meet with me.

R.A.: Good morning, and thank you.

M.S.: Good morning.

M.Z.: I guess to start, if I could just get some real basic information about each of you. This is what they call a life history form. So just to make sure we kind of have the facts. So Mark, your last name? It's pronounced Steinlein?

M.S.: Steinlein, yes.

M.Z.: Okay. Do you have a middle initial?

M.S.: F.

M.Z.: Race, they're asking me. Should I put white?

M.S.: Yeah.

R.A.: Human.

M.Z.: Human race.

M.S.: Hopefully. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Hey, that's what I am, too. What a coincidence. What's your date of birth?

M.S.: 10/18/50. Tomorrow's my birthday.

M.Z.: Oh. Happy almost birthday.

M.S.: I really don't need any more. (Laughter.) I've had enough.

M.Z.: It's better than the alternative, though.

M.S.: True, true. I'm still on the right side of the grass. So I'm still having them.

M.Z.: Address I can get from the forms, and phone number I think I've got. Do you use email?

R.A.: Yeah.

M.S.: Yes.

M.Z.: What's your email address?

M.S.: Waterrat, with two Rs, 999@aol.com.

M.Z.: Your birthplace is Galesville, is that right?

M.S.: I was born in a hospital in D.C., but yeah.

R.A.: Galesville.

M.Z.: That's where you grew up?

M.S.: Yep.

M.Z.: Your spouse's name, I believe, is Robin.

M.S.: Robin Allison.

M.Z.: Allison. Do you guys have kids?

R.A.: Yes.

M.S.: Yes. She has two children, and I have two children, both from different marriages.

M.Z.: Why don't I put your children on this form, and I'll put Robin's on the others.

M.S.: Okay. I have a daughter, Leslie.

M.Z.: How old is she? Or what's her year of birth?

M.S.: She was born in '79. She's thirty-two? Yeah, thirty-two. I have a son, Mark Thomas, who is twenty-eight.

M.Z.: Okay.

M.S.: Hard to believe.

M.Z.: Your education?

M.S.: High school.

M.Z.: Your work experience, I guess that's what we'll be talking about during the interview, so why don't we put that on hold for a sec?

M.S.: Okay.

M.Z.: Robin Allison, do you have a middle initial?

R.A.: It's actually R. Robin.

M.Z.: Oh, R. Robin.

M.S.: Robin's actually her middle name.

M.Z.: Female, white, and your date of birth?

R.A.: 9/30/44.

M.Z.: 9/30/44. And your address I've got. Do you have an email address?

R.A.: Chorseint@aol.com.

M.Z.: Your birthplace?

R.A.: Baltimore.

M.Z.: Your spouse is Mark. Your children's names?

R.A.: Sandi.

M.Z.: Is a girl?

R.A.: Yes. Pepe.

M.Z.: That's Sandi's last name?

R.A.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Okay. And what's her year of birth?

R.A.: What is her year of birth? (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Or what's her age and we'll do the math later. (Laughter.)

R.A.: Let's try August the 13th, 1960.

M.Z.: Nineteen-sixty?

R.A.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Okay.

R.A.: And Kim Ziegler. She is sixty-two, 1962.

M.Z.: Nineteen-sixty-two? Your education?

R.A.: I'm a registered veterinary technologist, which took one year in veterinary school, basically, veterinary technology school.

M.Z.: Interesting.

R.A.: Did the first course ever taught in Maryland designed by the Maryland Veterinary Medical Association.

M.Z.: Great.

R.A.: How you get from veterinary technology to running tugboats is a very long and complicated story.

M.Z.: Well, let's get into it. So where should we begin? As you know, we're putting together this exhibit over at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum on the history of the tugboat industry in the Chesapeake, but also the culture of life aboard the tugs, and also how the tugboat industry shapes communities. That's my role in this process, is to talk more about the cultural side, not so much the history. Other people will be putting together the kind of chronology and all of that. Why don't we just start with your own personal stories?

R.A.: Start with Mark, because I'm going to grab one thing.

M.Z.: When you got involved and how you got involved in the industry. Now, you were telling me before I turned on the tape that you grew up in this area.

M.S.: I grew up around the water. My father was a naval architect, a boat builder, a marine surveyor, a marine historian, and had done a great deal of work for the government. He had done the HAMS Project (ph), as I told you about. He was in charge of the Army's procurement for small boats and stuff in World War II. Then after World War II he worked at Trumpy's. I think they built the first all-welded aluminum PT boat in the aftermath of World War II there.

Then he decided to buy a farm, and get remarried and have another child, which was me. That was all when he was, I guess he was forty-six years old. Where he got the energy, I have no clue. Anyway, I grew up racing sailboats. When I was twelve years old, he built me my own skiff, rowing skiff and sailing skiff, to play around the river on. I grew up, my first job outside of home was working the local boat yard.

M.Z.: What did you do at the boat yard?

M.S.: I painted the bottoms of the boats and I used to help the captain, Neil Hartchee (ph), tow the boats over to the railway, and haul them out and stuff like that. Every summer I would work there. As I got older, in between other jobs, I would work there. It was pretty obvious to me that it wasn't going to be a high paying job. When I had the opportunity in my early twenties, I took a job in heavy marine construction. I worked a short spell on the Chesapeake Bay Bridge when they were building it in 1969.

M.Z.: What was your role in that?

M.S.: I was a laborer then, just helping with the carpenters carrying forms and stuff. I had got into the Pile Drivers Union shortly after that. I worked up in D.C. some on that, and was in their apprentice school where you learn to be a welder and read blueprints and stuff like that. And ended up one of my goals was to get on the big LNG dock that they built down in Calvary County, Maryland. That was a big two-year marine job and I got on that and worked the whole job. That was where I first came into contact with working the tugboats and barges, you know, on a fairly large scale.

M.Z.: So you were aboard the tugs or the barges?

M.S.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Just kind of moving things back and forth?

M.S.: Yeah, moving things around and helping out. Sometimes we'd go out and help the deckhands when it was bad weather. We had to put all the brigs away on moorings or sometimes even take them into Solomon's Island, because we were right out on the exposed Bay Shore, which is a bad place to be on a northeaster there. We encountered several storms and things like that. I had to go out and pull all the cranes and stuff around to Solomon's, or get them out on mooring buoys where they could ride the one anchor and things like that. Because they were too close to the structure, otherwise.

After that job, then there was another job in D.C. where they put the subway under the Washington Channel. I worked on that job, and when that job was starting to wind down, I looked around and realized there just wasn't any more marine work in the offing. Everything would be working on the subway in D.C. I have a cousin who – family's not been close, but actually an uncle and his two sons, my cousins, were both in the tugboat business. I ended up calling up the owner of a boat that he'd been partially involved, or in partnership with owning, and got a job as a deckhand in 1978.

M.Z.: Nineteen-seventy-eight?

M.S.: Uh-huh. That's when I went to full-time tugboat work. The tug was an old World War II vintage single screw tug, no air conditioning, had a cast iron diesel-fired cook stove in the galley. It was very old-fashioned.

M.Z.: How was that? Just to back up a little bit, you had had some limited previous experience aboard tugs.

M.S.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Did you feel, from those experiences, drawn towards working on a tug, like when the opportunity came up, did you think, yeah, this could really work for me?

M.S.: Oh yeah. Well, I was interested in anything that I could make a decent living at, as long as it involved being on the water. Tugboating seemed to fit right in. Like I say, a cousin and a friend that did it. It's funny, this little town right here, I think it's 250 households in this town, I could probably name you at least six or seven, possibly, maybe even eight licensed captains from around here that work on tugs. It's just happened that way, a group of us that got interested and ended up doing it.

M.Z.: I guess people who work in the industry like to be in or on the water?

M.S.: Of course.

R.A.: It's addictive.

M.Z.: You've got that here.

M.S.: Yep.

R.A.: It's definitely addictive.

M.Z.: Yet this area's probably close enough to some of the urban places?

M.S.: We're only thirty-five miles from D.C., which makes this a very popular spot. The population of this town goes up to about 10,000 people on a summer weekend, because of the boats. The marinas are just full of people, there's three waterfront restaurants.

R.A.: Very similar to St. Michaels in that right, is that, you know how your town swells on the weekends?

M.Z.: Absolutely.

M.S.: Yeah, and they drove up the prices. A lot of people in the past wanted to retire here, come here and buy a piece of property. The town went from being almost entirely working class and watermen to being a lot of retired people. I think there's two watermen working out of this town now.

M.Z.: Did there used to be a lot more right here in this town?

M.S.: Oh, yeah. I mean, it was a big major shucking house here, and Woodfield's Fish and Oyster house right down at the end of Woodfield Road. They stopped shucking oysters, I guess, almost twenty years ago now. Now it's a boat yard. But that was a major – you were either a waterman or a farmer, or a carpenter or something.

M.Z.: What about in those early days for you, did it ever occur to you, like the life of a waterman, was that ever a possibility?

M.S.: You know, for some reason, I was never really drawn to that. My brother was. He had worked on oyster boats quite a bit. Then he went in the Coast Guard, and then he went in that marine construction, same marine construction field I did. He stayed with it, and stayed with construction industry. He used to work part-time on tugs and stuff. He didn't really make a career out of tugs like I did.

M.Z.: Can you put your finger on why that might be? Why you were drawn towards one rather than the other?

M.S.: I don't know. I think maybe it was the travel part of it, or going different places. That first boat I got on, she was kind of a – she did kind of tramp work. She was contracted to a company that owned a fleet of various types of barges. They would move all kinds of specialized cargo; that boat would go anywhere from Houston to Maine. She made a couple of trips to Houston. I didn't get on it, but I pretty much covered everything from New Orleans to Maine on her, from Searsport, Maine, to New Orleans.

R.A.: Always the wrong time of year.

M.S.: Oh yeah, we'd be in Maine in December, and New Orleans in July.

M.Z.: What was the name of that vessel? This is the World War II single screw boat?

M.S.: Yes. The name of the tug was the *Progress*. There's a lady lives over on the Eastern shore named Nancy Taylor Robson who wrote a book called *Woman in the Wheelhouse*, about her experiences on the very same boat.

R.A.: Where's *Tugging on Your Heartstrings*?

M.S.: *Tugging on a Heartstring* was written by – the company that owned the *Progress* went out later –

R.A.: But where is it? I went over and looked –

M.S.: No, it's there. It's there. It's right on one of those left shelves.

M.Z.: I'm familiar with those books.

R.A.: Are you?

M.Z.: Yeah. I haven't worked my way through the – what is it called? *Women in the Wheelhouse*?

R.A.: *Woman in the Wheelhouse*.

M.Z.: *Woman in the Wheelhouse*. I haven't gotten through the whole thing, but I've read –

R.A.: That's a great book.

M.S.: My name, I'm mentioned in that book. I'm even mentioned in it. Not by last name, but I am mentioned in it.

M.Z.: So she was on –

M.S.: Yeah, I was on the same tug with her.

R.A.: I need to call Denny and get that one back.

M.S.: Then they went out and bought another tug called the *Nanticoke*, which was an identical tug. It was built to the same set of plans as the *Progress*, in a different yard. In World War II they built a hundred of them. The idea was that they would push oil barges up the Intracoastal Waterway, because they couldn't get oil from Texas to New York and Philly to the refineries, crude oil, because submarines were torpedoing the tankers off the coast.

I remember my dad telling me you could go down to Atlantic City almost any time you wanted, and watch a tanker burn which was pretty spectacular. That's what they built them for. By the time they got them all built and all the barges built for them, the minesweepers and all had chased the German subs away, and it was more efficient to do it with ships. There was a lot of those tugs still around when I first started tugging. They're mostly all gone now.

M.Z.: So you called it tramp work? That's what you call that when you're doing a lot of different kind of jobs and moving around a lot?

M.S.: Yeah. They used to talk about tramp steamers in the shipping trade, any cargo they could get to anywhere. And pretty much how that tug company, we would haul anything. I've hauled everything from parts to Navy ships that came all the way down the river from Fort Wayne, Indiana, and then we met that tug in Pensacola, and towed it all the way to Portsmouth Naval Yard in Norfolk. Nuclear power plant parts, and then the grain would be on the eastern shore. He had a bunch of harbor barges, and we'd start hauling grain. He did all kinds of whatever kind of work he could find. He got into the bigger and bigger barges. He was always pushing the envelope on how big a barge he could haul with how small of a tug.

M.Z.: What was that like working in those conditions?

M.S.: At one point it got pretty scary. We were hauling a 5,000-ton bulker barge from New Orleans back to Norfolk once, and got caught in a tropical depression in the Gulf of Mexico. And very nearly went down with it, with twenty foot seas.

R.A.: Nineteen-eighty-two.

M.S.: Nineteen-eighty-two, yeah. She was in, I guess, Newport to Bermuda race. They got fairly tore up in the same storm.

R.A.: Right.

M.Z.: That was before you all knew each other?

R.A.: Yeah.

M.S.: Oh, way before.

R.A.: Way before.

M.Z.: But you have that same, or similar, experience.

R.A.: Where we were in different times.

M.S.: Yeah, encountered the same storm.

M.Z.: Can you describe that a little bit more, just to give people a sense of what it's like to be in those kind of bad weather conditions?

M.S.: Well, what had happened to us, and this is a really odd story, because it's probably one of my all-time favorite sea stories to tell about things that happened to me. It was literally a life-threatening situation. What had happened is they often would put – they had a bunch of small tugs. Ours was fair size, and for its time, reasonably powered, but not very high powered. Back then, a 1,000 horsepower tug was a fair-sized tug. The really, really big tugs were 3,000 horsepower. Of course, now that's commonplace.

But back then our old tug was only rated at 700 horsepower. She had a great big old locomotive. She was single screw, big old locomotive diesel in her. We're pulling this empty barge that's forty-three feet wide with a twenty-three feet high and three-hundred feet long. It's as big as a football field almost, and it's empty.

We're towing it out of New Orleans, bound for Norfolk. He had another small tug down there, smaller than us, but twin screw, more modern. Since he was going the same way, he decided, and we used to do this a lot, we put two tugs on the same tow to get more speed. The way we did that, he just kind of ran along with us as we came out. We came up the Mississippi Gulf Outlet Canal and into the Gulf of Mexico. We pushed the barge

out through there. Once we got through, we got in front of it and hooked it up on a towline to tow it. Then the other tug came up and put his hawser on our bow boat in order to tow on it, so we were, like, in a string.

We took off. The weather forecast was for a southeast wind, and four to six-foot seas. I remember the captains were talking. I was the chief engineer at the time. I was responsible for the engine room. The captains were talking about the possibility of maybe we'd follow the shoreline around, rather than shoot straight across the gulf. That way if it got bad, we could go in somewhere or something, because the other boat was a bit smaller and so forth. That was kind of their general plan.

As we got around close to Tampa, the wind had started to pick up. We had came up from the southwest instead of the southeast, which created a lee shore there at Tampa. By the time we got close to Tampa, the seas had built to the point; they were ten to twelve feet at that point. We were worried that we couldn't get in the entrance that we'd have to ride the storm out because handling 1,200 feet of tow, and trying to shorten it up, and get inside in those conditions would have been extremely difficult.

At that point, the captain on the other boat was getting nervous; because he was afraid he was going to get overwhelmed. What happened was he had actually gotten water in one of his aft compartments, and the whole boat was down a bit by the stern. The boat wasn't threatened with sinking at that point, but she had lost some of her reserve buoyancy, and you could tell in the guy's voice that he was getting nervous. His bow was riding higher. We were trying to head straight into the seas.

At that point, like I said, it was ten to twelve foot seas. I think the guy wanted to bail out, anyway. And an odd occurrence just recently happened to me. I just went to work on a new boat and I'm running mate, the second wheelhouse position. The captain on that boat was the deckhand on that little boat at that time. He told me, he said, "The guy was scared to death. He had his wife on board with him, he didn't want to be there, and he said a big sea hit our bow, and we turned back toward you."

I had just come up in the wheelhouse and our captain was staring out the window, and the other tug was coming back toward us. The guy on the other tug says, "I can't hold her up, what do you want me to do?" Our captain says, "Whatever you do, don't let that hawser come tight," because that would have turned us. Then we'd have had a hard time getting everything turned back around, plus. So the guy says, "I'm cuttin' it." He cut his hawser. That same deckhand I was talking about cut the hawser at the tug. Here we are with 300-foot of barge, 1,200-foot of hawser, and then 600-foot of somebody else's hawser hanging off our bow.

M.Z.: Goodness.

M.S.: The wind was blowing so hard our captain had pulled back the throttle, so we wouldn't ride over top of that hawser hanging over our bow and get in our wheel. If that had

happened, we'd have gone ashore. We'd have been blown ashore, and if the Coast Guard couldn't get us off with a helicopter, that would have been the end of us.

At this point, the light barge has got so much wind it's just actually towing us backwards. That hawser streamed out in front of us, even though he still had her in clutch ahead just to hold her. He was trying, doing his best holding her, pointing straight into the wind. He's like, "We've got to get rid of that hawser." But the hawser was attached to us by – normally, when we tow a barge, we had two long steel cable bridles that came off the end of the hawser, which is a nylon rope about three inches thick. Those bridles were hooked to our boat, so we didn't have anything we could cut. You're out there in 600-feet of water or whatever, and it's just hanging straight down. Way too heavy to try to pick it up, pull it off the bit. I mean, it's just not gonna happen. I was scared. I thought we were – I mean, we were in a corner.

I got out there with a fire axe and tried to cut the cables. I chopped at that bit until there was great big gouges on the bit that I welded up later, but I couldn't cut the cable. Then we went back, we had a cutting torch, fortunately. I ran back and got that and got it all set up and pulled out to where I could work with it. But the whole bow was going under water. I cut on the cable a little bit and then a sea would overwhelm us. I would end up holding onto the bit while I was completely underwater. Then the sea would go by and I'd run back to the galley and shove the still turned on cutting torch into the fire of the galley. Couple of times I thought I was gonna blow the galley stove up, but then relight the torch and run back out and cut a little more until finally, finally, the hawser parted, or the wires parted. The hawser sank away, and we were able to go straight ahead again.

But that time, the seas were steady building. They'd built eventually to, a conservative estimate would be twenty-foot seas. I know she had a high level eighteen feet in her wheelhouse, and you had to look up to see the tops of the waves. We just went full ahead, straight into the wind, and ran that way for eight hours, and made good about two miles. I remember listening on the radio, a shrimper with steering failure being pulled into the surf. He was anchored and trying to get the Coast Guard to come tow him off. Apparently he didn't have insurance on the boat. Finally the Coast Guard, at the last minute, got him off the boat, as she went into the surf. She was a total loss. A couple other boats got in trouble that night. It was a very bad storm.

M.Z.: What year did you say that was?

M.S.: That would have been June of 1982.

M.Z.: And what was the name of the storm? Or did it have a name?

M.S.: If it had a name, I never knew it. It was basically a depression, and it just blew harder than the weathermen thought it was going to. Then it crossed the neck of Florida.

R.A.: It stayed a tropical storm.

M.S.: It stayed a tropical storm. I don't think back then they actually named tropical storms. Then it went up the coast and like I say, Robin ran into the same storm. She was Indianapolis to Bermuda –

R.A.: Newport to Bermuda.

M.S.: Or, Newport to Bermuda race, and she ran into the same problem.

M.Z.: At that point, you had been working on tugs for about four years?

M.S.: Yes.

M.Z.: Was that the first time that you'd really encountered something as dramatic as this?

M.S.: Well, I'd been in storms before, quite a few. We'd done a lot of up and down the coast, but never anything over eight, nine feet. And pretty rough weather, but something the boat could handle, and I didn't feel too uncomfortable, even though it was an old boat. I remember one time in the gulf the boat came in, we came in for crew change, because we worked kind of like I do now, two weeks on, two weeks off. We were relieving the other crew. They'd got caught in a blow and the whole front of the wheelhouse was buckled in, or the main house and the galley was buckled in.

We actually had to stop the tug working for a few days while we went in, and cut all that loose, and repaired it, and replaced the steel. It turned out that over the years the portholes had leaked water down into the bulkhead, and the frames had corroded out. When a big wave hit, it actually buckled the front of the wheelhouse, or the main house on the boat. That made me think. It was an old boat and they built them in a hurry in World War II. Even though it was a pretty well-built boat, still, it was an old boat. We were out there in pretty serious weather, and you did what you had to do back then. There was a lot of boats like that working.

There was yet another point in my career, I had gotten laid off from one job and work had gotten slow in the early nineties. I ended up working on an old World War II vintage boat. That time I was just working the Delaware River putting fuel on ships, but still it was running a single screw tug up there in all that current, putting oil barges alongside of ships. They don't even allow you to use single screw tugs on oil barges anymore. You have to have a twin screw tug. The industry has changed a good deal since then, safety rules and all that.

M.Z.: That's what I was wondering as you were telling that story, could a similar circumstance happen these days? And to what extent was it the vessel, and to what extent was it the captain of that other, like human error, I guess, is what I'm saying?

M.S.: The whole thing was based on a weather forecast. We thought, well, it's gonna get rough, but not that rough. Then, well, we can handle that. If it gets too bad we can duck

in. Well, the wind came in a slightly different direction than they thought, and more intensity than they thought, and suddenly it wasn't viable to go in there.

M.Z.: These things just happen?

M.S.: Yeah.

R.A.: It's happenstance, yeah.

M.S.: It's happenstance. I mean, when you're doing a distance that far, there's a chance you can get caught. Especially down there, especially after you come around Florida and coming up, there's just inlets. Inlets are notoriously difficult to negotiate, especially with a tow behind you. You have to shorten up in order to keep your tow from being swept alongside and hitting the jetty. If you shorten up too much, then the pull on your hawser becomes too extreme. It becomes unsafe, especially in an inlet, because you tend to surge and jerk on the hawser. If you break it, you're never going to get the barge back in time, it's going to go ashore.

Sometimes you get caught out there. There was a case a couple of years ago, a very large twin screw modern tug called the *Valour* that was caught in a big storm off the Carolina coast. He was out there in pretty good ways, I think, and it was on a long distance trip. They got overwhelmed. Two people got killed, and one man was crippled, and the tug was lost.

M.Z.: So it still happens.

M.S.: It still happens.

M.Z.: There's only so much that technology can do to make things safer.

M.S.: That was a ballast transfer system on the boat that was apparently allowing it to list. Either they didn't have any control over it, or the engineer that was currently on the boat didn't know how to control it. I worked for a company once that had a boat with almost the same situation. Their safety man had come out with a big printout from the Coast Guard's investigation and was telling us all about the *Valour*. I said, "Well, this boat does the same thing." "Oh, okay." I kept saying that, "This boat does the same thing." It was a small boat. It was a seventy-five foot tug. They expected me to go to – they said to jump in the boat and go from Norfolk to Pascagoula or something. Grab a barge and bring it back to Charleston, that kind of thing.

I kept saying, "This boat'll do the same thing. She will transfer her fuel and her fresh water. She'll start getting a list on her." I was running captain on her, and I woke up one morning, and the side of the boat was underwater, the quarter bits and all were underwater. We had to stop, transfer ballast, do things to get her back on her feet. She would do that. I just found it ironic. I left that company. I don't work there anymore.

They put out this big safety bulletin about that sort of thing, and then had the same situation, and basically ignored it. So I tried to explain it.

M.Z.: I guess a lot of times, I'm getting the sense that just the money pressures can add to these unsafe situations.

M.S.: Well, they can. It's an extremely expensive industry. It's extremely high risk. You have the potential to do a huge amount of damage. The insurance costs are prohibitive. I'm with a company now that moves gasoline, and oil, and ethanol, and jet fuel and all that. They have the very latest state-of-the-art brand new tugs and millions of safety rules. I'm actually running a boat that has more than enough power to handle the barge I've got, which usually it was marginal, it used to be. So it's a little more comfortable now. Anytime I want, I can just call the company up and say, "I feel like I need an assist tug." They'll send a little tug over to help me dock the barge, which makes all the difference in the world.

M.Z.: Things have changed quite a bit.

M.S.: Things have changed quite a bit, especially in the petroleum industry, because the price of a mistake is just way too high.

R.A.: The qualifications for people running the boat, and the drug testing, and alcohol testing has changed drastically from the seventies.

M.S.: Yes, back in the seventies you could pretty much have a pretty wide open lifestyle and still do it. But since 1990 that hasn't been the case. The Oil Pollution Act of 1990, which was passed in the aftermath of the Exxon *Valdez* disaster has tightened that up considerably. Then the Coast Guard has also tightened up the physical requirements for doing the job. They've had people that, through no fault of their own – just health conditions – maybe they didn't know enough about – there was a case down on the Arkansas River where a guy knocked a bridge down, a bunch of cars went in the river. He just blacked out behind the wheel, and his barge hit the bridge.

That's the thing a lot of people don't understand, a lot of people don't understand the potential. When 9/11 happened, I was working for a company hauling sand and gravel up the Potomac River. We hauled a huge amount of sand and gravel up and down there. On that day, we were further downriver going into Woodbridge, Virginia. But the guy that worked at the dock in D.C., pretty much everybody had been sent home, because nothing was happening that day. Right next door was a place where Fox News used to fly a helicopter out of. The police basically came and took that over. They put their own helicopter there.

They were all standing around and an old black gentleman that used to work for us running a loader at the dock where we unloaded the sand and gravel was over there helping them out. They were setting up concrete barriers and stuff like that, and he was using the loader to do that. They're all standing in a group, a bunch of guys in suits,

high- up police and federal people. They're looking across the river at a barge. I said, "I wonder what that barge is?" The old black guy says, "You don't know what that barge is?" I said, "I don't have any idea." He said, "That barge is full of jet fuel." I said, "Jet fuel, we've got to get rid of that." He said, "Well, you'd better not do that." He said, "You know who the jet fuel's for?" I said, "No." He said, "It's for Andrews Air Force Base.

That's the jet fuel for Air Force One and every plane that flies out of Andrews. That's how it gets there. They barge it up the river, and it's a pipeline that runs from the Anacostia River about sixteen miles over to Andrews Air Force Base." It was kind of amusing to me. I mean, cars are going right over it, it's right underneath the South Capitol Street Bridge. It's 20,000 barrels, 840,000 gallons of jet fuel, which could be a potential terrorist target, I would think. They weren't even aware of it or what was happening. I guess a lot of people learned a lot of things about what happens.

M.Z.: I think that's one reason I'm really glad that we're doing this exhibit at the museum. I think your industry is so important to so many aspects of everyday life, on a kind of mundane level, but also on much bigger, grander levels, like supplying Air Force One. It's something that's hidden in plain sight, almost.

R.A.: It is hidden in plain sight.

M.Z.: It's all around us. But for those of us who are not involved, we probably just don't tend to pay attention to it, or know much about it.

M.S.: Just outside of Norfolk, there's Langley Field. Just south of Norfolk there's Oceana Air Force Base, just south of that there's Cherry Point Marine Base, up here is the Patuxent River Naval Air Station. There is the aforementioned Andrews Air Force Base, then there's Dover Air Force Base, then there's McGuire Air Force Base up in New Jersey. Every single one of those places gets their fuel by barge. All that moves by water. The ironic thing I find is you're always seeing ads about the railroad industry and how cheaply they can move freight.

You know, they can move so many tons a mile for so little fuel, or they can move it so many miles for a gallon of fuel, or everything. But a barge can do even better. I think it's one of the most under-utilized methods of transportation that we have. You could barge containers to places like Salisbury or Cambridge or lots of places, up to D.C., rather than run them over the road. Trucks, one truckload at a time, I mean, a barge can carry a hundred containers. That's a hundred tractor-trailers you take off the road.

M.Z.: Right now they don't do that, right? I mean, they're not carrying containers.

M.S.: They do it to some. They do barge containers around, they barge them around New York Harbor, they barge –

R.A.: Baltimore and Norfolk.

M.S.: Yeah, they run between Norfolk and Baltimore. The only small run I know of, on a regular basis, a company I was working for before runs some from Norfolk to Richmond.

M.Z.: I meant more up into the rivers like you're talking about, the Nanticoke and stuff like that. They don't do that, or am I wrong?

M.S.: No, no, they don't do that.

R.A.: Not containers. Grain.

M.S.: Grain and fuel. Fuel still goes to Salisbury.

R.A.: Sand and gravel.

M.S.: Yeah, sand and gravel goes up there. A lot of gasoline goes to Salisbury, because my company does it. They haul it out of Yorktown.

M.Z.: Sand and gravel, fuel, and grain?

M.S.: Yeah, grain comes out, fuel and sand and gravel go in. Though, actually, I think there's a place in Seaford where they haul sand out and crushed stone in, so we get a load both ways there.

M.Z.: Then the containers are more going in and out of the bigger, more modern ports, would you say?

M.S.: Yeah.

R.A.: Seems you really have to have a container port to unload the containers. That's logistically tough in the smaller towns, I think.

M.Z.: And all those Gantry cranes and everything now, right?

M.S.: You don't have to have those. With a big crane you could unload a barge load of containers. All you need is a hundred foot of parking lot, hundred by a hundred, or hundred by two hundred or something, and you could unload a barge load of containers.

R.A.: Not sure I agree with that, but that's all right.

M.Z.: There's so many things to follow up on in what you're talking about here. I want to get a little bit back to your timeline. You started out as a deckhand in 1978, and you worked on the *Progress*, the old World War II vessel. How long did it take you to move up in the world and what were the stages there? I assume after you were a deckhand, you became a mate, and then after that you became a captain?

M.S.: Actually, I became chief engineer after being a deckhand. During that time I went and I got my AB's ticket, which was not at the time required for a tugboat, but it's a test that you take. On ships you would be the quartermaster, you would steer, you would be the lookout or whatever. Called able-bodied seaman, and it's an endorsement on your Merchant Mariner's Document. You have to take a fairly extensive test, lifeboats, life rafts, ship's rigging, little bit of rules of the road, first aid safety, stuff like that. That was my first; I studied for that on my own. I didn't go to school for it.

M.Z.: You studied for that while you were still a deckhand? Or this is once you became the engineer?

M.S.: I think I had already become an engineer.

M.Z.: How long were you a deckhand before you became an engineer?

M.S.: About eighteen months. In August of '79 the company purchased the tug *Nanticoke*, which was identical tug to the *Progress*.

M.Z.: And the name of the company was?

M.S.: JK McCammon Marine Transportation.

M.Z.: And I can look that up in –

M.S.: *Woman in the Wheelhouse*, yes. He still exists to some extent. He has a small boat that delivers lubricating oil to ships.

M.Z.: Who is he? What was the name of the guy?

M.S.: Jerry McCammon.

M.Z.: Okay.

M.S.: He lives up in Media, Pennsylvania, not too far from the Delaware River. His current boat is a small supply vessel and it works out of Wilmington, Delaware.

M.Z.: So they bought the *Nanticoke*?

M.S.: They bought the *Nanticoke* from the family of the girl that wrote *Tugging on a Heartstring*.

M.Z.: The Lamberts?

M.S.: The Lamberts, right. Frank Lambert at one time had worked for my uncle. It's a small community, really. I mean, when you've been in as long as I have, almost anywhere I go

I'm going to run into people I've worked with before or know or something. It's not that big a community.

Then I had gone ahead and gotten my AB's, and I thought, well, it would probably be a good idea to get a wheelhouse license. I thought about getting an engineer's license, but I didn't have enough time for it. Plus, I'd already used time as – there's two ways to go. You can either go engine room or you can go deck. Having gone deck as far as getting an AB's, I could use that same time over again to get a wheelhouse license, but I couldn't use it for an engineer's license. It forestalled my thought of being a license engineer. So I went and got my wheelhouse license.

M.Z.: That's like another endorsement?

M.S.: Well, no, it's a whole separate license. The AB is an endorsement on your Merchant Mariner's Document, which basically proves you're a member of the U.S. Merchant Marine. The license is a whole separate thing. At that time, they had a course and a license that covered, if you had I think it was two years in, you could get what they called an operator's license, a tugboat operator's license. It was restricted to tugs. I went and got that.

M.Z.: And how did you prepare for that? You took a course, you said?

M.S.: I went to the Tidewater School of Navigation in Norfolk, Virginia, and stayed down at the YMCA in my time off, and went to that school. They had a tuition charge and then they would prepare you for the test. You would take the test, and if you failed the test, you could continue to go to school for up to a year on the same tuition charge until you passed the test.

M.Z.: That's a good deal. How long was the course?

M.S.: It was study at your own pace. They had a really flexible and good – which I don't see schools doing now. You call them up and say, "We have a course and these are the dates." These people would never say that to you. They'd say, "Come down and study. We have videotaped lectures. We have instructors circulating around that will help you. We do practice tests, and you work through exercises, and there's instructors there to help you."

So basically you studied at your own pace. You could set your own schedule. My first license I think I went – I'd get off work on a Wednesday, I'd stay home through the weekend. Then on the first Monday I'd be in school, and I'd do that week at school. I'd go home and have the few days with my family, and then go back to work. It took me two times and I had my license.

I got my first license and I was still working, that was in '81, I guess. I was still working for the company that owned the *Progress*. But they didn't show any sign of wanting me to be in the wheelhouse. They wanted me right in the engine room, right where I was.

M.Z.: So when you get that license you can be a mate?

M.S.: You can be a mate, you can't be a captain. By 1982, I had the time in to be a captain. So I upgraded the license and I went ahead and took another – they call them an inspected license, where I can now be master on any tugboat and mate on any vessel up to 500 gross tons. That was the upgrade I did then. I was always going to upgrade it again, but I never did, because I had enough license to cover pretty much anything I wanted to do. At that point, it became obvious to me that the company I was working for wasn't going to –

M.Z.: This was still McCammon?

M.S.: McCammon, yeah. He just didn't have a need to put me in the wheelhouse and train me for that and all like that. So I called up my cousin, who owned a couple of old tugs, one of which was even older than the one I'd started on. It had been originally a steam tug and it was built in 1905. That was the tug *Quaker*. I think you know my cousin Denny, who used to volunteer at the museum some. I called him up and it was kind of funny, because our families hadn't gotten along. His father and my father didn't – his father was married to my father's sister, and they didn't always get along. We had never been close. I think I had met him once when I was a little kid or something. I didn't really even know the man. I just called him up, told him who I was. He got along okay with my dad, and just had been his father and my father had an issue.

He was a very nice man. I called him up and I was kind of doing this – I was a little uncomfortable, because he was my cousin. I hadn't been in touch with him and all like that. So I'm talking away at him and telling him how "I've got my license, Denny, and I'm really wanting to work some, and if you ever might – any chance you might need somebody to fill in," and I'm talking away. He finally breaks in and says, "Wait a minute, tell me this." I says, "What's that, Denny?" He said, "Can you be in Seaford, Delaware, at 4:00 this afternoon?" I'm like, "Yeah, I can." So there I was.

That was my first experience being in the wheelhouse of a tugboat. It was a pretty interesting experience because he put two barges together that he couldn't really see over. He had to stand up on top of the wheelhouse with a steering switch on a long wire in the pouring rain, and steer the tug out of the Nanticoke River. He volunteered to do that. I just stood in the wheelhouse by the throttle in case he needed me to back her down. (Laughter.)

Out the river we went. Once we got out in open water, we strung them out behind us and towed them. We went down to Lee's Creek, North Carolina, down off the Pamlico River and got two loads of fertilizer, and brought them back to Seaford. That was an interesting trip. But then after that, every time I could in my time off in the other company, I worked for him.

M.Z.: So you were getting more experience?

M.S.: I was getting wheelhouse experience. Like I say, I'd run boats all my life, but hadn't run tugs, anything real big. I used to steer all the time, give the captain or the mate a break when I was on the other tugs. As far as actually close-in boat handling, shifting barges and stuff, I hadn't done much of that. I got to do that with my cousin, because he used to haul grain. He used a tug; the barges had hatches that worked on rails. You had to jack them up, so that their wheels contacted rails, and then raised the hatch up a little. You actually had little bits on hatches as you'd catch with the bow under the tug and make them roll. Had to be very careful that you didn't pull them off the track and stuff like that.

It was kind of interesting. We used to load grain over in Tappahannock and haul it to Salisbury. That was for Perdue. I guess it was chicken feed. We hauled sand and gravel from Havre de Grace to Salisbury. We hauled fertilizer from down in Lee's Creek. I would do that whenever I had the opportunity arose in my time off, and I kept my other job. I guess it would have been November of '82, the boat the *Progress*, I was back on the *Progress*, I had known the chief engineer on her. Well, she lost her contract.

Basically I was out of a job. I called my cousin Denny up and said, "Well, I'm totally at your disposal at this point." He said, "Well, good, because the *Blue Star* just had its crankshaft seize up, and I need to probably replace the engine." I had a big job to work on doing that, and in between times still running wheelhouse for him when he needed somebody to fill in. That lasted until '83, and work had slowed down for him. I was just working intermittently and an opportunity came up for me to go work for a sand and gravel company over on the Potomac River.

I went over there and started out, actually, as a combination of things. I was doing repair work on barges, because I was a welder, and fill in as the relief mate on the tug whenever they needed someone to fill in, because they didn't have a regular schedule. Well, I did that for about two or three months. Then out of the blue, the owner of the company called me up and said, "I just fired the captain. I need a captain, will you come and do it?" I said, "Yeah, but you gotta have a schedule, and you gotta have a regular relief system" and so forth. We had kind of ironed out those details.

I did that for about two years, running a small pusher tug up and down the Potomac River. Then I left there. I had an interim working there on shore. I became what they call a port engineer, like an assistant manager and so forth, and took care of the maintenance of the barges and tugs and still filled in whenever. The company grew and we had two tugs and more people, and I still filled in and took – the boat needed to be taken to the shipyard, I would do it.

M.Z.: What company was that?

M.S.: That was called Breton Bay Water Transportation, which was actually a subsidiary of a large company called Florida Rock Industries. That company later was folded into another company called Salisbury Towing. But it was the same.

R.A.: Now Vulcan Industries.

M.S.: Yes, now Vulcan Industries. It was bought out by Vulcan Industries. I worked for them for about eight years. Then work slowed down in that industry and I got laid off right at a critical time. That was about 1991. There was recession on at the time, things were slow, and I ended up having to work for a guy that didn't offer any benefits whatsoever (sic). He was contracted to a company up on the Delaware River that was putting fuel on ships. We would haul a small little barge around, go alongside ships and do what they call ship bunkering. Back in the old days the coal lockers were called bunkers. So now fueling a ship is still called bunkering. That's what we did. I did that for a couple of years.

Then I went with a company for a while that did – I was looking to better myself as far as I had a child with medical problems and stuff, and I was trying to get some benefits. I went with another company and they were hauling oil barges. That was where I hauled the jet fuel. We used to go to Port Mahon and all those places.

Then I got out of it for about a year or so, and went back to that heavy construction work. My spouse at the time wanted me to be home. That didn't work out real well, and I kind of segayed (sic) back into tugboating by taking a construction job, running the tug, working on the bay bridge up by Annapolis. I did that in the mid-nineties for about two years. Then I went back as a captain for Salisbury Towing again, on the Potomac River again. I did that for, like, nine years.

M.Z.: Was that also sand and gravel?

M.S.: That was all sand and gravel, crushed stone, yeah. Because they're all over the Bay, Havre de Grace, Norfolk, Seaford, Salisbury, Easton. A whole lot of rock at Havre de Grace. Major rock wash.

R.A.: Washington, Washington, D.C.

M.S.: We went to D.C. and Woodbridge, Virginia. And also up the James River to Richmond, they have a rock quarry in Richmond. We used to haul out of there down to Norfolk.

M.Z.: The sand and gravel is just used mostly for paving and construction?

M.S.: Paving and all kinds of construction work, road beds, depends on what you want. I mean, the rock, anything from riprap, I mean, they hauled all the riprap down for the Poplar Island reconstruction from there. Not all of it, actually. They had the second phase of it. I remember they were enraged when somebody actually bought rock by train down from Pennsylvania and then barged it out of Baltimore for the first phase of the job. They're going, "We got the rock quarry right here on the bay. What happened, somebody didn't sharpen their pencil on the bid?"

But the second go-round of it they did. The company really liked that, because they'd have a barge going to Salisbury, and they'd hang a rock barge alongside of it, and they'd just drop it off. It didn't really cost them anything to deliver it. They did everything from riprap down to finely ground stone that went into asphalt. We used to haul a lot. There's an asphalt plant in Easton when we used to haul a lot of that aggregate down for that. I worked there in 2001, that's when Robin came to work there as a deckhand.

M.Z.: I see. The plot thickens.

R.A.: Yes, the plot thickens.

M.Z.: Now, what company was that?

R.A.: Salisbury Towing.

M.S.: That was Salisbury Towing, yeah.

M.Z.: You were working there as a deckhand?

M.S.: Yeah. She had a license, she was a licensed captain. She was at one point Walter Cronkite's yacht captain.

R.A.: I had just left Walter Cronkite, and my mom was getting older, and decided I need to do something to stay in the Bay, and not be in the Caribbean for months on end, or wherever I was going for months on end. I was never home. So Mark's brother, who I met when I fished him out of the Miles River one day –

M.S.: While canoe racing.

R.A.: While canoe racing when his board broke and I fished him out, became a friend. We remained friends for some time. Then he brought Mark to a party at my house, and we had met. When I decided to try and be in the Bay more, I called Eric and said, "Eric, is your brother looking for anybody on the tug?" He said, "Gee, I don't know. I'll call him." He called me the next morning and said, "Yeah." He says, "We've been looking for somebody for three months, need a deckhand." I said, "Okay." I said, "Let me come work on the boats."

I went up and interviewed with the company in Havre de Grace. I said, "I want to work on the boat for twenty-four hours or forty-eight hours. Let me see if I could actually do this because it's not light work." It turned out I could do it. Other than being really short, I was pretty strong. (Laughter) Getting a line on a bit over my head, ten feet over my head or eight feet over my head was a little bit of an issue, but that was about the only one. I said, "Yeah, I can do this." The goal was that as soon as I could upgrade my license to, at that point in time a 150-ton, I guess it was, and a master of towing vessels, then I could go ahead and become mate on the boat. Which is what I did. I deckhanded for what, six months, I guess, seven months, eight months.

M.S.: About six months.

R.A.: And then moved into the wheelhouse. Mark taught me how to run the tug.

M.Z.: What was your relationship, if you don't mind me asking, what was your relationship like at this point?

R.A.: We were friends.

M.S.: We were friends, yeah.

R.A.: We were friends.

M.Z.: Must have been interesting to get to know each other by working together in those kind of circumstances.

R.A.: It's probably the only way we have a relationship.

M.Z.: Why do you say that?

M.S.: There's not very many women working on tugboats. In my career, I have worked with three, but I've only married one of them. (Laughter) I worked with Nancy, the gal who wrote *Woman in the Wheelhouse*. I worked with another gal at another company.

R.A.: It was interesting, because number one, we had become friends. I'm used to running my own boat. I'm used to being the captain, I'm used to being in control, I'm used to being the one that gives the orders. It was an interesting situation for him because he's used to teaching twenty-year-old young men how to run a boat. Now he's got to teach this adult captain female how to run a boat. And it was –

M.S.: It was a little different.

R.A.: It was more than a little different.

M.Z.: It sounds like you guys have a great story here. Somebody should write a book about you.

R.A.: We're getting ready to go cruising, so we're probably going to write something. People have been telling me for years I need to write a book.

M.Z.: I think they're right. Can you back up a little bit and tell me how you got to that point? I mean, we've done that basically with Mark, we've gotten his chronology.

R.A.: Let me see where to start. I mean, it starts forever ago. Let's just start with the marine industry. I left my ex-husband, and was raising two young children completely on my

own. I guess that's where it really starts. I had been either on a horse or on a boat every moment I could from the time I could walk. It was one or the other. It was either woods or water. When I left my ex, I moved to the SPCA, which is what everybody would do. I ran the SPCA for two years in Annapolis. During that time I made a lot of friends in the marine industry. I got involved totally in racing sailboats. I just threw myself into the water.

M.S.: And you got your first license –

R.A.: Nineteen-seventy-six. I went from being an animal person to completely immersed in the whole waterfront thing.

M.Z.: You got your first license in 1976, what license was that?

R.A.: Fifty-ton captain's license. That was because I went to work for a company called the Yacht Yard.

M.Z.: So what year was it that you left your ex-husband?

R.A.: Seventy-one.

M.Z.: You were working for the SPCA?

R.A.: I had to go somewhere, because when I left my ex-husband, I moved with goats and skunks and raccoons, and all the three Great Danes, and all these animals that I had to take somewhere. So the SPCA was a likely candidate. So I managed that. Then I realized I could not make enough money in that world to raise two children. I looked around and said what could I do to make some money? I started working part-time selling boats. I was also the chief riding stable inspector of the state of Maryland at the time. I had three jobs.

As time progressed, it progressed into selling boats, working for yacht yards, running yacht yards. By 1976, I was basically selling boats and I was doing instruction on them. I was taking people out and showing them how to run them, how to use them. Needed a license to do that, which is why I got the license. Stayed with that company for about five years. It was a really good company, fun company to work for, little on the nutzoid side. But we were probably the biggest dealer in Annapolis at that point in time.

But waking up in the middle of the night dreaming about fixing broken fiberglass, said I need to go do something else. So I went to a company called Marine Engine Sales and Service and became their service manager. Backtracking for one moment, I'm not trying to skip around on you here.

M.Z.: That's fine.

R.A.: I ended up running the service department for the Yacht Yard. I went from being a yacht broker to running the service department, which meant I had thirteen guys working for me. I was commissioning a boat a day and doing about \$5 million worth of boats, commissioning them, a year. I mean, I would literally show up at 5:00 in the morning and leave at 8:00 at night. I was the only woman running the service yard, to the best of my knowledge, on the East Coast. I've lived in this all-male environment since I could possibly remember.

M.Z.: What was that like for you? Was it hard to establish yourself in that kind of setting?

R.A.: You just had to work harder than anybody else. You had to get yourself ahead of the learning curve. I mean, if somebody was going to ask you a question, you had to know the answer. Guys could fumble it or guys could not know it or they could bullshit, but you had to know the answer. You just had to work harder. And I did. That's worked pretty well, in general.

M.Z.: Once you did that, behaving that way, did you get the respect that you deserved?

R.A.: In general, yeah. Absolutely. In fact, I'm still really good friends with everybody I've ever worked for. So that says something unto itself. I mean, my bosses have become friends, and so with everybody I worked with. So they respected my work ethic, they respected my nuts. I mean, I'm just crazy. But you had to be to –

M.Z.: In terms of your energy level?

R.A.: Exactly. I have been –

M.S.: While she was doing all this, she was always racing on the side on big sailboats, ocean racing.

R.A.: I was one of the very few women in 1971 going ocean racing. If you were a woman on a boat ocean racing, you were probably a wife. But I just wanted to go. I mean, I wanted to go do this. I fell in love with it, and have done it ever since. I was doing something a lot of the guys didn't do, so they had respect for me because I was going out and putting myself on the line all the time. It's been a great life, number one. I have loved what I have done. I've been able to do almost anything I've ever wanted to do.

M.Z.: Sounds like it. Sounds like you're not afraid of just really sticking your neck out there and taking a big, huge chance.

R.A.: No. And I was working for Marine Engine Sales and Service, and Petersen Publishing Company was going to reopen a magazine called *Rudder*. *Rudder* had been a big publication for years. They were going to reopen it on the East Coast and they hired me. They talked to me and they said, "You know everybody. Would you come and work for us and do our East Coast sales?" Basically I took over East Coast sales for *Rudder*

magazine and Petersen Publishing. Anytime anybody wanted to double my salary, I'd think about it.

M.Z.: That sounds like a good policy.

R.A.: Well, the kids, because they grew up with me being a yacht broker for a long time. They said, "Mom, we never know whether we're eating peanut butter, or you're going to walk in with a brand new television set." They're great kids. Went to Petersen Publishing, spent about three years with Petersen Publishing. I wasn't real happy in the publishing world. How do I say this politely? There were too many women. It was too (makes monkey sounds). I miss my guys. Particularly if I had to be in the office. It was just too female.

When BMW came to me – and these people all came to me, I didn't go to them. From Marine Engine Sales and Service on through, everybody came to me, said, "Will you do this job?" Sometimes I'd say yes, sometimes I said no. BMW hired me again, wanted to pay me a whole lot more money. I took over being the Northeast sales application engineer for BMW, for the marine division. Again, I was the only female anywhere in the whole male engine world, worked for BMW and loved it.

Still racing, and they gave me a lot of time. Gave me a whole lot more money, gave me a lot of time. I could go racing when I wanted, all I had to do was call the boss and say, "I've got a race I want to do." They sponsored me in the One Lap of America Race driving BMW cars, driving all the way around the country in a race, along with Betty Cook, who was the World Offshore Powerboat champion at the time. There were three of us and we drove seven days and 8,750 miles. It was a great experience with BMW.

When they first hired me, it's a very German company. They did not tell my boss's boss that they had hired. They said they had hired someone, but they didn't tell them who. So I'm sitting in my boss's office in Montvale, New Jersey, New York business suit, you know, looking like a female. I'm sitting there talking to David, and Hans walks in and David looks at him, and he's got this little "I just ate the canary" look. He said, "Hans, I want you to meet the new sales application engineer. This is Robin Allison." Hans says, "Ya vol, you haff hired a voman." (Laughter) So I stood up and turned around and said, "Hans, I'm glad you noticed."

That's sort of life in general. I mean, and I traveled with the guys. It was four or five of us that handled the whole country. We would go from boat show to boat show to boat show. I'd done this with the Yacht Yard; I had done it with Marine Engine Sales and Service. David would call me and say, "We got engines to pick up here, meet me at Norfolk, meet me here, meet me there." We were always moving engines, we were moving this, I'd move the whole boat show thing for BMW from Newport to Florida four or five times. Ten-by-twenty-foot floats, all the engines, all everything. I coordinated all of that for them. So that was a great thing.

[End of Part 1. Begin Part 2:]

M.Z.: This is the second recording session with Robin Allison and Mark Steinlein on October 17th, 2011. Okay.

R.A.: Before he entered the picture. So I'm with BMW. They decide to get out of the marine industry. So now what do I do? It was not the world's best time in economic times, so, of course, I did the only smart thing, I started my own engine company with a friend of mine from Volvo. We owned our own engine company. I finally bought him out. Then I ended up being bought out after running this engine company for about six years. I was bought out in 1990, or '92, I guess it was, actually. So it was seven years.

Then I said, okay, I've been working this very high pressure, big corporate stuff, running my own engine company, what do I want to do? It was hard to find a job in '92, '91-'92. I said it's time to go sailing. I found a job along with a mutual friend. We ended up running Tradewinds Yacht Charters in St. Lucia for three years.

M.Z.: That must have been beautiful.

R.A.: Oh, great place, great time. Terrible boats. When I got there, the guys would change the engine oil by dumping the oil out of the engine into the bilge, and then into this beautiful blue water. I went about completely changing how their procedures worked, and how they did things. They were not used to a white woman in the bilge with these black boys. The guys were wonderful, but they learned, and they were respectful, but I helped them. If they needed something to go to their house, I would take the truck, and I would pick up a washer or a dryer and help them move it into the house. They just weren't used to a woman, particularly a white woman, helping them do things like that. That went on for about three years.

But that was enough of that. It was time to come home. I missed home, missed my kids, missed my mom, missed family, friends, that kind of stuff. So I thought, well, gee, what can I come home and do? It's got to be still the marine industry, because I tried to go straight a couple of times. I tried to do couple of different jobs, I can't even remember what they are right now. But it was one of those things, I just can't be put into this nine-to-five box anymore than you could. I mean, that was the big thing. You just can't do this mundane stuff. I tried to go into real estate one time, I thought, well, I'm pretty good at sales. I should be able to do this. Couldn't deal with the crazies, or the other crazies, I guess.

M.Z.: And that kind of office environment it sounds like is not your –

R.A.: It's just not my thing, no, not at all. So came back and went to work for Fawcett's, which was the biggest chandler in the area at the time. I went in, because I knew everybody in the industry, I went into their wholesale department and I basically spent time, a lot of time in the office, but that was okay. And a lot of time on the road.

M.Z.: When was that that you went to work for them?

R.A.: '94-'95. I worked for them for a couple of years, and still great friends with everybody there. Wes Green (ph) came to me and said, "We want to make you a manager. We're opening a new store in town. Please come to work for us." So I did. And worked there from '95-'96 to '99. Then Walter Cronkite bought a boat that I had always been in love with. And I'm racing all this time, too. At the same time I'm racing, I'm also teaching sailing for a company called Womanship, which I taught for, or have taught for over twenty-five years. I'm always doing two or three things, it seems. I'm always juggling. Built the yacht club, I was a chairperson to build Eastport Yacht Club. I'm always juggling these multiple balls in the air. That's why I'm hopping around because it's sort of, I guess, it's what I do.

M.Z.: So Walter Cronkite bought the boat?

R.A.: He bought a sixty-foot Camper Nicholson named *Trilogy* from Dr. Dorsey (ph). This is just the prettiest boat I'd ever seen. I had met the Commodore in 1976 on a Marion to Bermuda race, and he was sailing with Mike Ashford, who owns McGarvey's. And we were talking on the radio going over – obviously he has this immensely distinctive voice. He and I had been chatting and I said, as we got ready to sign off, I said, "Tell Mike he owes me a bloody Mary and an oyster stew." (Laughter) And I met he and Betsy, his wife, later at Royal Bermuda Yacht Club.

We all sat around the bar talking. He says, "Ever thought about coming to work for me?" I said, "Gee, couldn't do it with the kids right then." But I said, "Not right now, but maybe later." So when he bought the boat, I really liked it. I called friends of his and said, "If he's ever looking for a captain, let me know." Three months later they called me and said, "You still available?" I said, "I'll make myself available." I said, "Let me go up and look at the boat, and talk to the Commodore, and see what he says." So we went up, had a chat with him, flew to the Vineyard, and went to work for Walter Cronkite.

M.Z.: When was that, then?

R.A.: Ninety-nine.

M.Z.: So how long did you work for him and what was that like?

R.A.: Two years. A two years you wouldn't have had to pay me for. It was exhausting, it was wonderful, it was very tense at times. It was one of the high hurricane years or two years. I got chased by hurricanes pretty much everywhere we went. But when you're working for him, it's a twenty-four-seven job. And at that point in time, because he truly knew he had limited time. He was in his mid-eighties at that point in time. He was trying to sail every possible moment that he possibly could.

But a kinder, nicer person has never existed than he and his family. They were wonderful people. Sitting around after everybody else had gone to bed. Betsy would have gone to

bed. It would be he and I and possibly the mate, and we'd just sit around at midnight and just have conversations about stuff. You couldn't pay for that.

M.Z.: You must have heard some great stories.

R.A.: Great stories. I just pretty much keep his privacy his privacy.

M.Z.: Of course.

R.A.: Which is what I'd like to do. But as I say, he's just a wonderful person. I mean, he would sit in the living room and play with the spaniels and tear up. Betsy was wonderful, one of the funniest women I've ever met. He'd be climbing out of the companionway, she'd pull his trunks off. (Laughter.) It's like, this is a side of Walter Cronkite you never think about.

We were anchored, I think, on Peter Island. He wanted to get – big time swimmer, he'd swim twice a day. And I said, "Have you ever tried Joy?" I said, "Just put a little bit of Joy in your soap. Wet up a little bit, put a little bit of Joy when you soap up." Well, he put a lot of Joy, I mean, he's this great big soap ball, and jumping overboard. That kind of stuff. We had all kinds of – from astronauts to senators to the admiral of the Pacific Fleet, we'd take him all out sailing every afternoon in the Vineyard, Tom Hanks. I got a chance to meet a lot of people.

M.Z.: How did you make the transition from him to tugboat world? There's a contrast for you.

M.S.: (Laughter.) Yeah, major culture shock.

R.A.: Well, obviously, having been flexible all this time, it was sort of like, okay.

M.S.: He sold that boat, didn't he?

R.A.: I left in May. I was getting ready to go back in the fall to go back to work for him. But Mother was getting more ill. He fell in August and tore his Achilles tendon and thought he was never going to sail again. Now I needed a job. I had plenty of money in the bank at that time, and I went to Cuba that summer, I drove across the United States with friends. I mean, I had a great summer. I took months off. I went to Hawaii. When I realized I needed a job, I thought I need to stay home. What do I do? That's when I called Eric and said, "Does your brother need anybody?" So that was the beginning of working with tugboats.

M.Z.: Boy, that is quite a saga. (Laughter.) I'm just trying to process it all. So when you started working on the tugs, obviously you'd been involved in the marine industry for a long time. But that was your first experience really aboard a very industrial –

R.A.: In the commercial world.

M.Z.: – kind of vessel?

R.A.: In the commercial world. The big-time commercial world, yes.

M.Z.: So how big of a transition was that? You've talked about some of the issues with being a woman and you just kind of trying to assess, "Can I physically do this?" Was it difficult to deal with going from the yacht world to going to something that was probably a lot more grimy?

R.A.: It was still twenty-four/seven. I mean, you work six hours, you go to sleep; you work six hours, you go to sleep. I probably got more time off on the tug than I had ever had on running a boat for an independent owner.

M.Z.: So it really wasn't that different for you? I mean, the schedule wasn't that different?

R.A.: The schedule wasn't that different.

M.S.: But you get your two weeks off.

R.A.: I actually had time off as opposed to not having any time off. When I was working as a captain for Walter, I had done it for people not nearly as important, but you don't have time to go to the dentist. This actually gave me a little bit of time to myself.

M.S.: Six months, a year off, basically.

R.A.: As far as fitting in on the boat in general, I think I fit in pretty well. I was pretty used to fitting in wherever I was, whether it was a crew of twenty one guys and me on a racing sailboat named *Javelin*, which was seventy-seven foot long, and I ran the pit on her. I mean, it was twenty one guys and me.

M.Z.: So you were already so accustomed to being in a mostly male world?

R.A.: An all-male world, just about. I was very comfortable with it. I was used to just holding my own in whatever circumstance, and most of the time they called me when they had a problem.

M.Z.: So when you started working with that company, that was Salisbury Towing?

R.A.: Yes.

M.Z.: And you guys were doing the kind of sand and gravel type stuff?

M.S.: Yep.

R.A.: We were running out of Woodbridge, Virginia, and we were running either to D.C. or to Goose Bay or Breton Bay occasionally, Norfolk occasionally.

M.Z.: It just was no issue for you, that kind of being in such an industrial kind of world compared to the yachts and the more recreational stuff?

R.A.: Well, it was different, but it had been my choice. I wanted to do this. It had been, okay, I had done this. But let me go somewhere else. I think tugging is probably some of the most fun I've ever had.

M.Z.: Why do you say that? What are the things about it that are more fun than some of the other things that you've done?

R.A.: Haven't thought about it that way. But if I had something I want to do tomorrow, you say, okay, you can go be a captain for this person or you can run a tugboat, I'm going to run the tugboat. It's an interesting challenge. It gives you your own personal time that you can actually go close yourself in a cabin and have some time to yourself, whether it's to read a book or listen to music, you have personal time. Generally working for a pretty high-powered owner, you have no personal time.

M.S.: You're someone's servant, basically.

R.A.: You are somebody's servant. In this case, you're really not a servant. You are part of a crew.

M.Z.: It's a small crew.

R.A.: It's a small crew. It's usually four people or maybe five people, but usually four. And you have a lot of time to yourself, you have a lot of time to – you can just be more your own person. Yeah, it's dirtier, it's a little ickier.

M.S.: Boats themselves, I mean, modern tugboats nowadays tugboats are very nice inside. The boat I'm on, which is brand new practically, it's only two years old, I mean, there's a flat screen TV. It's hooked up to a satellite in every room, not just in the galley. It's fully air-conditioned and heated. I go to the outside to go to the upper wheelhouse or back to the stern controls to tighten up the winch and that's about it. It's very nice, very comfortable.

M.Z.: That's a big change from the past.

M.S.: From the old diesel fired stoves, yeah, it's a big change. But as Robin was saying, it's a fairly comfortable way to live. You have a nice structured watch schedule. You have your two weeks on and your two weeks off. You end up just as many hours a year as anybody else. But you do it, you're doing twelve hours a day, seven days a week, and therefore you get your nice two-week blocks of time off, which becomes addictive. You don't want to go back to the real world after you've done that for a while, because it's so nice.

M.Z.: I'm thinking back to the earlier question for both of you being so oriented towards the water from such an early age. Why tug, why the tug industry for you as opposed to being a waterman? But I wonder if some of these issues factor into it?

M.S.: Sure. Time off, the good pay and steady pay, and it was always decent pay or reasonable pay in the industry. And then there became a shortage in the last ten, fifteen years for wheelhouse people, and even now with times so hard –

R.A.: It's gonna get way worse, too.

M.S.: Yeah, because a lot of people are gonna retire. But with times so hard now, even so, if you're pretty good, you can usually find a reasonably good job. It's the only place I know where a high school dropout can make four hundred bucks a day, seventy thou a year and good benefits.

M.Z.: I look at it all and I think, wow. (Laughter.) Wish I'd been oriented that way.

M.S.: It's a big responsibility, too. I mean, you're dragging two million gallons of gasoline through New York Harbor or something. It strikes you that – I mean, you can sit around on standby for hours. It's like the old story about the airline pilot or whatever, it's hours and hours of boredom punctuated by moments of sheer terror. All of a sudden you've got to go through the bridge with the empty gasoline barge and the wind's blowing sideways on you.

R.A.: I don't know how much of this is my observation, but I think many of the people I've met in this industry are adrenaline junkies. You have to be an adrenaline junkie to want to do – I know I am, obviously, from the stuff I've done. You've got to be an adrenaline junkie to be willing to push 650-fifty foot long through the Woodrow Wilson Bridge. I mean, the first time I did that, I'm thinking, if I can do this, I can do anything. That is my mindset, okay, I'm gonna do this. I'm gonna do it right. You're the only person there. You're the only person on the bridge, there's nobody else around. The deckhand, everybody else is asleep, it's only you.

M.S.: The deckhand's standing there cooking supper or something.

R.A.: Right, calling you to say, "How much pepper do you want me to put in this?" (Laughter.) I'm, "Oh, I don't know, a teaspoon or so." (Laughter.)

M.S.: One of the things that made that a challenge is during that time they were rebuilding the Woodrow Wilson Bridge and there was construction equipment all around it and the already-skinny passage through it was even narrowed down worse, and you had to keep three barges in a row lined up. And we literally were 600-feet long going through there, counting the tug and all the barges.

M.Z.: That's interesting. Do you agree with what Robin's saying, that you have to be an adrenaline junkie?

M.S.: I think it certainly helps, yes. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: The reason I ask is because from the reading that I did, which was *Tugging on a Heartstring* and then a little bit of *Woman in the Wheelhouse*, and then some other articles and stuff, that was certainly my impression, that you have to be an adrenaline junkie. But I interviewed a young man, he's in his twenties, he's maybe twenty-five, twenty-six, who's getting into the industry now. He's in the industry now, but he went through one of those maritime academies, SUNY whatever it is, Fort Schuyler in The Bronx. And I kind of brought up that topic. I didn't quite put it that way, but basically I was staying, "Do you have to be an adrenaline junkie?" And he's still coming up, right?

R.A.: He doesn't know he's an adrenaline junkie.

M.Z.: That may be. But he says –

R.A.: He's twenty how old?

M.Z.: Twenty-five-ish.

R.A.: He doesn't know he's an adrenaline junkie yet.

M.Z.: I remember what he said, he said, "It's much better to be calm and to not" –

R.A.: Oh, no, you've gotta be calm. Being an adrenaline junkie doesn't mean you're not calm. You've got to be calm.

M.S.: Yeah. You don't want to get excited. That gets transmitted and the next thing you know everybody's excited and –

R.A.: Everybody's – no, no, you've got to be calm.

M.S.: – nobody's doing what they need to be doing.

R.A.: Absolutely. He's right.

M.Z.: He's not a captain yet, so he's –

R.A.: But he also doesn't know that he's an adrenaline junkie, because at that age everybody – most guys are. It's the guys that fly Blue Angels. When you go into war, they don't send fifty-year-olds in, they send eighteen to twenty-two-year-olds in. It's because you're an adrenaline junkie.

M.S.: You think you're going to live forever.

R.A.: You can't be hurt, right. That's sort of what I was saying about Mark teaching me, who had already been through all this other shit forever, about if it can break, I've fixed it. The two things that come to mind are he had been telling me about this one god-awful barge that it towed so badly, and he'd been telling me this story for days. All of a sudden we have to tow this barge to Norfolk, and it was, I think, my first tow job, ever. And I got this –

M.S.: Pushing the barge as we were towing behind on a hawser.

R.A.: Right. So I had been pushing a lot and I was all cool. Anyway, so we're towing this barge with a horrible reputation. He's getting ready to go off watch. I'm just getting ready to come on watch, and just put this barge on the tow. He says, "I'm going to sleep." I said, "Up here you are." (Laughter.) I said, "You're not going below until I find out if I can do this." So he slept up, there's was a bunk, a little cot thingy in the wheelhouse. He stayed up there with me for an hour or so till I was comfortable doing that. We were good enough friends at that point in time, so I'm telling him what to do, and he's my boss. (Laughter.)

M.S.: Sort of. (Laughter.)

R.A.: Then we were in Norfolk and we just had some major repairs done in Norfolk another time. We're getting ready to leave, and it's midnight and I'm coming on watch. I said, "What do you mean, we're leaving?" I said, "This hasn't been tested yet." I said, "We haven't done all this and this." I have had so many times when I have left a yard without all the right sea trials done after a lot of work that – I have years worth of horror stories. You just don't do that. Unless you take it out and sea trial it, it's not done.

As far as I was concerned, the sea trial had not been complete. Well, he said, "Look," he said, "I am the captain." He said, "We're going back down to Woodbridge. I'm on watch, and I can fix it if it's broken." I'm used to being the one that had to fix everything. So if it broke I had to fix it. Not only was I in charge of running the boat, but I also had to go fix what was broke. This was a really wonderful new experience to me. I had somebody that could be the captain, and there was an engineer, so I didn't have to be both of these people.

M.Z.: It sounds like you guys have found the perfect situation for both of your personalities separately, but also as a couple.

R.A.: It's pretty unusual.

M.Z.: It's pretty remarkable.

R.A.: Yes. It truly is. I mean, it's –

M.S.: We just have to take turns being captain. (Laughter.)

R.A.: We do. That's absolutely right.

M.S.: I tell everybody sometimes I get to be captain. I even have her permission to say so. (Laughter.) It works out well.

M.Z.: So what are you each doing right now? Mark, you are working for Vane?

M.S.: I work for Vane Brothers, I'm the mate on the tug *Patuxent* right now. I just started with them back in June, and came off a job where I was working dredges in New York Harbor. Now I'm running a 4,200 horsepower tug with a 50,000 barrel fuel barge. And mostly moving around Philadelphia harbor, occasional trips to Baltimore. They tell me we go to New York every once in a while, but we haven't done it since I've been there.

M.Z.: And you're a mate?

M.S.: I'm the mate, yeah.

M.Z.: This is the *Patuxent*, did you say?

M.S.: The tug is the *Patuxent*, yeah.

M.Z.: How is that for you, being mate as opposed to captain?

M.S.: It's just fine for me. The pay isn't that much different, and it's a huge amount more responsibility to be the captain. My ego doesn't demand that anymore. I had my first captain's job in 1983, I know all about it. I've done all the crazy stuff, and I'm perfectly comfortable being that. Then they told me that with my experience, when an opening came up, that I would be considered to fill it if I wanted it.

M.Z.: How do you feel about that? Do you want it? Or do you feel like at this point –

M.S.: I'm not even sure I want it at this point in my career, as long as I'm working with a guy that I'm comfortable with. And I am. So I'm fine being the mate. I don't need to be the captain. I don't need to be the one in charge. I did it for years.

M.Z.: Vane Brothers, gosh, you know what, every single person that I've interviewed so far, except for Denny, either currently or has in the past worked for Vane Brothers.

R.A.: That is a really neat company.

M.S.: It's the second time I've worked –

R.A.: Have you seen their history book?

M.Z.: I think they have it online, so I've looked at it online. I haven't seen the actual book.

R.A.: I'm this tangible person. I'm still in the whole book thing.

M.Z.: Yeah, I don't have it. I haven't been to Baltimore yet. But I think that is going to be part of what we do, either me or another person involved with the project.

R.A.: But you need to interview Jerry Smith. (Laughter.) He will respond to you as a female in a different way than he would respond to a guy.

M.Z.: Okay.

M.S.: He's a great guy.

R.A.: He's wonderful.

M.Z.: One more thing I wanted to say about Vane. It just seems like everybody now is doing fuel. Whatever you might have done in the past, gravel, sand, grain, whatever, now it's all about fuel is the impression I'm getting. Like that's where the jobs are, basically, is what I'm saying.

M.S.: It's always been a major part of the tugboat industry, is fuel. I've been involved in the fueling of ships. I've been involved in the dock-to-dock transfers. There's a great deal of transfers from one refinery to the other, always mixing up stuff and changing stuff and storing stuff. Now you've got ethanol in the mix. We'll haul a barge of pure ethanol, but it goes somewhere, gets pumped off or loaded and pumped off somewhere else that it can be mixed with the gasoline or whatever. I think most all gas now is 10 percent ethanol. So you got that.

Like I say, a lot of that stuff that I do, here's this big tug, and I mean we're capable of going anywhere on the East Coast, or Gulf Coast, pretty much anywhere. I mean, the boat carries almost 80,000 gallons of fuel. We end up a lot of the time just moving stuff from one refinery to the other, from one refiner to a storage facility or something like that. It's a lot of fuel, and any major cargo that can be carried in bulk can be carried very cost-effectively in barges. There's certain companies that that's all they do, haul. Some companies, all they do is oil. And some of your bigger ones are oil. Oil was clean, oil is very restrictive about where it goes and very tightly regulated. It's usually the premiere job. But you've got companies like Express Marine, all they do is coal. That's all they do. They carry coal all over the East Coast.

Then part of Dan Towing (ph) works for BG&E, and they haul coal between Newport News and Brandon Shores in Baltimore. There's a lot of coal. At certain times of year there's a lot of grain. Not as much as it used to be, it seems to me. I don't know if we're not exporting as much as we used to. I know on the western rivers they move a tremendous amount of grain. Iron ore on the Great Lakes gets moved still.

R.A.: Individual big things, like we moved the Salisbury Bridge for Jerry to Salisbury. We towed the Salisbury Bridge.

M.S.: Yeah, the Main Street Bridge, they pre-assembled it somewhere and barged it in.

R.A.: I moved extruded concrete out of Cape Charles to the Woodrow Wilson.

M.S.: Big construction material, stuff you can't really move over the road easily. That was a great thing. We worked at that sand and gravel operation, you have a hundred ton crane, and you want to take it down from Woodbridge down to Breton Bay, and put it in the shop for the winter and work on it in the off season. In order to move it over the road, you've got to disassemble it into small enough pieces to carry it down the road, it would take five trucks for five tractor trailers.

Whereas you can shove a barge against a bulkhead, walk the crane onto the barge, carry it down there, walk it off. I mean, you could move so much more weight. Once the company bought a sand pit over on the Pocomoke River. We carried two earth movers and a bulldozer over there on a barge. It's amazing what you can do with a thousand horsepower tug, move so much weight.

M.Z.: Yeah. I wish I could go aboard one of these vessels just to kind of experience –

R.A.: I'm sure you can.

M.Z.: You think I can? When I brought it up to people, they say these days security is so tight.

R.A.: Talk to Jerry.

M.Z.: I guess I've got to talk to Jerry.

R.A.: Talk to Jerry and talk to Jeff.

M.Z.: Okay. All right.

M.S.: Jeff get you on a small tug today, probably, if it's sitting at the dock.

M.Z.: Maybe I should come back, though, with somebody else, like go as a team, and then we can take photos and maybe do some sound.

R.A.: Talk to Cathy (ph), too.

M.S.: Zach's (ph) wife, Cathy.

M.Z.: Now, Cathy is Jeff's –

M.S.: Spouse, yeah. She writes for work about a magazine.

R.A.: She's super savvy about who does what to who.

M.S.: She knows all these people, all of them. She's a photographer, also. She's a very neat person. Very nice.

R.A.: She's a great lady.

M.Z.: Good, I look forward to meeting them. Now, I think you said this before, but I've gotten confused because your story is so involved.

R.A.: That's what I say, trying to tell you my life story complicates even me, or confuses even me.

M.Z.: Right now you are?

R.A.: I'm working for West Marine. Mark and I are building our sailboat, so we're getting ready to go cruising.

M.Z.: What are you doing for West Marine? You are working as a captain?

R.A.: I'm just working the store. That way I get to buy everything at 50 percent off. (Laughter.) Of which I spend more than my salary.

M.Z.: You said that you guys are building a sailboat?

M.S.: Rebuilding a boat.

R.A.: Rebuilding, actually, an old sailboat.

M.S.: Old Pearson 39, it's in the yard getting –

R.A.: From the ground up, and we're taking off and we don't know where we're going yet.

M.Z.: That's exciting. What's your timeframe for that, do you know?

M.S.: Next year.

R.A.: Hopefully by next year this time. We're going to be going somewhere.

M.Z.: You thinking like Caribbean or?

R.A.: Probably backside of Florida, Bahamas next year because he's probably gonna have to work for another year or so. I'm gonna probably try and figure out whether I can do some more teaching for Womanship.

M.S.: Chartering herself and the boat.

R.A.: Chartering, taking people out for the afternoon, that kind of stuff, just going to play for a while.

M.Z.: Sounds like you deserve it.

R.A.: We don't have to listen. We're not the servants anymore. I'm really looking forward to this.

M.Z.: I feel like I could probably talk to you guys all day, but maybe we should start folding things up and you can get on with your lives. After we listen to the recordings and do the transcripts, if we have questions, things that I obviously should have asked you and didn't, maybe we can give you a call again.

R.A.: You know where we live.

M.Z.: Before I turn it off, I want to just ask you is there anything you want to add, or is there anything that you think would be very important for us to address in the exhibit that I haven't brought up, or that you haven't brought up here? If you can't think of anything right now –

R.A.: Because I don't know exactly what you're doing, and this is very self-serving on my part, by the way, it sounds as though you're doing not only tugging, but transportation on the Chesapeake.

M.Z.: Actually, it's funny that you say that, because I think ultimately the museum wants to create a more permanent exhibit of transportation on the Chesapeake. This is going to be sort of a beginning piece of that longer term effort.

R.A.: I think you already have a little bit of it, but the Wheeler Transportation Company.

M.Z.: What is that?

R.A.: It was a transportation company out of the Choptank.

M.S.: Steamboats.

R.A.: Going to Baltimore.

M.S.: The old steamboats. That's our family. That's our ancestors.

R.A.: As I say, this is self-serving. Anything you can find about that, I would –

M.S.: They're trying to track out what the relationship is. They have –

R.A.: As far as I can tell you, he's my great-great-great-great uncle. But it was Caleb Clark Wheeler and the Wheeler Transportation Company.

M.S.: The fascinating thing is –

M.Z.: So you think that we should kind of –

R.A.: If you're looking for just transportation in the Bay, and they ran basically with Choptank to Baltimore.

M.Z.: And transporting goods?

R.A.: People. People, goods, watermelons, tomatoes, everything.

M.Z.: So do you see the industry, the tug industry as a kind of outgrowth of that sort of history?

R.A.: I do. I do. The tug industry became – you could put it on a barge and move one barge, leave it, take another one, go back, you didn't have to wait for that boat to have the cargo changed.

M.S.: Most of the grain on the Bay now is moved by a company called the Ward Brothers. They had the old bay steamers for years. The little tiny freighters. Them and a guy named Anderson out of Salisbury had these little tiny freighters that only carry 800 tons or a 1,000 tons. But they've all moved over into the tug and barge thing. Because you can carry almost 2,000 tons in a barge, and like Robin says, a tug can drop the barge off, go get another one.

So that's a lot – they're talking about doing that for these new solar wind farms. Rather than having a ship go out and establish these windmills offshore, take a tug, these new ATBs that pins to the barge, articulated tug/barge units. They can move a unit out and set it up, and the tug can go get another one. You can have two or three operations going at once for about not much more cost than would be to do it with a ship.

M.Z.: I think this is a theme we want to develop, tugs as an outgrowth of this long history of transportation on the Chesapeake. So that's great.

M.S.: But there was a time, if you wanted the watermelon or a pound of green beans, and you went to Baltimore and bought it at the produce market –

R.A.: It had to have come from the Eastern shore.

M.S.: It came from the Eastern shore, and it came by boat. That's what skip-jacks and bugeyes and schooners did when they weren't oystering or doing something else. They were hauling produce and stuff like that back and forth. That's all gone.

.A.: Women may have gone to Baltimore to have their children. They may have taken a steamer to Baltimore to have their children. Because that's where the good hospitals were. So that whole history of what happened on the shore, went to the shore and then

went to Baltimore and back is, I think, an interesting study on just moving things around the Chesapeake Bay.

M.Z.: Living over there on the eastern shore, on the one hand it feels, and in some ways it is so remote, and yet on another sense it's so connected to these much bigger global transportation networks. It has been since the beginning of European presence.

M.S.: The reason why – I don't know if you've ever noticed it or not, but the cheapest gas on the eastern shore is around Salisbury. That's because it comes in there by barge. Now all the produce, at a certain time of the year, you'll see truckloads of green beans going up the road, tractor trailers. I've often wondered why they don't move it by water still, in a barge or something. Maybe it's not cost effective, I don't know. Or maybe something up at port – I look at Cambridge, a place like Cambridge, and I see a deepwater port.

There's deep water all the way up to that. But nobody else sees it. Everyone wants to build condos on it. We used to haul sand and gravel out of there. Through the Maryland Avenue Bridge, which was pretty tight for a 300-foot barge. Now you go up in there and they stopped doing it. Some construction company was doing a large amount of work, and they said, "Hey, can you deliver us a load of gravel down here?" They brought a load of crushed stone in, and all of a sudden everybody was up in arms, "What's the great big thing doing in here?" That's what I see when I look at Cambridge. That would be a place where you could deliver containers; you could do all kinds of things.

R.A.: It is the perfect, perfect deepwater port. I absolutely agree with you.

M.S.: It would take trucks off the road. I mean, you can only haul twenty tons on a truck. That's it. You can haul 1,000 tons on a small barge. It's fifty trucks.

R.A.: The waterfront of Cambridge has not been so overly improved at this point in time that it would not – it would be the appropriate place. Baltimore needs to be redone completely, as far as what they're doing container-wise.

M.Z.: Haven't they done a whole lot, though, there to modernize that port?

R.A.: They have in some areas, but there's some areas that they haven't. Of that ferry bar channel area, there's wrecks in the water, that whole area is just awful, that it could be so much better improved that without displacing the whole Baltimore inner harbor, Fells Point area, that's condo and glitzy and very human-oriented. There needs to be more commercial areas.

M.Z.: What about that Seagirt Terminal? I mean, they've done a lot of work there, haven't they?

M.S.: Oh, that's a big thing.

R.A.: Oh, yeah, Seagirt's great.

M.S.: One of the issues to me, and I'm a little bit of, I guess you'd say I'm kind of with these people that are in the Occupy Wall Street group, but I don't feel like a lot of these companies want to hire an American working man. They want to have it made in China by slave labor and bought here. Well, with their increase in the price of fuel, that's getting more costly.

One of the things they're doing to compensate for that is they're widening the Panama Canal, so they can get even bigger ships. Right now I've seen – I worked for years up there with the dredge in New York Harbor. We're dredging up to Port Elizabeth where the containers come in Newark Bay. They have to come around Bergen Point, they have to go through Kill Van Kull, come around that tight turn at Bergen Point, and go up to that dock, and we deepened it all to fifty feet.

And that's the problem in the Bay, you can only get forty – or forty-some feet up to Bay. There are gonna be deeper draft, they're gonna be beamier, and they're gonna be 1,360-foot long, the Panamax ships, the new ones. That's what they're widening –

M.Z.: What?

M.S.: Yes. Thirteen hundred and bigger than an aircraft carrier. They're already bringing ships into Port Elizabeth that are 1,160-foot long and 960-foot ships are commonplace. But they're going to 1,300-foot ships, so they can keep bringing cheap junk from China at a reasonable rate.

R.A.: Or from wherever.

M.S.: Or from wherever. You get your sneakers from Indonesia, and everything at Walmart comes from China.

R.A.: The other place that the tug industry is going to be huge is continuing to keep these areas dredged. That's a huge issue for the tugs.

M.S.: And it's an environmental issue, too, because the stuff you dig up is not always too nice, because of what's allowed to go in the water before.

R.A.: And the rehabilitation of Hart and Miller Island, Poplar Island, I would hope that around Sharps Island Lighthouse, Sharps Island should be the next target for that.

M.S.: My father could remember opening a hotel on Sharps Island. He was here in the thirties, so he could remember when there was still a hotel on Sharps Island. And of course Sharps Island –

R.A.: Is gone.

M.S.: It's totally gone.

R.A.: For all intents and purposes. But that would be – obviously, we’re going to have to continue dredging, and the whole spoil situation is huge. Poplar Island, have you been there?

M.Z.: No, I haven’t.

R.A.: You need to do that. (Laughter.) Put it on your list. I can give you a week’s worth of work. You’ve got to go see what they’ve done. And it’s amazing. They have recreated an island, as they have with Hart and Miller, and probably Jeff can get you there, too. Either Jeff or Jerry can for sure get you there.

M.Z.: Poplar Island and what’s the other?

R.A.: Hart and Miller. That was the last tow job I did was with Jeff on Megalodon, or actually it was with Stevie Mack (ph) on Megalodon, we towed a, I don’t know, 1,200-foot dredge from Slaughter Creek to Hart and Miller Island.

M.S.: Little tiny dredge, there’s 1,200 feet of pipeline with it.

R.A.: Right. Well, it was a little tiny dredge, but it was three barges.

M.S.: Yeah, they always pile all their equipment together and then hook the pipeline behind it. I came up the Intracoastal Waterway 2,500-feet long once with a rig like that, which was kind of interesting.

M.Z.: Going through the Intracoastal?

M.S.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Lots of twists and turns, right?

M.S.: Oh yeah. They have small tugs to help you guide the whole thing. You see the port people waiting in their cars, you open a drawbridge, and they’re sitting there waiting and waiting and waiting and waiting and you only got half your tow through the bridge. (Laughter.) But yeah, it was kind of interesting.

R.A.: I just find it fascinating work. I find it useful work. Being the captain of a mega yacht or a motor yacht or a sailboat is great fun, and you go see wonderful places, and you go do good fun things. But you star as servant, and it’s not really performing any useful purpose. But this is. It’s a huge challenge.

M.Z.: And you like a challenge.

R.A.: Oh, yeah. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: It's a huge technical challenge. It tests your skills, is that what you mean?

M.S.: It's a big responsibility.

R.A.: It's a huge responsibility. I'd say going through the Woodrow Wilson Bridge, 600-foot long. It's this little tiny two-foot build – thing out there, going through something that looks like this, and “How am I gonna get through here?” Then “How am I gonna fold it all up? Where's the wind coming from? What's the current doing to me?” It's this constant challenge of making you work with the wind and the water. Coming into Goose Bay at 4:00 o'clock in the morning when it's a channel probably as wide as this house, and you're coming in 300-foot long.

M.S.: And the current sets directly across it.

R.A.: You can't see anything. You can see I put it on the chart plotter, and I followed my chart plotter along, which you always argued with me about. I set my own chart plot up that I could just follow the line. If it was total fog, I couldn't see anything, I could get in. So as long as I could stay on my line, I was in.

M.S.: I did it by radar, but I was more used to doing things by radar.

R.A.: But the radar didn't give me where I wanted to be in my association. You have to figure out for yourself, and that's part of the wonderful challenge of it.

M.S.: She was used to running a yacht. On a yacht, usually the radar screen is down below and you're up at the helm station. So you can go refer to it, but on a tugboat, you get to sit there and it's like having the TV right there, you're looking at it all the time. I've run up and down Chesapeake Bay so much now that I can come up in the middle of the night, pretty much –

R.A.: And know exactly where you are.

M.S.: Pretty much anywhere on Chesapeake Bay, one glance at the radar picture, and I –

R.A.: And you know exactly where you are.

M.S.: I could tell you whether I'm half a mile or quarter of a mile, maybe, where I am, just by looking at the shape of the shoreline from the radar.

M.Z.: I guess at the time that you started, there weren't so many of the more modern navigational devices? I mean, you didn't have GPS and whatnot?

M.S.: No. Paper chart – the first boat I was on, you had the paper chart, you had a cheap radar, and that was it, and a searchlight. We had a LORAN that didn't even read out in latitude and longitude. It read out the TDs and you had to interpret a light and figure out where

you were. And we used it, but we found it more handy out in open water, in the ocean or the Gulf of Mexico, keeping track of where we were and stuff.

R.A.: Yeah, we're pretty more equipment on the sailboat that we're doing now than the tugs had thirty years ago.

M.S.: Twenty years ago. It's been only in the last fifteen years or so they've come up with chart plotters and the computer navigations programs, in the last ten or fifteen years. Before that it was all paper chart, radar, GPS, you had your numbers, where you had your LORAN, that gave you your lat and long. I used to tell people, that's the most important thing, the first thing you have to learn, you have to know where you are all the time. You get confused about where you are, you're going to get in trouble.

R.A.: Stop. (Laughter.)

M.S.: Yeah. Stop and figure out where you are, because you're going to be in trouble soon if you don't keep up with that. The chart plotters and computer navigation, I mean, I've got, in the main wheelhouse in the boat I'm on now, I've got three huge screens that gives me all the information I ever wanted to know, including wind direction, depth, apparent wind, speed over the ground, course over the ground, I mean, anything you want to know, it's there. Makes it very nice. A lot easier than it used to be.

But I remember, not that long ago, going up the Potomac, first time I ever went up the Potomac River, I went on my cousin's tug to Quaker, had a searchlight, a chart with a date of 1968 on it, and the radar was out, so that was all I had. The searchlight and the chart.

I found my way up there and I found my way back. I mean, we were towing three landing craft for the Army and had to go to a shipyard in Cambridge. It got foggy and we just had to anchor, we couldn't run, because we didn't have a radar working at the time. Of course, at that time, it wasn't a legal requirement for a tug to have a radar. It is now. Not only have a radar, but I have a working radar.

R.A.: And have it working.

M.S.: Oh yeah. Most tugs have two radars, so you have a backup.

M.Z.: Seems like a reasonable regulation.

M.S.: Especially if you're pushing fuel down. You don't want to be wandering around in the fog with no radar with two million gallons of gasoline.

M.Z.: So you don't begrudge any of this modern stuff? I've been wondering, do some of the guys who've been in the business a long time look back and say, "Those were the good old days, when people knew how to figure it out themselves, reconnoiter themselves."

M.S.: Well, think we're losing something. I love it. I love that we have this stuff. But we've got guys now, I mean, if a chart plotter's not working, they don't want to leave the dock. I'm like, I don't want to take an empty barge on a bluebird sunshiny day with no chance of fog, and go eight miles downriver? Come on. I mean, you could do that just because you know it. You don't even need the chart on the Delaware River, because you've got range lights and channel buoys, and if you know what you're doing.

R.A.: Without a chart plotter?

M.S.: Without a chart plotter working they don't want to sail, some of these young guys.

R.A.: That's amazing. I mean, I think it's great to have. If I'm going to come into a port that I've never been into in the middle of the night, and it's dark, and I've never seen this before, I want everything working. But if it's someplace I go all the time, I don't need it.

M.S.: Yeah.

R.A.: And so that becomes a time, when do you turn it off? I teach a lot of safety at sea stuff and part of it is knowing where you are and having backups. But also being confident enough in yourself that you can trust your abilities to get somewhere without the stuff.

M.Z.: That seems like it's got to be very important, in case everything fails.

R.A.: If everything fails, absolutely.

M.S.: You still need to know how to figure out where you are by, I mean, we used to do a lot of stuff by just the distance off the shore, where you could set up radar ranges, get bearings from two or three – bearings and ranges from a couple different locations on your radar. You can pinpoint your position on a chart pretty quick if you know what you're doing. But it takes a little work.

M.Z.: I've heard that at least in shallow water, you can also literally feel vibrations and things.

R.A.: Yes.

M.S.: Oh, yeah. Well, I've done it. I brought a model bow old-fashioned tug down the Intracoastal Waterway where you almost didn't have to steer. You just kind of let her – not run her too fast and drive her up on a shoal, but run her at about half speed. This light boat without a barge, we were going down to pick up a barge, and it was bad weather. We decided to go inside and she would just kind of sense her way along. She would sheer away from the shallow water and run along like that.

I've also been in situations where the bank suction was such, we had two big deep-loaded barges in front of us that the barge was constantly trying to swing from one side to the other. I remember the whole length of the A&P Canal fighting the wheel. One of the

first trips I ever made down there to get fertilizer, and it was difficult. I was standing there pouring sweat when I got to the end of it. It was tough.

R.A.: Alligator Pungo Canal.

M.S.: Yeah. A&P Canal. That's a long, skinny canal.

M.Z.: Could you see the question mark?

R.A.: (Laughter.) Of course, the question is what do you want to do next after you go cruising for a while? If it's anything, I want to come back and do some tugging somewhere. That would be interesting to do. The last thing you want to do in your working career is that would be the thing I would want to do.

M.S.: What I want to do, if I have the money to do it, is build some small boats. It's in my family, my father was a boat builder, I'd like to build some small boats and stuff and experiment with maybe aluminum and stuff like that. I'm a welder more than a woodworker.

R.A.: So build us a tug. (Laughter.)

M.S.: That might be a little more project than I want. (Laughter.) I was thinking of a twenty-five foot power boat that I could ride around in if I want to go to the Eastern Shore instead of driving across the bridge.

R.A.: Build us a little tug that incorporates that.

M.Z.: Maybe that's a good note to close on here. This is great. Thank you both so much.

M.S.: I hope you got some good stuff.

M.Z.: Oh, I think we have some excellent, excellent stuff.

R.A.: Do you have a card?

M.Z.: I do.

R.A.: Good, because if we think of anything monumental, I can email you.

M.Z.: Should I go ahead and turn this off? Is there any last thing you want to add?

M.S.: I think that's good.

[End of interview.]