

Oral History Interview

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

“The Culture of Tugs and Tugs in Culture”

Interviewee: Martha Austin
DOB: 1955
POB:

Interviewer: Michelle Zacks (M.Z.)

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St. Michaels, MD 21663

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Transcription by:

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

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M.Z.: Today is October 7, 2011. This is Michelle Zacks, for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. I am in the home of Martha Austin, Jack Austin's wife in St. Michaels. Thank you so much for meeting with me.

M.A.: You're welcome.

M.Z.: It was good to meet you. I guess it was a couple of weeks ago when I did the interview with Jack. It sounds like you have plenty of things to contribute to our understanding of the world of tugboats (laughter).

M.A.: It's definitely a partnership.

M.Z.: Can you explain that a little bit?

M.A.: I'm not sure he would—I give him a safe haven. It's not an easy lifestyle for him to be on the tugboat, or any of those gentlemen to be on the tugboat. He comes home and he walks in the door without a lot of problems facing him. I've been able to give him a safe haven when he comes home. He's got a good thirty-six hours before I can start hitting him with the honey-do list, or some of the things that have gone on.

M.Z.: Did it take you some time to learn how to pace things?

M.A.: Actually, yeah, he was on the tugs when we married, so I was fully aware of the schedule. Certainly, when he comes home, he's tired, exhausted, and he really has to get his land legs back. He's been on a boat and depending on the weather and the seas, his body can be – he can do this. He can sway. He has to get back to it.

M.Z.: I never would've thought of that.

M.A.: Early on it was funny, because he would sit down to the dinner table, and wrap his arms around his plate. I'd have to say, "Honey, we're not moving." He'd be like this.

M.Z.: That's so funny.

M.A.: I had seen him, one of our first houses had a long hallway, and he would walk down, bracing himself, going down the hallway.

M.Z.: That's really fascinating. All of these things that you don't think about. (Laughter.)

M.A.: Like I said, depending on the seas. He's gone into larger vessels over the years, but the smaller the vessel, the smaller the tugboat, the more it bobs up and down. The ATBs that he's on now, it's like a 500-foot ship. It's not going to have the same motion as a 100-foot little tugboat by itself. So that's not so much of an issue anymore. But it was kind of funny.

M.Z.: Tell me again when you got married.

M.A.: May of '79.

M.Z.: He had started in the early seventies, right, if I remember correctly?

M.A.: I believe his business, Compass Marine, had been let go. He had done a couple other things, but had taken a job. I don't want to say the company, because I can't really remember. But he was working a two-on, two-off cycle. That was in '79 and then we kept going. I have a feeling he was still with Teracom out of Philadelphia, and going back and forth.

M.Z.: How did you guys meet?

M.A.: Very legitimately, in a bar. (Laughter.) The Pub, in Easton. Jack was buddies with my brother, though. We did have an introduction. Actually, Jack had known my brother, and had met my parents and a lot of my family before I did.

M.Z.: That's kind of nice.

M.A.: It was nice. Easton is a small town, so we sort of ran in the same circles for a while.

M.Z.: Jack grew up right here in St. Michaels.

M.A.: He did.

M.Z.: You, I can't remember, Annapolis?

M.A.: I grew up in Towson.

M.Z.: Oh, Towson.

M.A.: He would probably not say St. Michaels growing up, because it was really – I think he'd say Miles River Neck. Their post office was in Easton.

M.Z.: Okay.

M.A.: Box 416 was his parents'. I don't know why I remember that.

M.Z.: That's funny. So you grew up in Towson, but did you grow up on the water? You had a connection –

M.A.: Not at all.

M.Z.: – to the Eastern shore, didn't you? I think you said your father –

M.A.: My father and his brother and his buds would come to Tilghman to fish. We always vacationed in Ocean City, so to me, Easton was a little stop on Route 50. My brother worked for the telephone company in Easton. I had come down to live with my brother and his wife after college. I worked at Environmental Concern. That's when I met Jack. As a matter of fact, that was on East Chestnut. So when we met, I was living on the other side of Talbot Street.

M.Z.: That's funny.

M.A.: It is funny, especially when I know the numbers. I know what my brother bought the house for, and what he sold it for, and now what it is for sale today. It's just unbelievable.

M.Z.: Times have changed here.

M.A.: Absolutely.

M.Z.: I've only been around here for a couple of years, so I only hear stories about how it used to be, but obviously I wasn't here then.

M.A.: I guess this was in the mid-seventies, my brother and his wife bought the house for \$40,000 and he sold it for sixty-five and thought –

M.Z.: He was doing great.

M.A.: – he'd died and gone to heaven. Today, it's on the market for \$750,000.

M.Z.: Oh, my gosh.

M.A.: Yeah, same house. It's been worked on. It has things done, but it's a cute little waterman's house. So that's what we've seen since we've been here.

M.Z.: So when you first came to the area and when you first met Jack –

M.A.: I didn't know the difference between a duck and a goose. I'll say that. It was all new to me.

M.Z.: You were drawn to it? It appealed to you or did it take a lot of adjusting for you?

M.A.: Not at all, not at all.

M.Z.: It just seemed like a natural fit?

M.A.: Like I said, I worked for Ed Marbish (ph) and I just loved it. It was beautiful. I loved the colors. I love the people. I like the small town. I had grown up in suburbia, which is neither here nor there. I liked the small town life, where you knew your neighbors and

they cared about you. It was nice. So no, there was no real adjustment. My parents loved it. They thought this was great, because they could come and visit.

M.Z.: It's a beautiful spot.

M.A.: They loved that.

M.Z.: What about like when Jack talks about how he grew up on the water, and the water was his playground. So going into tugs was sort of a natural progression for him, in a way.

M.A.: Right, for him it was.

M.Z.: But for you, marrying a guy like that, was it something – I don't know, was it unexpected for you that you would end up having a life like this?

M.A.: Actually, we met and married in like eighteen months, which is unheard of today. Literally, I think we met in, like, January and were married in May, eighteen months later. I loved his family, the farming attitude, the outdoor attitude, just being outside. I was an athlete. I was an outdoor girl. But suburbia and the country are very different and I just loved it. We lived in a small house out in Preskill (ph) out by the Y River. We lived in a tenant house for a big estate and that was just fabulous.

M.Z.: I'll bet it was beautiful.

M.A.: It was beautiful. He could keep his little boat there. At that time, he did have a little work boat. Of course, we still have a work boat. This was another little one. Sundays were spent, as many weekends as possible were on the river, doing a lot of log canoeing. He had sailed log canoes, so we followed the canoes whenever we could and fished, and fished, and fished, so I loved it.

M.Z.: But at that point, he was already on a tug schedule then?

M.A.: Right.

M.Z.: So I guess not every Sunday could you –

M.A.: No, not every Sunday. I learned to entertain myself and I can be alone. I'm fine with that.

M.Z.: I guess you have to have that kind of personality in order to really make it on a long-term basis.

M.A.: Yes, yes, yes.

M.Z.: I think you, and everybody I've talked to, has said there's a lot of divorce in this business.

M.A.: There's a huge divorce – I can understand why.

M.Z.: Can you talk about that a little bit, what some of the pressures are?

M.A.: You get lonely. You get lonely. Making a lot of decisions. I had the support of – you know, my family was in Baltimore and I saw them a lot. I was close to his family. I don't know. He's such a great guy. Then when he came home, we could play. Really, that's one of the reasons – one of the reasons I didn't pursue a professional career. I mean, I have a college degree, and I could've probably done a few things.

When he came home, we wanted to be together. I didn't want to get up at 7:00 in the morning and say, “See ya, bye.” When the children started to come, I really had to be home. Daycare in those days, around here, was tough. It was almost non-existent, so I was it.

M.Z.: Plus, you probably – even, I mean, especially after the kids – but even before the kids, there was probably just a lot of stuff to take care of. I mean, it would've been hard to have a job.

M.A.: Yeah. We bought a tiny little house in Bozman, and took care of the house and I worked out at the Y. I do, I have great girlfriends. I have great girlfriends. To be honest with you, I don't know how it has gotten as far as it has. We have a nephew that tried it and he came off the tugs. He was an engineer and he had a wife and three kids, and it just wasn't going to work, so he's doing his own thing. I mean, they're still married, but that wasn't going to work for that family.

M.Z.: If you had to think about, okay, what are the characteristics of yourself or people like you, who can cope with this kind of lifestyle, what characteristics –

M.A.: You have to be independent. You have to be independent. Decision-making, I have to make lots of executive decisions, our money, our house, our children, our parents. I make a lot of decisions. I did find out early that that was the best way to go, instead of consulting him constantly. He learned to trust me.

M.Z.: It works both ways.

M.A.: It does work both ways.

M.Z.: Because I imagine, for some men, they wouldn't be comfortable with that.

M.A.: I agree. He doesn't want to be bothered with some of the piddling and stuff. I think that's probably, now that I think about it, pretty important that I make decisions and go with it. That's hard.

M.Z.: I bet it is.

M.A.: It's hard. Especially, it was tough with the kids in school, the discipline, activities, things we were going to commit to. I was big on commitment. If you started something, you finished it. Sometimes that was tough as a single – I was a single parent. Then I had to drag him along when he came home, to go to all their activities. One of the things that I found difficult that – and we're still working on it – is keeping him informed of what happens in his community during that time.

M.Z.: Not just the household and the family, but the community at large.

M.A.: Obituaries. I have really tried very hard, in the last five, six years, cutting out the obituaries, so he doesn't put his foot in his mouth at the grocery store, saying, "Oh, how's your mom? How's your dad? How's your husband?" "Oh, I buried them last week." That happened just a couple times, and just so he feels a part of the community, and he's not totally out there. That's important.

M.Z.: Yeah, all these things that –

M.A.: Being in a small town.

M.Z.: I thought you were going to say keeping him informed about what's going on in the house. I mean, that must happen to.

M.A.: That, too. That, too.

M.Z.: Especially when the kids are going through whatever.

M.A.: Yeah, but he missed a lot. He missed a lot of the subtleties. When you see your kids interacting, and you see how they are, he missed that. But then again, when he was home, he was here when they got home from school. He was here in the morning for breakfast. He didn't have a lot of burdens. I did keep the honey-do list to a minimum, so that he could do the carpool, and take them to swim practice, and hang out at the field hockey field. Actually, he probably saw his kids as much as some other parents.

M.Z.: As much, or even more.

M.A.: In those allotted times. Now, a lot can happen in those allotted times. I mean, we raised three kids, and there were some blips. There were some big blips, and he missed a few of them. He didn't get to experience them like I did.

M.Z.: Like what, for example, can you think of?

M.A.: Well, you know, a DUI. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Not just the fun stuff?

M.A.: Catching the boys in the – you know, no, not just the fun stuff. Not just the fun stuff. Stuff happens.

M.Z.: You have to learn how to handle that, and then he has to learn how to handle it when he gets back. He has to learn how to accept whatever your decision was for how to deal with it.

M.A.: Right, you know, you can only revisit it to a certain extent. I mean, if it happened the day before he came home, yes. But if it happened fourteen, fifteen days prior, the dust has settled, and he has to be really diplomatic about how he – and he always would.

M.Z.: Was that ever a challenge for him? I mean, did he ever have to sort of go off by himself and process things?

M.A.: Yeah. We talked about it a couple – and he has expressed – he's not very demonstrative, but I know he feels for me. I know he feels that I have a lot on my shoulders when he's away, in regards to stuff that happens, the kids and family, siblings, our siblings. All our parents are gone, but we went through those years of caring for elderly parents, which was burdensome, as many people know. That was a whole 'nother segment of our lives together. The teenage years, and then our parents' years, and then their deaths. It really is interesting. All four of our parents, he was home for all their deaths.

M.Z.: He just happened to be?

M.A.: He just happened to be home, which we've talked about. Because he's been on board when people have gotten those phone calls.

M.Z.: Can you imagine? What happens in that – are there emergency –

M.A.: Yeah, there are. The company will get a substitute. If they're out on the ocean, when they get to port, they get relieved. We were really fortunate. We were fortunate that way. We were together when those times happened.

M.Z.: How old were you when you got married?

M.A.: I was twenty-four. He was thirty.

M.Z.: So you were still pretty young.

M.A.: Yeah, I was twenty-four. He was thirty.

M.Z.: Then how soon did the kids start coming?

M.A.: Three years. Arianna (ph) was born three years later, she was born in June. We were married in May, so it was three years. Then the second one is seventeen months apart. I had three kids in four-and-a-half years. So for that period of time, I was busy.

M.Z.: Four-and-a-half years, you said?

M.A.: Uh-huh. Arianna was almost four and a half when Claire (ph) was born, so that was pretty tight.

M.Z.: You had like three years after you got married before you had your first child. So you had that period to kind of get used to the lifestyle. I guess once you started having kids, you kind of probably had a handle on it, more or less.

M.A.: Yeah, I did. I did. I certainly understood what I was facing. I think he had to rearrange his schedule for a couple of the births. It is possible. They will work with you, to a certain extent, for family events.

M.Z.: Was he able to be there for the births?

M.A.: Yeah, he was. Two were caesarean. Actually, they were all caesarean.

M.Z.: You could plan it.

M.A.: We didn't do it purposely that way. It's just the way things worked out, so he could be there. We could make arrangements. The family came and then he could go back to work. That was the biggest adjustment, I remember, when he went back to work after Claire was born.

M.Z.: That's your second daughter?

M.A.: Third, the third one. That was tough.

M.Z.: How so?

M.A.: Well, it was a lot of work.

M.Z.: To have three.

M.A.: You know, a four-year-old, and a three-year-old, and a newborn. At that point, we lived outside of Bozman, halfway to Neavitt, not that far, but down St. Michael's Road. So the distances and the driving and doctor's appointments, but you know, we did it. I don't know how.

M.Z.: Did you have family come and help you?

M.A.: My mom and dad came from Baltimore for the typical three, four days. But that was enough. That was fine. I was independent enough at that point that, okay, time to go.

M.Z.: Wow, you had your hands full.

M.A.: Yeah, but it worked, evidently. Evidently it worked. They're good kids.

M.Z.: Do you remember at the time really pulling your hair out or were you comfortable enough with the life that you could –

M.A.: I remember realizing I hadn't brushed my teeth for a while. A friend of mine let me know that I was really losing too much weight. "You need to start eating."

M.Z.: So again, your friends came in.

M.A.: Yeah, and said, "You need to start eating." That's about the extent of it. I really appreciated that. There again, I've had some really good friends. We have really good friends, that included me. Nobody was queeked (ph) out about inviting a single woman to parties and stuff like that, none of that. I mean, I was fully accepted as a single married woman.

M.Z.: Yeah, interesting.

M.A.: Which is different than a single woman. They all missed Jack, so we could talk about Jack. They always asked. They still do. "Where is he? What's he doing?"

M.Z.: That must help you.

M.A.: Sure, yeah. Now one of the things that's changed dramatically is the communication. Communication is so much better.

M.Z.: Tell me what it was like before and how it's different now.

M.A.: If I remember correctly, if I got a call once a week, it was a lot. It was a trunk line. It was a party line. So you couldn't really – and it was expensive, too. I can't remember, but I'd have to ask Jack about this, who was paying for the calls. We could've been paying for those calls and it was expensive.

M.Z.: This is through an actual phone or through the radio?

M.A.: Yeah, it was through a phone. It was like a party line. There again, I never burdened him with mundane complaints. It would serve no purpose. He would only worry. "I'm lonely." No, none of that, just upbeat conversation. "I'm healthy. Kids are good. You're good." I think, likewise, he probably didn't tell me everything that was going on on the tugboat.

M.Z.: If something very dangerous was going on or risky?

M.A.: Right, right.

M.Z.: Ignorance is bliss.

M.A.: Absolutely. I saw a poster once, I remember years ago. It was one of those beautiful photographs of high seas and a boat going up and down. He's like, "Oh, yeah." It's like, you're kidding me. "Oh, yeah. That's us. Up and down." I don't need to know that.

M.Z.: So in a way, it's good to have your own separate worlds.

M.A.: Yeah, yeah. I think that's probably one of the reasons that it has lasted.

M.Z.: With the party line, too, there's the expense and you don't want to hassle him. You also are aware that other people are listening to your conversations, right?

M.A.: He didn't inform me of that fact until maybe a little while later. He said, "Honey, I need to tell you something, that everybody can hear what you're saying." I said, "Oh, God." Yeah.

M.Z.: So do you remember some of the early conversations?

M.A.: Not really. We were newlywed and I'm sure it's all that stuff. He said, "You really don't need to be saying those things."

M.Z.: Oh, I bet there's some stories there.

M.A.: Yeah, I think there probably are. But everybody goes through that. Why did I hear another conversation? People could break in. I remember listening to another conversation. He and I were talking and then there was another couple talking. They were having a fight about a washer and dryer. (Laughter.) That was bizarre.

M.Z.: So you learned to avoid those kind of situations, edit yourself, I guess.

M.A.: Yes. And of course, today he has e-mail, cell phones. We almost don't have anything to say sometimes.

M.Z.: Because you're in such close touch?

M.A.: Right.

M.Z.: You can talk every day, if you want to.

M.A.: His friends are e-mailing him. He's getting all the newsletters for the organizations. He's really much more attune to what's going on in the community now.

M.Z.: Yeah, so some of what you were talking about, about keeping him informed, you don't have as much burden.

M.A.: Right. He has a problem with the Star Democrat website, which is very hard to manipulate. That's one thing, I still keep articles from the newspaper. Other than that, he watches the money TV shows and current events. He wasn't up on current events thirty years ago.

M.Z.: Yeah. Would they have any kind of radio or – I don't know how that works. Did they have –

M.A.: I think it would always depend on where they were.

M.Z.: I thought there was TV. Isn't there a TV on board?

M.A.: He has TV now, but they have all the antennas and now there are so many more satellites in the sky. Thirty years ago on these rinky dinky little tugboats, I think it just depended on what kind of antennas they had. I think he could probably get radio within a certain distance of the shoreline.

M.Z.: Wow, so really major things could happen in the world and he might just have no idea.

M.A.: Yes, yes. Elections, deaths –

M.Z.: Natural disasters.

M.A.: Natural disasters.

M.Z.: Would that be part of what you would have to pace yourself with when he came home? Like, not wanting to deluge him with everything right away?

M.A.: Exactly, exactly, prioritize the most important things.

M.Z.: Was there a learning curve for you for that?

M.A.: Yeah.

M.Z.: You had to figure out how to kind of manage the information?

M.A.: You know, you can sort of see on somebody's face when you're speaking to them if it's going in or not. I could tell. A lot of times he'd walk in the door, and he hadn't slept for thirty-six hours, so he's out. Like I said, prioritize. It's amazing what you figure out, what's important, what's not important. Some things, he'll figure out. He'll turn the TV on and he'll figure it out. Mostly, I made sure he was up to date on family: sisters, mothers. "Oh, by the way, I saw – and she's doing this and he's doing that."

M.Z.: It's quite a job you have, then.

M.A.: Yeah. And I have to say, as the years go on, it's like, go figure it out. We don't have the – it's not as important. Some things are just not as important as they used to be.

M.Z.: For example?

M.A.: Siblings, all our siblings have their own lives. Our parents aren't an issue. He doesn't want to hear gossip. He doesn't need that. He really doesn't. There were a time when it was important. Not important, but it was out there. Who's doing what to whom? Not anymore. He doesn't care.

M.Z.: Plus, with the e-mail and whatnot, if he really wants to know some of that stuff, he can keep in touch with whomever, if that's important.

M.A.: Right. Later, you know, if we go to a party, and he's not on the same page as everybody else, on the ride home he'll say, "What was that about?" If he asks, I'll let him know.

M.Z.: Yeah, yeah.

M.A.: I think that's also just a function of age. I'm not sure it has much to do with our lifestyle, but that's a function of age and maturity.

M.Z.: Yeah, yeah. It's, again, the prioritizing. So do you think it's at all comparable to a kind of military lifestyle? The things that so many men and women both now, with so many women in the military., but what the person at home has to deal with after their partner has been gone for probably usually longer chunks of time.

M.A.: I think it is.

M.Z.: I mean, from what I understand. I haven't been in this situation myself, but I imagine you start kind of developing your own way of doing things and then the other person comes home. Of course, you've missed them a great deal, but then they might have a different style for approaching whatever. Was that a factor for you?

M.A.: One of our fights, and we do still need to work this out today, is the kitchen. This is my domain and when he comes home, he wants the domain. It's really funny how he comes in and he starts washing dishes, because he wants to wash the dishes. Because a clean boat is a happy boat and it's got to be shipshape. Like, this would not do.

M.Z.: Oh, really? This would not do?

M.A.: Everything's got to be put away.

M.Z.: Because this looks pretty neat to me.

M.A.: That needs to go away, and that's gonna pitch and roll, and it's gonna crash on the floor.
(Laughter.)

M.Z.: So has he learned to back off a little bit?

M.A.: Yeah, he has. He likes to cook and when he comes home, he'll cook a meal for six men. It's like, "Honey, it's like the two of us." He'll cook, and that's an adjustment.

M.Z.: How about the kinds of food? I mean, is it like steak and potatoes?

M.A.: He eats better than I do on the boat, because the meal is important to them. It's their entertainment. I think besides the divorce rate, obesity on tugboats is huge, on ships. You can sort of understand it.

M.Z.: Yeah, I was talking to the young man – I think, do you know him too? Josh?

M.A.: Yeah, right. Josh Roark.

M.Z.: I did an interview with him and he was saying the same thing. He was saying that these days, as the boats get bigger and more comfortable, a lot of them are paying more attention to exercise and having some kind of workout equipment or a treadmill or whatever.

M.A.: Yeah, exactly.

M.Z.: But I guess in the old days, you're sitting around a lot.

M.A.: There's a lot of waiting, especially these bigger barges. They take many, many, many hours to load and offload. You know, it could be eighteen hours at one slip. There's a lot of sitting around. Since 9/11, I remember prior to 9/11, Jack would be able to get off the vessel and walk in the tank farm or wherever he was. Now, he can't. Security is so tight, especially at these refineries. He does a lot of oil refineries, and you do not walk around an oil refinery. That's a no-no. He spent a lot of time in the cities. If he would get off in Philadelphia, he'd go get a meal by himself, just to get away. Not anymore. So food is an issue.

M.Z.: But you said he eats better on the boat?

M.A.: Well, they'll eat steak and fish and they'll fix complete meals. My problem is I just don't eat.

M.Z.: Peanut butter and jelly?

M.A.: Peanut butter and jelly, and cheese and crackers, which is not really good.

M.Z.: When you're by yourself because your kids are pretty much out of the house, right?

M.A.: They're gone, yeah. Claire's in Annapolis and she'll show up and we'll have a meal. That's the first thing I want to do. She's not so keen on it. "Let's go eat." So that makes life a little different.

M.Z.: That's probably a factor of being alone so much. I think a lot of people who live alone, as a rule, don't tend to cook that much.

M.A.: No, I enjoy it, but it's silly.

M.Z.: If it's just for yourself, yeah.

M.A.: Sure, it's silly. Cleaning it, preparing it, thinking about it, preparing it, eating it and then cleaning up after, I don't need that. (Laughter.)

M.Z.: Are there other things like that, daily life things you think that are different because of your situation now, especially with the kids out of the house as well?

M.A.: I'm always sort of looking at the calendar and planning little activities for us to do. I pay attention to the newspapers and if there's – we don't take part a lot of the artistic stuff. He'll have three weekends home. I try not to load up the first weekend. I have to respect his wishes and I don't know what they are. I usually, unless it's something that's been planned way out – the middle weekend, if we go to the beach for a night or do a day trip to D.C.

This time of year, we try to do an apple run, maybe go to Western Maryland. You know, just plan something, a little getaway. The last weekend he's home, really, by Sunday night, he's going. I can't plan anything Monday or Tuesday, the days right before he goes, because he's not with us.

M.Z.: His mind is on his work?

M.A.: He's planning his trip. He's waiting for the phone call, because he doesn't know where he's gonna go, north or south. He'll have to adjust his luggage, make sure his computer is right, getting the money situation straight because he carries all the grub money. That comes in his paycheck and we peel that out. He's making sure he's got everything he needs.

M.Z.: Who does the shopping? Does he have to do that?

M.A.: Well, the captain should not. But he takes a keen interest on what they buy to make sure that they just don't buy all candy, and they would. I mean, some of the crews –

M.Z.: Because it's younger guys?

M.A.: Younger guys and impulse shopping. They'll do Costco or some of the bigger grocery stores. He wants to make sure they get three or four huge roasts, and five or six gallons

of milk, and they'll freeze it. He's got a lot of experience in that, and then he'll guest chef. The captain will guest chef, that kind of stuff. If there's food on board when they get there, evidently they're having some kind of pissing match with the other crew. They're eating up all the food and they're not leaving a meal for these five, six guys. So he'll go on board and there will be nothing. Then it could be thirty-six hours before they get to a grocery store.

M.Z.: Wow.

M.A.: You know, that that still goes on.

M.Z.: Yeah, gosh, there's so many of those mundane daily life things to be concerned about, in addition to that kind of really big picture stuff.

M.A.: Exactly. You know, food, and getting the trash off, getting the trash on, the water on, fuel, fuel in the tug, fresh drinking water and food.

M.Z.: Now, I mean, from what I've read because a few, mostly women, have written books about tugboat life and experience. It seems like back in the day, when there were more kind of small mom and pop operations, the family might be involved, to greater and lesser degrees with maybe helping out with the shopping or the laundry.

M.A.: Sure, like showing up with the food.

M.Z.: Yeah, or getting parts, running and getting spare parts. Was that ever something that you were involved in with very much?

M.A.: No.

M.Z.: Is that because of the kinds of companies he worked for?

M.A.: I wasn't around when Jack had his little tug company. I bet if he had his company, I could do that. Access to the vessel is important. There was so much happening on waterfronts in those days that you could pull your car up, especially like in Philadelphia and Baltimore. You had, just easy access. Now there's security everywhere. There are chain link fences everywhere. It wouldn't be that easy or fun.

I would think that'd be a great way to relate with your spouse, too, making meals and that kind of stuff. Sure, I'd do it if I could. A couple years he was running a cement barge. At one point, he was running dry cement to Boston for like the Big Dig and Logan Airport and there was lots of cement. There's a cement depot in Baltimore, Lafarge. It's not far from the Key Bridge. A couple times I got up, because I could figure out how to get through the gate. It's out of the way. I did get onboard and visit him. I wasn't smart enough to take any food, but anyway. It's just access.

M.Z.: What was that like, when you got on board?

M.A.: It was fun. It was fun.

M.Z.: Can you describe it?

M.A.: Greasy, metal, a lot of climbing up ladders. I remember one of the crewmen was like, "Where'd you come from?" He was like, "Who are you?" (Laughter.) We don't do that too often. Of course, he is the captain, but he has to respect, not everybody gets to have their wife come visit them, so he doesn't want to rub it in their faces.

M.Z.: I guess as a captain you probably have to be real conscious of that.

M.A.: Yeah, yeah. He respects their loneliness and their wives don't get to come. I think I only did it once or twice.

M.Z.: But it's probably good for you to have had some experience that you can kind of picture what he's going through.

M.A.: I have no faces for these names that I've heard all my life. You know, Peter Keys (ph), I could name fifteen names. I have no idea what they look like. There's no socializing with his work group, understandably. It's not purposely. But you go home. You get off, you go home. There's no going back to have a party, which makes our social life way more dependent on me. If you have a husband that has office parties – the social aspect of our lives is pretty one-sided. It's a mystery, sometimes, where he goes, what he does in these ports. There are a couple people I really would like to meet before this all ends. I just don't know them.

M.Z.: It's interesting that you say all that, because when I talked to him and other people, it sounds like the tug boating world, like everybody knows everybody. All the similar names come up. I think, because I don't know anything about this, I'm not involved personally. I think it's not just your immediate family, but it's this big extended family. And in a way it is.

M.A.: He feels it. That's his family, but for me and my girls and the family, huh? We did have a friend of his stop by, I don't know, six weeks ago. Harry Anderson (ph) was getting recertified up at MEBA and called Jack out of the blue. It was just – wow, that's a real – and that was really nice for Jack to have someone in his home.

M.Z.: Was that the first time you had met him?

M.A.: Yes. It was fun. It was fun, listening to them talk. But it is a very small community, the tugging world. Jack will talk to Josh. Josh is in Mississippi, I don't know, he's in that area. They'll share stories and familiar names and the same thing up here. It's funny, because my daughter, Claire, is now dating a guy that's going into the tugging business.

M.Z.: No kidding. Are you surprised by that?

M.A.: Not really. Not really.

M.Z.: What was it like for the girls growing up? How involved were they in his life? How interested were they?

M.A.: It's the way it was. Oh, very. I think very interested. But that's just the way it was, you know? That's the way it was. They didn't feel deprived. That's just the way it was. I was always around for all their events and school and the classroom, and all that kind of stuff. Another reason why I never had that nine to five, because it was important for me to have face time at the school and their sporting events. We have talked about this with the girls. "That's just the way it was, mom. It's fine."

M.Z.: Well, it must be if she's –

M.A.: Yeah. "Are you sure about this?" No, it's an honorable profession. It's a marketable skill and it's a growing industry. In this economy and day and age –

M.Z.: You can't say that about too –

M.A.: We've talked to Josh. So yeah, it's difficult, but it's good work.

M.Z.: That's interesting that you're going to have a, did you say that they're engaged.

M.A.: No, they're not engaged.

M.Z.: Oh, they're dating.

M.A.: They're dating. But there's been a lot of conversation between he and Jack.

M.Z.: Do you all get along with him pretty well?

M.A.: Yeah, yeah, and I think he understands what he's getting into.

M.Z.: And so does she.

M.A.: Yeah, she maybe more than he, as far as timing and what it's like being away. For instance, this year Jack will work Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's. We're already planning the weekend we'll celebrate. We're thinking about that weekend. I think it's like the 11th or 12th of December.

We'll try to maybe have a little Christmas party with friends, and how we're going to work it, who's going to be here. It's just another day. We've done it before and we'll do it again. I'd rather it not be that way sometimes, but it's just the way it is, and it won't help anything to boo-hoo about it.

M.Z.: That's something you've had to deal with a lot over the years?

M.A.: Uh-huh, and when the girls were little and he wasn't around, that's when my parents were around, and they picked up a lot of slack.

M.Z.: You could have holidays together.

M.A.: Oh, sure. We made it festive. It was always fun, even without him. We felt worse for him, that he wasn't home.

M.Z.: How did he handle that? Did it bother him?

M.A.: It's the way it was. They'd always have a big roast. They'd have their own holiday meal on board. I mean, he had to keep the spirits up, as the captain. Like I said, there's no use boo-hoo'ing. It's just another day of work. We'd explain to the girls, you look at a hospital; you look at the police force. There are a lot of people that work over the holidays. Don't think that you're alone. A lot goes on out there December 25th, so get over it.

M.Z.: Have you been in the position of having to sort of counsel other women who are in this situation, the way that Jack is sort of a mentor to younger men, like Josh?

M.A.: Not so much. Not so much. I know there have been some Bay pilots' wives. We sort of make eye contact and smile and nod. Our niece married a fellow whose father was a Bay pilot. His mom and I would talk. That's sort of a different schedule. It's like three days-two days-three days-two days. It's a little different. But no, I haven't met many of the women. Like I haven't met the men, I haven't met the women.

M.Z.: Right. I guess you'll be in a position of counseling your daughter if –

M.A.: If that goes –

M.Z.: If that relationship –

M.A.: She's a tough cookie. She knows. I've always wondered why the companies don't promote a little more social with their employees. As Jack explained, some of the guys are from Texas, California, Ohio. They get off and they just want to go home. They're not going to ship their families in for events. I know in the Hudson, they always have a tugboat race once a year. I've always wanted to go to it and Jack's like, "Oh, for crying out loud." (Laughter.) "I'm not going to that to see tugboats race."

M.Z.: That's very funny.

M.A.: Yeah, I've seen it online, seen YouTubes.

M.Z.: Maybe you and the girls should go.

M.A.: Yeah, maybe. Jeez, I'd say, "That looks really neat." "Well, yeah. I really don't need to do that."

M.Z.: I wonder if you were able to drag him up there, if he would get into it once he was there, kind of looking at it critically and, "Oh, they don't know what they're doing."

M.A.: Yeah, and that's just the way it is.

M.Z.: One thing I was wondering about is the danger aspects. I was listening to the recording again that I did with Jack before, and he's talking about how it's just a dangerous occupation. As I was listening, I was wondering how that was for you, to be aware of the dangers that he faces on a day-to-day basis.

M.A.: He doesn't talk about it. I know he has to do a lot of climbing. Crew change day I know is always precarious, because they've got all their luggage. He has a suitcase, backpack and a computer bag. I know, for instance, he's got to climb over the barge. It depends on how they're situated, tugboat, barge, dock. They do a lot of climbing, and on and off launches. If they're anchored, you've got the launch, and the on and the off. I know he's fallen. I know he has a bad leg and it happens.

He, in the wheelhouse, probably is in the dangerous position as some of the deckhands that are out there in all kinds of weather, and hit with all kinds of wind and waves, and that kind of stuff. Now that they're in the ATBs and not using the hawsers the way they did in the past, I don't worry about that so much. The falling and the shoes are important. Shoes are really important. Yeah, and I pay attention to the weather. I pay close attention to the weather.

M.Z.: You know, especially these days, I guess, you know exactly where he is.

M.A.: Yes. He was out for Irene and they were in Long Island Sound. I kept pretty close tabs on where he was. Finally he was like, "Would you leave me alone? We're just anchored. We're going up and down. I'm more worried about you." That's a pretty tough vessel. Some of these little sailboats that are doing these races on the coast, I worry more about those.

M.Z.: Yeah. How about in the earlier days, when he wasn't on such a big vessel and the communication wasn't as great? Was the dangerous aspects of it, was that a problem for you, or did you try to just put it out of your mind?

M.A.: He didn't share. We were talking earlier about me coming down from suburbia and acclimating myself to life on the Eastern Shore. I had no idea about tugboats. I really didn't. I'm very comfortable on a vessel, and spent a lot of time on the river, but tugboats were a total mystery to me. The danger thing, I just couldn't let it get to me. I think that's why he didn't share a lot.

M.Z.: He didn't want you to worry.

M.A.: There was no point.

M.Z.: Again, it probably gets back to trust, too. You have to trust that he's a competent guy. He knows what he's doing. Accidents can happen and there's nothing you can do.

M.A.: They can and there's nothing I can do about it. I will say, though, that as the years go on, I worry about, and he doesn't want to talk about his health. You hear about a stroke victim, and all you hear about is timing is of the essence. You get that drug in you as quickly as you can. Any of those guys collapse with a stroke out in the ocean, that's it. I mean, these days, that would be my concern.

: Heart attack, they do have the paddles and I think they're more prepared. They have a fabulous medical kit and he's trained in using the paddles and all that kind of stuff. It's the stroke thing that I would – and I know he wouldn't want to talk about it. But he's sixty-two.

M.Z.: As he gets older, as you get older, do you start thinking like maybe it's time to wind this up?

M.A.: Yes and no. There's no mandatory retirement age. It's not like an airline. As things go, these guys want to work as long as they can. As I say, you'll work as long as your body says you can work. He'd have to find something else to do, just for his sanity. But then again, in all industries, these men are not retiring and making room for the next generation.

M.Z.: Just because of the economy?

M.A.: Just because of the economy and this is in a lot of different places. If I've heard it once, I've heard it a hundred times from people my age. "I'm not retiring." Well, unless you retire, that next generation isn't going to get on board. So that's a whole 'nother issue.

I think he likes it. The worst part are crew change days. It's exhausting. He gets off the tug, maybe gets in a taxi, gets to a train, maybe gets to an airport. It is eighteen hours of traveling with a lot of luggage.

M.Z.: He doesn't drive to where he has to go?

M.A.: It depends. This time I took him to the train station, because he got the boat in Philadelphia. That's his green truck out there. He got the train, and then gets to the train station, and they may have a van. The company may have a van, if they can coordinate all these guys to get from the van to the refinery, where the tugboat is.

A lot of times he'll drive up to Staten Island, if the boat's up there somewhere. That's a long day. That's exhausting. Especially this time of year, the weather transitions. He's

got to take stuff. He went with all his fleeces and his blue jeans this time. You never know, so that's hard. We think about it sometimes, but the retirement word, not yet. He's not there yet.

M.Z.: I wonder what that will be. You know, if and when that day comes around, I wonder how that will be for you, you know?

M.A.: Well, we talked about that. Last winter he had a rotator cuff surgery, and then had appendicitis. He was home for like three months.

M.Z.: Wow. How did that go?

M.A.: It was long. I laugh and tease him, because it got expensive. He got on eBay. He got back into his fly tying. He started buying fishing rods. Stuff would come in the mail. It's like, "What are you doing?" "Well, I was online last night and I found this." I was like, "Honey, you've just got to stop." You've got to have something to do. I don't know if there would be anything at MEBA or instructing. There's a school over in Linthicum, instructing. But he'd have to do something.

M.Z.: How is it for you, just having him around, other than the purchasing issues? It must have changed your lifestyle so much.

M.A.: I talked to Rosemary. I said, "Oh, God, there's got to be something I can do in the office. Please tell me there's more work for me to do in the office." Yeah, it was nice. It was nice.

M.Z.: But an adjustment.

M.A.: An adjustment and we're too young for that. We're not there. We don't like to be sedentary, so we get up and go to the Western Shore, or do stuff. We still need to make some more money, because it's expensive. It's expensive.

M.Z.: Is there anything else you want to add? As we're putting together this exhibit, I think this part of the story is pretty important, just how the families deal with this. I'm just looking at my notes a little bit to see if there was anything I was thinking about that we didn't cover. I think we've covered a lot of it. Is there anything else?

M.A.: The social, the communication, the finances, I take care of all the books, pay all the bills and raising the girls. I mentioned this to Claire the other day that we're doing these things and she said, "Oh, well, it's just the way it was." It's been interesting. It's had its challenges, but rewarding. Like I said, it's good, honest work and I think it's valued. I'm not sure people understand the vastness of the maritime industry. I don't think people get it.

M.Z.: I don't think so either. That's why I'm very happy that we're doing this exhibit, because I think even the Maritime Museum doesn't usually pay attention to the more industrial side of the Chesapeake, and obviously it's so important.

M.A.: Yeah, it's very important. Jack started off going up to those little rinky dink places.

M.Z.: Little rinky dink companies, you mean?

M.A.: Well, he'd take oil to Sharptown or Vienna. I remember I had a conversation with an older lady in St. Michaels. She says, "He has a tugboat company. How interesting. What does he do?" I said, "Well, he moves oil." "Why? Why does he move oil?" I said, "Do you like your electricity? Well, you know that power plant in Vienna?" "Well, I thought it was just electricity." I said, "Well, it's made electricity by oil." "Oh."

You know, I explained the one summer or two summers he spent in the Gulf of Mexico, moving oil from Houston or Louisiana over to Florida for their power plants. The woman was like, "Well, why?" I said, "Well, they like their air conditioning." "Well, what's that got to do with oil?" I said, "Oil makes the electricity, so you can be cool."

Then he reminds me that if you go to any mall in America – I don't know what the percentage – I think it's in the nineties. Say 90 percent of the goods in any mall in any America arrives by a vessel.

M.Z.: All these container ships, right?

M.A.: All these container ships.

M.Z.: Has he been involved specifically with that? He hasn't, has he?

M.A.: No, no.

M.Z.: I would like to talk to somebody who has, because I understand how important that is to our daily lives, as you're saying.

M.A.: It's huge. Yeah, I'll think about it. But we were out fishing late this summer. I don't know if you're aware, but Baltimore has just begun receiving one of the largest container ships.

M.Z.: Yeah, I actually have been poking around on the web, just doing background research for this.

M.A.: Oh, my God, we saw it one night. Huge. We were out on the west side of Poplar Island fishing and he could see it coming down the Bay. Huge. Nine hundred feet, just stacks and stacks –

M.Z.: I don't think I can even picture what 900 feet really means, you know?

M.A.: Huge. Blocked out the sunset. He went for it. He said, "You have got to see this thing." It was flying. I couldn't believe how fast it was going. That's another thing, recreational vessels. They don't all understand. They see this monstrous thing coming down, but man, that thing is flying, four foot wake. It's a huge industry. On the river – is that where Josh is now? Is he on the Mississippi?

M.Z.: He's on the Mississippi and intercoastal, I think, down in the Gulf. Like you said, Mississippi, but I think over more towards Texas, Houston, and around there.

M.A.: Yeah, just so much going on down there. It is huge. I think there have been quite a few people from the Eastern Shore. Over the years, many, many watermen have called Jack about this. It's a huge commitment. They just couldn't cut it.

M.Z.: Because of the whole lifestyle, like what you're talking about, your whole family has to be really on board with it.

M.A.: You have to be drug tested, too. You've got to be clean. You've got to be clean, and it's tough. That's a real eye-opener. At any given time.

M.Z.: So you have to be clean 100 percent.

M.A.: You have to be clean, period, 100 percent. That doesn't always suit.

M.Z.: That's going to be a challenge for a lot of people.

M.A.: But it's good money.

M.Z.: I think I asked – if I didn't ask Jack this already, I would like to. I know I talked to Josh about it, but what you're saying about how important this work is to just kind of the nuts and bolts of our daily lives, in terms of electricity and stuff that we buy.

M.A.: Goods, right.

M.Z.: That we depend on, working in that sort of industry, I imagine effects the way that you see the Bay. You know, I'm sure for a lot of people it still is a playground and a source of recreation and fun and pleasure. But it's also this other work domain.

M.A.: It's a highway.

M.Z.: I was just wondering if you could talk about that. Has his work sort of changed your perspective on how you interact with the Bay?

M.A.: You know, it has. But I have to say, both of my parents are from the city of Baltimore and love the city and paid attention to the harbor. I remember, as a little girl, my father talking about the dredging of the harbor. We would go down and gunk all around and

look at the harbor. It didn't make sense to me then, how important it was to keep the channel deep. The ships were going to continue to get bigger and draftier and how important it was that Baltimore was so far into our country, as opposed to Norfolk, that their ships could get the coal in and out quicker than Norfolk. I was aware of it. My father was an engineer, so I do see that.

I will say that I married into a family who fishing and hunting was their lives. They had a great respect for the environment. At the same time, it's a way to make money. There's got to be a balance. It can't be one way or the other. There's got to be a balance. The watermen, too, they love the Bay, but it is their livelihood, and it has to be respected. That's a whole nother – the environment of the Bay is a whole 'nother subject. Jack sees it firsthand. He doesn't go up and down the Chesapeake so much anymore. He sees stuff that makes him sick. He likes to see the industry growing. He's always aware of the business on the Bay. It's important. You've got to have it.

M.Z.: Has that perspective created any tensions for you guys, here in this area? You know, I just think a lot of people who move to this area or retire into the area, see kind of the aesthetics of it. “Oh, it's so beautiful and it's a playground.”

M.A.: Oh, yeah. I'm not sure that's a function of Jack's work, but I think it's more of a function of his being born and bred here. It's certainly beautiful and wonderful and marvelous here, but people live and work here. It's important for them to have jobs. You can't cut your nose to spite your face.

If a family owns a farm, and that's the only way they're going to educate their kids or pass something down, that's the privilege of ownership. At some point, that has to be respected. Because they had a big farm and luckily, it wasn't an issue with all the new environmental stuff. The farm went long before. But without that farm, the family wouldn't be where it is. I think that's more of a function of his being born and raised here.

He loves to see the industry. He thought that container ship was just – and then the cruise ships. Cruise ships now are using the port. That's got to bring some money in. He's not as fanatical about the environment as the come-here's. They were property owners, and there was a right of ownership that's just being usurped. We'll see. He's got his own little property right here.

M.Z.: Well, this is really great. Thank you so much. Is there anything else that you want to add before we turn things off? Do you have any recommendations for us, as we're putting the exhibit together?

M.A.: No, we'll think about the container aspect. Are you going to talk to any Bay pilots?

M.Z.: I don't think that's on our agenda, because it's a little bit – I mean, it's obviously related.

M.A.: Yeah, it goes astray, doesn't it?

M.Z.: I think we're going to keep it focused on the tugs. I think the containers are pretty relevant. I don't have, I don't think, any contacts yet in that world. I'll have to start making some phone calls.

M.A.: Did Jack say anything about talking – I think Bobby Marshall (ph).

M.Z.: Bobby Marshall?

M.A.: Do you know the name?

M.Z.: No.

M.A.: He is from Tilghman. He has a sport fishing boat. I know in off-years he has been known to run a tug. He's a real character, and I'm sure people at the Maritime Museum would know the name. His fishing boat is called *Class Act*.

M.Z.: Is he involved with the container?

M.A.: No, I have a feeling he was doing some stuff – at one point he worked for Denny Berg. I don't know if he was doing stuff for Poplar Island or running gravel barge to Salisbury. Richard might know.

M.Z.: Richard Scofield (ph)?

M.A.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Yeah, I want to try to go a little further afield. I don't want to make it all be Talbot County. I might start trying to broaden my horizons now, geographically, but also I'd like to get a bigger sample of the kinds of work that people do. If you guys think of any container people, if Jack thinks of anybody, please let me know. I haven't even started really poking around, so you know, I will.

M.A.: The thing is, about the container ships, would all be operated by a pilot. That is one of the interesting things. You know, Jack's tug is 125 or – I'm not even sure. Then the barge is like 500. So in essence, it could be a five or 600 foot vessel, but he doesn't have to take a pilot. Then some of these other smaller vessels have to take a pilot. He could explain to you why that is. The container ships would definitely have a pilot. It could be a foreign skipper. I don't know about that.

M.Z.: Maybe I can talk to Jack a little bit more when he gets back, too, and he can explain some of this stuff to me. When does Jack get back?

M.A.: On the 19th, it's always on a Wednesday. The 19th, for three weeks, the 19th through the 9th.

M.Z.: I think I told you before, I'm on jury duty, so I have to wait day-to-day to see what I'm doing.

M.A.: Yeah, you have to call the night before.

M.Z.: Yeah or they have it online, too. But yeah, you don't know until, sometimes you know a few days ahead. Right now I don't even know if I'm supposed to go.

M.A.: Is anything happening in Talbot County? I always try to follow murder trials.
(Laughter.) So this is going to be in the spring?

M.Z.: April is what we're shooting for.

M.A.: Have you managed any photographs?

M.Z.: We have some photographs in our collection, older stuff.

M.A.: Old stuff, that would be cool.

M.Z.: Then yesterday we interviewed Denny Berg and so he had a few photos.

M.A.: Good, good.

M.Z.: But I'd like to get more contemporary photos, too. I don't think I'm the person for that job. I mean, I can snap photos, but it'd be nice to have something a little more professional. I hope that's going to be part of it, too. And I'd like to go onboard a vessel, and be able to take some pictures. But I don't know.

M.A.: Did he show you any of the pictures?

M.Z.: You showed me one. When I was here, you brought something out. So maybe we can look at that. I'll go ahead and turn this off now, unless you have anything else?

M.A.: Oh, sure. No. I'll keep thinking.

(End of interview.)