

Oral History Interview

Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum

“The Culture of Tugs and Tugs in Culture”

Interviewee: Michael (Mike) Grosh (M.G.)
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POB:

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M.Z.: There we go. Okay, we're recording now. Okay, so this is Michelle Zacks for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum. It is September 24th, 2011, and we're actually in my home in Claiborne with my neighbor, Mike Grosh. So, Mike, can you just say your name and spell your last name so that we have it correct?

M.G.: Uh-huh. Michael Grosh. G-r-o-s-h.

M.Z.: G-r-o-s-h. Okay. And your address, I can fill that in, but you're on Old Claiborne Road.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Right? And I know you wrote that down on the form, so I can get—

M.G.: Yeah. It's the same mailing address because I have the mail lady.

M.Z.: Yeah. You actually have delivery?

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Yeah. And what's your date of birth?

M.G.: Seven, twenty-seven, 1954.

M.Z.: Nineteen fifty-four. I think you're one year younger than Eric. He's born in '55. And I just want to get some of the basics—

M.G.: I'm a year older.

M.Z.: One year older, I mean. (Laughter). I just want to get some of the basic information down. You are a captain, right?

M.G.: Yes.

M.Z.: And the company you work for is Vane Brothers?

M.G.: Uh-huh. Vane Line Bunkering is the actual right term for it, but everybody knows it as Vane Brothers. They've got a whole bunch of different irons in the fire. They have a safety division and water service and loitering and all kinds of different stuff. So I'm in the bunkering side of it, transporting oil.

M.Z.: Okay. So that's one of their divisions, and that's one of their primary divisions, isn't it?

M.G.: Yeah. That's where their money is. Uh-huh.

M.Z.: Okay. And the name of your tug? You told me before, but—

M.G.: *Oyster Creek*.

M.Z.: *Oyster Creek*. And how long is it?

M.G.: Ninety-four feet.

M.Z.: Ninety-four feet. And the horsepower?

M.G.: Three-thousand.

M.Z.: And what—I'm not very familiar with all of these terms—but what type of tug it is? You told me it's not the whole ATB thing.

M.G.: No. Yeah. It's a wire boat. So it has a single-drum towing machine on the back that has an inch and three-quarter wire. I think it's 2,400 feet of wire loaded on this drum. So it would be what people in the industry would understand as being a hawser boat. But because it has a wire, it's got the towing machine, so it doesn't, what you're thinking of is like ATB or pin boat is what everybody calls those. And that's not what this is.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. So this is kind of the older style of boat, or—

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah, it's kind of old school. Uh-huh. It's, it's more versatile. Because it's set up to do a little bit of everything. So yeah, I mean, it's kind of like a, you know, my company built these barges and built these boats—it's kind of an issue within the company as well. You're doing all this stuff, why didn't they go ahead and pin everything? Because it really is a lot more efficient. We make more time. But they chose not to do it that way, so we have a wire boat.

M.Z.: Uh-huh.

M.G.: And they have a whole fleet of them. They have like, I don't know, they must have fifteen 4200-horsepower tugboats. These are scaled down. They're kind of like 75 percent of the 4200s. You know? They're the 3000. They look just like, a little bit shorter, a little bit smaller, little bit less horsepower, but other than that, the whole fleet is, the Vane class boats are all pretty much the same. And there's about thirty of them, so...

M.Z.: Is this one of the new ones that's being built right now down in Salisbury?

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. They built, I think they had six of them built in Salisbury of the 3000 class. And this was the fifth boat built. The last one of the series is supposed to come out in December, January. Then that's the last of the build program.

M.Z.: I think I might make a trip down there just to see the shipyard and see what that's like.

M.G.: Uh-huh. Yeah.

M.Z.: And so, you're just hauling petroleum. Is that correct?

M.G.: Yes.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. Okay. Well I want to talk about that and how that all works. But maybe we can actually start with a little bit more of just your history and how you got into this business in the first place.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: And how you've progressed up to being a captain, as well. Because I know that probably doesn't come easy or quickly, necessarily.

M.G.: Yeah, well it's gotten more and more difficult. It certainly hasn't gotten any easier. I feel sorry for these—in fact, basically, I recommend everybody now that, you know, looking at, if you're trying to maximize pay, which, that's what the whole name of the game is, it's almost like you don't really want to go into the wheelhouse. Because it takes so much time and it's very regulated.

Our industry is very regulated. So, and the Coast Guard realizes that these people that are in charge of moving, like the typical barge that I move around is a 30,000-barrel barge. So you can have, you know, you pretty much need to know what you're doing. And how do you start? So it's ten years. That's the rule of thumb for a captain to become a captain. Once you even get into the wheelhouse, it's ten years to get from when you first get your license to being able to have a degree of confidence to be able to do your job, you know? So anyway, my background is—

M.Z.: Well so first that, you told me before I turned the recorder on, but you grew up around Annapolis?

M.G.: Yeah. Just north of Annapolis. Severna Park.

M.Z.: And did you grow up, like, in and around the water? Were you—

M.G.: Yeah. Well, in fact, my mom and dad's place is on the water, on the Magothy River.

M.Z.: And is that part of what led you towards this kind of work?

M.G.: Oh, yeah. Definitely. Oh, yeah.

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

M.G.: Yeah. Graduated high school, went to college, graduated from college. Now I'm trying to join, you know, get into the workforce. And did a little of this, and pumping gas,

ended up becoming a regional manager of several gas stations. And that was just pretty much nuts. And sold clothes for awhile, and there was Robert Hall. And it was, you know, I was seeing that this whole career business was pretty much sucky. So I needed to find something that I was going to be able to maintain my sanity. And I had been in a sailboat, I had done a lot of sailing.

And I still do a lot of sailing. In fact, I've ended up buying the boat that I grew up with, I bought from my dad because he went to a bigger boat and I had told him that when the time came for him to sell that boat, I wanted first dibs on it. So I bought it, and I still have that boat. So, which is an Alberg 30. So I'm looking around for something that I could maintain my sanity over a forty-year career expectancy. And, you know, it was like, I need to find a job on the water. So there's a lot of Albergs. In fact, there's an Alberg 30 down here in Claiborne that we know each other through the association, through the Alberg 30 Association.

And there was one, a member of the Alberg 30s was the chairman of the Blue Diamond Fleet. So I met him at a rendezvous, at a social function, and he kind of pointed me in the direction of how to get my foot in the door with the tugboat industry. And it was, because the Blue Diamond Fleet was a—and Curtis Bay Towing is the correct name of that—he pointed me in the direction of a union job. And then, so I went up to the union hall up in, using his name as a reference, and then I end up going to the Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship in Piney Point, Maryland for three months. Which I'm going into this cold. I don't know anything about nothing.

But as it turns out, it basically was a boot camp. You know, you shave your head, shave your beard, they dress you in uniforms, you march around for three months. You learn this and learn that. And in two-week things, learn a little bit of tankerman and you get your lifeboat thing, seamanship, safety, swimming and that sort of thing. And at the end of it, they guaranteed you a job. And in the middle of all this, my class happened to be the—because life boat is a big deal.

It's actually the only thing that's of any importance that you actually learn at the school for three months. My class just happened to be the class where they have these lifeboat races up in New York every year, and it was my class was the first year that the SIU was the union that I was about to join here, was going to participate. So we got a team together, my class, and we went up to New York and we won this race. We actually won. So now, they're all falling all over themselves because we just amazed everybody that we were going to win this thing, you know.

M.Z.: What was the name of your union? SIU?

M.G.: Yeah. Seafarers International Union.

M.Z.: And I'm sorry. Tell me again what the name of the school was?

M.G.: Harry Lundeberg School of Seamanship. But it's Piney Point, is what everybody knows it as. It's on the Potomac River, right behind the Piney Point Lighthouse. So that gave me a heads-up as far as any jobs coming up, and basically, you know, I had this class that we were going through three months spending at Piney Point. It was a fifty-member class and ended up there were three of us that had these jobs going down to Texas to work on a harbor tug for G&H Towing. And so I went down there and, basically, it was just a one-month job, but in the course of that month, another opening opened up and I got my foot in the door for a permanent job down there. I got my sea time license. As soon as I got my license, I started fishing around for a job on the east coast.

M.Z.: What license is that?

M.G.: Uninspected Towing Vessel. UTV. So, yeah, got my license then started looking around, and that's how I got my foot in the door with Eastern Shore Marine Towing, which is Denny Berg. He needed a mate. And so, and that's how I ended up going into the wheelhouse.

M.Z.: Okay. So you were, what were you, second mate or something? Or did you go right into being first mate?

M.G.: The only mate.

M.Z.: The only mate.

(Laughter)

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah, it's kind of like one of the more amazing things, you know? You walk into the Coast Guard, and of course, now I had to go to school because it's a pretty—you know, it's got nothing to do with actually running a tugboat—but, you know, the navigation, the rules of the road, generals and there's something else. There were four sections of the test. It's been so long, I've forgotten. But, and two of those sections, you had to have a ninety to pass. Navigation and rules of the road. Which means you could only get two wrong questions out of about fifty.

So then now, you walk in as an AB, able seaman, and then you walk out of here, you got this piece of paper saying that you're qualified to run a tugboat. You know? But there's no difference, you know? (Laughter). I still don't know how to run a tugboat. It's just I have this license that says I can, you know? And Denny was generous enough to hire me and put up with me in probably desperation on his part, also, because he was, pretty special operation he had. And I ended up working for him for six years and I learned a huge amount. You know? I learned, you know, everything I need to know as far as tugboating with Denny.

M.Z.: When did you start working for him? Do you remember what year that was?

M.G.: 1982.

M.Z.: So what was the time lag between like when you graduated from Piney Point and —

M.G.: I went to Piney Point in '79. And you needed eighteen months' sea time to get your—actually, you needed twelve months. At the time, it was a second class, what's called second-class operator. They don't even have that anymore. I'm not even sure if they have the uninspected towing vessel operator. But, and I was just short, I was about three months' short of being able to get my full uninspected towing vessel operator's—they hesitate to call it a license—but they call it a license now. But at the time, they were trying to discriminate between uninspected towing vessels. Because prior to 1972, you didn't need a license to run a tugboat.

So this is like a, what's happening in the tugboat industry is a continuing intersection of Congress and the Coast Guard in trying to tighten up things because bad things seem to consistently happen on tugboats. And every time something bad happens, they decide they need to do something else. So, you know, it's like I get grandfathered in because I'm already, you know, basically there.

M.Z.: What do you think about those increasing regulations? You think it's a good thing or unnecessary, or—?

M.G.: They need to do something. What I object to is that they have such a difficulty with people they consider actually having a—like ship captains. You got your ship captains and you got your tugboat captains. And, because it's a tonnage thing. These licenses are restricted on the basis of tonnage and it goes up. Like the original uninspected towing vessel had a 200-ton limit for, plus being uninspected, it was also not—well that's all gone.

And now they're talking about eliminating uninspected towing vessels. This is in the works, in the next year or two. There won't be any uninspected towing vessels. Everything's going to be inspected. But so now you have all these guys that have spent a whole lot more time and effort in getting unlimited license, unlimited water, for to run these big ships like the Exxon *Valdez*, just to name an example. You know, that guy had a big license. You know? You can make the argument, well what good did that license do him? You know? He's got that big license and he still ended up piling up on Bligh Reef, you know?

So it's like, and brother Willy (ph) down there, he went through the Sunshine Bridge down there in Louisiana, railroad bridge, and that. So you had these catastrophes all the time, and yeah! It needs to be regulated and something needs to be done. I'm not sure that just piling on more regulations is the answer, you know? And what they're doing is they have a steersman pro—and like I was saying, in '82, when I got my license, all of a sudden, I'm on a tugboat. And I'm standing my six-hour watch in the wheelhouse of a tugboat, and I don't know anything. You know?

M.Z.: What license was that in '82? That's your —

M.G.: Second class UTV.

M.Z.: Okay.

M.G.: Yeah. So—

M.Z.: Yeah. So really, you have to learn, it sounds like what you're saying is you just have to learn by experience.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: More than just getting, studying and taking a test.

M.G.: Yeah. No question about it. And what's interesting is that now, because my company's going through a huge expansion program, and there's always a shortage of good wheelhouse people. So what they've been doing is they've been hiring people out of these maritime academies. And these guys coming out of there, these four-year schools with pretty humungous licenses, and then there's not really any American shipping fleet for all these people to get absorbed into. So they end up, a bunch of them end up migrating down to the tugboats. Well, surprise, when they end up on the tugboat, the Coast Guard recognizes that there's some experience that counts.

So the first thing these guys have to do is spend eighteen months on deck of a tugboat before they're even allowed to go into the wheelhouse. Which is a real shock to their system because they've just spent four years. And then when you point out to them, well you know, with eighteen months' sea time on deck of a tugboat, you can sit for a license and you can get in the wheelhouse. You can get in the wheelhouse in eighteen months just like you're going to get in the wheelhouse eighteen months. Now once they get into the wheelhouse, they'll have a bigger license, you know? But they still need that eighteen months' sea time on a tugboat because it's a unique thing. They don't teach tugboat at these maritime academies.

M.Z.: And even if you learn in a school, it's probably a lot different than learning in the real world.

M.G.: Oh, yeah.

M.Z.: Because you're going to encounter a lot of unexpected stuff, where in a controlled school setting, you can't manufacture unexpected circumstances that they have to encounter.

M.G.: Right. And that's how you—you're right. Exactly. And so the Coast Guard has made all these kind of, you know, they've made me a designated examiner so now, and when these guys show up on my boat, they have this thick blue book and it's like, you know, discuss the various lighting, navigation lights on it. And then I go into okay, sail a loaded barge from a dock, dock a loaded barge, dock a light barge, transition from towing to

getting into pushing. There's a whole, there's pages and pages and pages that you have to check off these guys.

It takes eight months, probably, to run through this whole thing. Because you're working, you're not doing this all the time anyway, and if it's a 50 percent chance that both guys are going to be up, whenever this, whatever's happening, and the two people are going to be together, it's a real tedious thing to get a license now. And that's not right either, you know? There should be a better way of doing it, but I don't know what it is. You know? I recommend everybody to either go engineering or go as tankerman to maximize. Because you're going to spend a lot of money to go to school to get this license so that you know the correct answers for the Coast Guard. Then you have to find a company that's willing to take you on as a trainee.

You have to find somebody like me who's willing to actually take you under their wing and be able to let you—it's a difficult thing to sit there and watch somebody do something and let them make the mistakes so that they learn, but stop the mistakes from being catastrophes. You know? It's really stressful. It's difficult for me. And I avoid it whenever I can. But it's necessary, you know? You have to do this. And it's part of my job to bring these people along so that they can do that.

M.Z.: And I imagine Denny Berg kind of played that function with you to some extent, right?

M.G.: Oh, yeah. He never really, he wasn't on the boats all that much. He tried to stay home as much as he could. Yeah, he showed up on his boat to fill in and do this and do that. But really, I learned most of what I needed to learn as far as boat hounding (ph) and all that stuff from Butch Shorts, was his main captain, you know.

M.Z.: Who was that? Say that name again?

M.G.: Butch Shorts.

M.Z.: Butch Shorts?

M.G.: Yeah. S-h-o-r-t-s. I think he lives in Delaware somewhere.

M.Z.: S-h-o-r-t-s?

M.G.: Uh-huh.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. And so was he the captain on the vessel, or he—

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah.

M.Z.: So can you tell me what that was like, when you first got on that? What was the name of Denny Berg's boat?

M.G.: Actually I was—he had a fleet. It was two boats. The *Mustang* was really what I was hired for. It was a push boat, square bow push boat. Had a pair of Caterpillar 352s in it, I think. There were, it ended up being a total of 820 horsepower, I think?

M.Z.: So a lot smaller than what you're working with now.

M.G.: Oh yeah. It was way smaller. Sixty-four feet long. She drew nine foot, six inches. So she drew a little bit more than a typical push boat. And we took her up and down the coast a couple times which was really insane, but that's what we did. And then his other boat was the *Quaker*, which was a, when I was on her, she had a Nordberg medium-speed diesel, which is 900 RPM, 615 horsepower. The boat was dieselized in 1954. It had been a steam tug. It was made out of riveted, puddled steel, whatever that means. She was a beast, boy, she was tough. I mean, we seriously abused her.

M.Z.: And you worked kind of between those two boats? The *Mustang* and the *Quaker*?

M.G.: Yes. Yeah. Uh-huh.

M.Z.: And you were, I guess Butch was the captain for one of them? Not for both of them?

M.G.: We rotated around. It was like, whatever boat wasn't down, you know, wasn't down for repairs, we kind of like went to the other one to keep things moving.

M.Z.: And what kind of work were you guys doing and where was that happening?

M.G.: It was dry cargo. They had these two or three hopper barges. And they were double-hull. They were actually pretty good barges. They were seagoing ABS barges—American Bureau of Shipping—that we carried grain, rock, fertilizer. And of course, I mean, the magical thing about that is, is that whenever you changed cargoes from one to the other, somebody had to go down there to sweep out whatever the previous cargo was to make it acceptable for the next cargo, and that would be us. (Laughter)

With the push brooms and the five-gallon buckets and the coal shovels and scooping the stuff up off the bottom. These are 195-foot-long barges, you know? That's a lot of sweeping. And the bottoms are not smooth, they're all, get all rippled because they get emptied out by buckets, by crane buckets. So over the years, those buckets slamming into the bottom, you get ripples in between the ribs. So it's like a real, it's a pain in the ass, is what it is. (Laughter)

M.Z.: How long would that take? A hundred and ninety-five feet, did you say?

M.G.: Yeah, it would take—we were always trying to push around two barges at a time, so it wasn't like you just did one barge. You got the one barge done, then you'd have to go ahead and do the other barge, you know?

M.Z.: How do you push two barges at the same time? I don't understand.

M.G.: End on end. Just lash them together with steamboat ratchets and big turnbuckles, is what they basically are. Big turn—you know, these, and you, you know, it's all grunt, hard, it's manual labor. You know? It was all manual labor. And uh—

M.Z.: Doesn't that make it real hard to maneuver when you have two of them? I mean, doesn't it make it doubly hard, or is it—?

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah. Sure, you know. I mean, the length of the tow was, you know, you figure 190-foot, 195 per barge. Two barge end-on-end and then, you know, seventy-foot, seventy-five-foot-long tugboat. Yeah, you're taking up a lot of real estate.

M.Z.: You must have learned a lot.

M.G.: Uh-huh.

M.Z.: Can you tell me what that was like? I mean—

M.G.: Oh, it was awful. It was awful. I was really having second thoughts for a good little while. And I was just too stupid, ignorant, I guess is what the word is. I just didn't know that I was being put in a position that I really shouldn't be in. You know? I mean, I wouldn't, knowing what I know now, there's no way. I'd be like, you're out of your mind, I'm out of here. You know.

M.Z.: So you were in over your head, you think?

M.G.: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. But I mean, we're pushing around, it wasn't like, you know, you pile these things up. Because we're going down the Intercoastal Waterway. I mean, my first run was, in fact I got on, with the *Quaker*, two loaded barges full of scrap steel from, they were loaded at someplace up in New York, and the previous mate had to get off. And I got on by way of a Waterman, a crab boat off of Bloody Point. I got on the boat. Me, a fifty-five gallon drum of oil, and a clutch. Oh, and a grocery bag of sheets, of bed linens for my bunk. (Laughter) Because one of the questions I'm asking Denny, I mean, there were so many questions. He was driving me to get on to the *Quaker* for this operation, and it was like, is there a washing machine and dryer on this boat? He goes, "No. We've got a five-gallon bucket and a plunger." I was like, "Okay." You know, I mean there's no, I was so in over my head, I didn't even know what kind of questions to ask, and you get an answer like that to a question that you've come up with, it was like, you know, maybe I just better shut up and just see how this thing goes here, you know?

So I got on at Bloody Point and it was about 5:30 in the afternoon which makes, captain's watch is 6:00 to 12:00. So I didn't have to worry about anything until midnight, you know. So I'm coming on there. Down the Bay we go. We're going to South Carolina, to a steel mill down there in South Carolina by the inland waterway with a stop at Great Bridge because they have the, right before you get to the locks, there's a set of dolphins there. So we tied everything up and that's where we changed out the clutch that I came

on with. So (laughter) this is all done by boat crew, you know? None of it, well all we had was the maintenance manual for this, you know? We're trying to figure out okay, if we undo this bolt here, you know, and then, that's how, that's how we did it. You know? And that went on for six years, just like that.

M.Z.: Did you say that was your first run?

M.G.: Yeah, it was my first run.

M.Z.: Wow. What an initiation.

M.G.: Oh, yeah, it was terrible.

M.Z.: How did the rest of the trip go?

M.G.: Terrible. You know. Going down, the good thing was, it was two loaded barges, which means you have a certain amount of control. You're going so slow, and it stays in the water column. So you can kind of, like, get everything—the original plan was that once they got unloaded, we were to go outside and go up the coast from South Carolina and then go into the Bay and then bring the barges home that way, because with light barges, it's really a different paradigm as far as figuring out how to make these things do what you want to do. And you know, the Intercoastal Waterway, most of it's canal and twisty and curvy and bendy. And you really have to be on your game to make that work. And I had never even gotten in pushing gear on a barge before all of my sea time was with harbor tugs. I was docking ships down in Corpus. I had never made up to a tug, or a barge. So I was really green.

So yeah, at some point, the lead barge ended up going, and it was me, you know, piled it up over a cedar cypress stump somewhere and punched a hole in the lead barge, but it was scrap steel so, you know, the lead barge was sinking, but it, you know, it was down by the head and basically it was underwater. We all put on our, when we got to the dock, we put on our bathing suits and we went swimming right off the—we had our little steel beach right there, you know, 'cause it was right there. But then because it floated, it was a double-hulled barge, so as they emptied out the scrap steel, and they just put, you know, it's a magnet thing, and they'd just empty it. And as they emptied the cargo out, it popped up out and then once the rudder was out, you know, out of the water, we could patch the hole and then move on with that. So I learned how to patch barges and pump barges out and all that.

M.Z.: You learned everything the hard way on that trip. Wow. That's pretty dramatic.

M.G.: Yeah. So we didn't, Butch, he chose not to, decided, which I don't blame, with the *Quaker* going outside from South Carolina, you're talking about going around Howters (ph). Now it was summer, you know, so it could've been done, but we're talking, it was two barges. So it was a multi-barge tow with this antique tugboat. He didn't want to go outside. So we didn't. So which meant that we're now pushing these two light barges up

the Intercoastal, and I am, you know, I was out of my class before. Now I'm totally out of it, you know.

So anyway, we got a pretty good ways, just a tumultuous trip the whole way around, and then it ended up, I ended up, we missed the turn somewhere and backing and filling to get the whole rig into the channel to where I could go again. I backed the stern of the tug into the bank on the back side and bent the rudder, you know. Oh yeah. (Laughter) So, you know, get another tugboat to take this and I think I ended up flying home or something, you know, while the boat went in to the shipyard to get the rudder repaired, you know, that sort of thing.

M.Z.: How did you feel after that trip? Did you feel like I'm not doing this ever again?

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah, it was like, yeah. It was just so, well, like I say, I mean, I didn't have any other experience so I didn't know that there might have been other options that I could've more sensibly kind of eased my way in to the situation. You know? But I just kept just putting one foot in front of the other, which is basically what Denny taught me anyway. That's what you always do. You just put one foot in front of the other and eventually, you know, you're going to get the job done.

M.Z.: How many other people were on that boat?

M.G.: Four-man crew.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. Were the other people more experienced than you?

M.G.: Well, the captain was. The other two, the person three and four were deckhands. You had the deckhand for the captain and then the deckhand for the mate.

M.Z.: Wow. That's amazing that you were put in that position at that stage. But you stuck with it.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: How long did it take before you started to feel more comfortable with the whole thing?

M.G.: Well, it was a pretty steep learning curve. You know? And then, it became, you just started asking the right questions and it really, you know, the *Quaker* shouldn't have been taken two-barge tows down there anyway. And I don't know what he was thinking when he decided to do that.

M.Z.: Why shouldn't it have been?

M.G.: It didn't have enough power. It just couldn't handle it. You know? It just couldn't, it was just too much barge for the boat.

M.Z.: So it wasn't all your lack of experience, it was also just kind of the circumstances as well?

M.G.: Well, he was, you know, being the eternal optimist, he's thinking he could maximize his profit because he can double, you know he gets paid by the ton of product delivered. And he goes, "Man, if everything works out all right, I'll double my profits." You know? 'Cause it's a pretty, you know, it's a pretty, the profit margins are pretty narrow anyway in this. I guess, you know, I'm assuming they are. And it's a lot of expenses, you know, there's a huge insurance and fuel expense and all that kind of stuff. Crew expenses. So, yeah, you know, you try and maximize your profit, you know? But it was like, from an operational standpoint, it was like, the *Quaker* needs to go down there with one barge. And that's pretty much the end of that.

Now the *Mustang* was a twin screw tugboat. And we would go, but after about a year or so of doing this, I can't say I really got comfortable with it, but it was our job. You know? We were taking these two barges primarily down to Lee's Creek, which is in the Pamlico River in North Carolina, or to Hopewell, Virginia, loading fertilizer. So yeah, after a year, like I say, I worked for him for six years and so, from year two to year six, it was kind of, you know, it was part of the deal. I knew how to, I knew when to start making my turn to actually make the turns, you know? (Laughter) That sort of thing, you know? I knew when I needed to start stopping to actually stop by the time I get to the dock, you know? All that sort of stuff. Pay attention to the tides and all the stuff that I needed to know to successfully do the boat, you know. It was about a year and a half.

M.Z.: Well I guess, like you said, what Denny said, you know, it's always true kind of like in whatever life circumstance you find yourself in, you learn by doing, you learn step by step, put one foot in front of the other. But when you're operating a tug and you've got these barges, I mean, the consequences are potentially pretty big of making a mistake. So the stakes are pretty high.

M.G.: You can't do that now. In fact, there's not really, there might be, I think maybe the Ward Brothers and maybe Apple is still in business down south. There's not really any mom and pop tugboat outfits. They've been squeezed out by the insurance requirements, if nothing else. You know?

M.Z.: So here on the Bay, there's not really mom and pop? I was wondering about that. Like what stage the industry is in now. You hear about Vane Brothers and some of these others, and Moran. How do you pronounce it? Mor-in?

M.G.: Mor-an. Yeah.

M.Z.: Mor-an? That used to be Blue Diamond, you said, right?

M.G.: Well, no. Blue Diamond was a subsidiary of Moran. Moran's a very large tugboat company. Primarily ship docking. They do have some, they have a fleet of tugs, of

barges, oil barges. And they might even have some container barges or some dry cargo barges. But they're primarily harbor tugs.

M.Z.: So, but, for the most part, in the Chesapeake now, the mom and pop outfits have gone by the wayside?

M.G.: Yeah, well, I'm not where I see 'em too much anymore, but I would say, yeah. But there has to be somebody still going up and servicing Cargill's up in Seaford and Perdue, because, I mean, the fact is that it's just the, barges are just the cheapest way to transport bulk products. By far, you know?

M.Z.: So I guess this area, Chesapeake and Delmarva, with all of the chicken industry and then the corn and the soybean production, you're talking tugs and barges moving that stuff around. And fertilizer. And that's part of what you were involved with with Denny. Is that right?

M.G.: Right. Yeah.

M.Z.: And then you also had the steel and rock. So can you kind of paint a picture of that for me, 'cause like I told you, I talked to Jack Austin the other day, and he's doing, you know, petroleum products, and that's what you're doing now. But can you sort of paint a picture of tug life in the Chesapeake and moving those kind of bulk commodities. And sort of what your experience with that was and maybe more generally, how that works. Like, you go from where to where. You pick up stuff —

M.G.: Yeah. Well, just to say, just take a one-run thing here. We were primarily moving in and out of Seaford. Seaford, Delaware. Going up the Nanticoke River. So if we pick up the barges, let's say we have two empty barges up there in Seaford. We would put these two barges together up there. They were square stern. So the rakes were, they were butted up stern to stern. So the bows were, like, on the other end like that. And we're using these ratchets and you make these things all together. So it probably took maybe three hours, probably three and a half hours to just put the tow together. And then you're getting pushing gear on these things and then you take them out the river.

Now we're going out to, say we're going to Hopewell for fertilizer. Ammonium sulfate is what we loaded there in Hopewell. So you had to hope for good weather so that you could push down the Bay because if you had bad weather coming up, which, and now you're going around, to go up to Hopewell, that's the James River, so you have to go around Thimble, which is basically the mouth of the Bay. Swells. You can't push anything over about two-and-a-half foot seas, really, two-foot seas, depending. A foot-and-a-half groundswell will make your toes curl around your seat, you know? Boy, you're hoping it's only like an hour and a half, but that hour and a half will bust up your tow. Now you'll have loose barges all over the Bay, you know? That's not a good thing.

So if it's bad weather, now because these two barges are end-on-end, you have to screw around with these things to get 'em so that they're bow-to-bow with, we have straps from

the port bow of one to the port stern of the other, starboard bow of one to the starboard stern of the other. These straps are maybe sixty or seventy feet long. Very stretchy, big nylon. They were Samson lines, was really the nice stuff that we had. Probably, I don't know, they must have been nine-inch Samson line. So they would absorb a lot of shock. That, going from pushing gear to getting into towing mode with a hawser, probably would take anywhere from forty-five minutes to an hour-and-a-half just doing that.

And then, when you get around to wherever you're going, into Hampton Roads, now you have to get it back into pushing gear again to go on up to Hopewell. So you're putting 'em together, now you're fooling around with the ratchets, getting 'em to where you can go up the James River to get to Hopewell. Okay, so now you get the bar—assuming that you can go straight into the loading dock, because more often than not, we would have to go to a lay birth and wait for the whatever ship or other barge or whatever was loading there, to get out of the way. So you would shift the barges, barges, it's a very long dock. So we could put two barges in there at the same time. Break the barges down again because you can only load one barge at a time and as they, you know, the draft is going to change.

Somebody's got to slide the hatches. There were four hatches on each barge. That was the tugboat's job. So as this—and we were also in charge of making sure that they didn't overload the barge and they loaded each compartment of the barge properly, because the trim thing became an issue. You had the, it was a little bit tricky to get to know how much product to put in each cargo containment to have the trim come out right. If it rained, you had to stop loading, close the hatches up, wait for it to stop raining, open up the hatches again—

M.Z.: Hang on. Hang on. So that could really delay things, I mean like the weather we've been having.

M.G.: Oh yeah. Oh, it would be days. Oh we could, with the two barges, we could take days loading them, loading the barges. Yeah. And each barge carried, I want to say, it was, they were basically overloaded at 1,800 tons. They really, I think, if we were going up the coast the ABS, see the ABS only counts for the Plimsoll marks on the side, the little circle thing with the bars on 'em? That's only for going up the coast. So we could overload the barges, assuming that the product—something like corn, you couldn't put enough product in there to get it down to the marks anyway, so it was always light because it's a fairly light product. You know, the volume was more than the weight of the stuff.

But fertilizer, you could overload the barge. So we would load each barge 1,800 tons, a little bit over 1,800 tons. Thirty-two hundred tons, two barges, going up to Seaford. Now we've loaded the barges, got the hatches all closed, you secure her for sea. Because there's these, the hatches rolled on these steel wheels that were like a carriage-kind-of assembly with another ratchet, basically, another turnbuckle. And you would jack the wheels up or down to stop or to make the hatch covers roll. These hatch covers probably weighed twelve tons apiece.

M.Z.: No kidding.

M.G.: We're talking about a pretty massive piece of steel here, you know? So you're sliding these things around and then you get 'em in position, then you lower the, with the, we're doing all this with a four-man crew. It's just the mate, you know, the mate on the mate's watch and the deckhand doing it all. Or the captain. And it was like, generally, you didn't get somebody on the off watch, 'cause you're already working twelve hours a day. You get into a situation where something really bizarre comes up, and you have to get the off crew up to do work, you're getting into a, you know, it's not a good idea to be up for eighteen or twenty-four hours at a time when you're moving this stuff around. You know. So you really try and adhere to the six-on-six-off schedule. At least, I do.

So you get these things secured for sea, you get, you know, the hatches all in position, down, in pushing gear. The two barges end-for-end. Down the Bay you go. Check the weather. If the weather's too bad, you really can't go up the Bay anyway. Because the break in seas, these hatch covers, you know, they're pretty good, but they're not a 100 percent. And if you get a driving sea going into those seals for the hatches, that sea water'll get into whatever product you've got and it'll basically ruin the cargo. And that, you know, this is fairly valuable stuff, you know, as far as fertilizer.

So with the *Mustang*, we were moving, I think we would, with these two barges, we would move at about six knots in still water, something like that. And the trick there was to catch the flood tide at Wolf Trap. If we caught the flood in, and we were in pushing gear—you lose, man, we would go down to, like, three knots if we had to tow these loaded barges. Because it's just so, it's waterline length. It's just more streamlined to push these, push this thing. And to be in pushing gear on the whole rig. If you have to split 'em up and you're towing at the end of a 600-foot hawser with these two barges with straps in between 'em, there's so much more drag. Your speed basically cuts in half. Plus you're raising your towing because it's rough weather, so that's going to slow you down too, just beating into seas and stuff like that.

But if you're in pushing gear at Wolf Trap, catch the beginning of the flood tide, we would get up to Seaford carrying that same flood tide all the way up to Seaford. That's like eighteen hours, it'd be. Because the tide moves up the Bay. As a matter of fact, I've checked it out. It moves up the Bay at eleven-and-a-quarter knots. (Laughter) So if you catch the beginning, you're losing, you know, you're losing that magical six hour of flood tide, but you're not losing it that much. So you're basically, you're carrying it for eighteen hours.

You could do it. We did it all the time, you know? Because basically, we were just treading water. If we had the ebb tide, we're going there, we weren't making any time anyway. Basically, you're just sitting in position waiting for the flood tide anyway. We were basically, all that we were doing was just suggesting to the barges the direction we wanted to go, you know? It was really, nature was deciding where we were going, you know? (Laughter)

I mean, 800 horsepower with 3,200 tons of product, and each barge weighed 883 tons, I believe. So we're talking about some serious weight here and not really a whole lot of hor—the horsepower-to-weight thing wasn't really there, you know?

M.Z.: I don't know if this is going to make sense to you, but something that I find very interesting about this whole business is the way that the tugs and the tug industry is this kind of intermediary between some very, like, country, rural, natural stuff. You have the, I mean, we can look out our window right here and see the corn growing or the soybean. The combines, as you know, are going through right now to harvest it. And then, you know, that natural product is used for kind of industrial purposes and there you guys are kind of being the intermediary to move it, you know, in between storage to storage, you know, where it's actually being used for something. And yet, even when you're out there doing this kind of industrial function, you're working with the tides and the weather and again you're kind of really immersed, as you just said, in nature, and trying to work with nature. You have to work with nature, not against it. And it's just kind of an interesting combination of things. Do you know what I mean? Is that making sense?

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah, I know what you're saying, but, and it's because it's not a, yeah, I mean, it's very, I mean I can sit up there in my wheelhouse. Now I'm, the boat I'm on now is pretty nice. I mean, in fact, basically, the wheelhouse has got its own dedicated air conditioner. I've got my own heating, I've got my own thermostat and everything up there. So I'm sitting there and I go up there with my cup of coffee and go, "Oh man, it's really snowing out there." You know? It looks bad, you know? I'll have to throw another log on the fire or something here, you know? And each of those engines is burning sixty-two gallons of fuel an hour. You know? I'm going through 120 gallons of fuel an hour going where I'm going. You know? That just, I continue to be amazed at that. You know?

And I'm moving petroleum now, but I don't even know what the fuel consumption was on the *Quaker* and the *Mustang*. But, yeah. It's kind of a, yeah, you're with nature and you're around nature, but you're also basically, we're there to essentially abuse nature is what we're doing, you know? Because it's an industrial thing. I mean, we're doing, everything that we were doing was basically an insult to nature. You know? I mean, really. The fuel consumption, stirring up the water. I always thought, because the Nanticoke is really a beautiful river to go up and down. I mean, it's really, thirty-seven miles from the number one Nanticoke up to Seaford.

So when you're taking a loaded barge up there, and these two barges, 195-foot long, 35-foot wide, we're up there, I think we would take probably a ten-and-a-half-foot draft. And we would go up there, depending on the run, maybe twice a week, certainly no less than once a week. We're taking these loaded barges up there. Now we're taking, they're unloading the barges up there, so this huge volume of barge is coming out—we're making a suction, is what I'm getting to here—at the head of this freshwater ecosystem.

I've often, 'cause I know we're filling that channel, we're basically pushing a wall of water as we're going up the Nanticoke River with this load. You're not really, it's probably a ninety-foot-wide channel, and we're using every bit of that ninety-foot in some of those turns, you know? So I'm wondering how did that, where was the saline, the border for freshwater and saltwater. Was that affected by these barges making a vacuum up in Seaford, you know? Is it affecting that haline line, you know? I've always wondered. Probably not, but—

M.Z.: That's an interesting question, though.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: I mean, how does it make you feel when you say, "We're basically abusing nature"? Does it bother you or do you feel like well, you know, you've got to break a few eggs to make an omelet? Is that how it goes? I mean—

M.G.: Yeah, it's pretty much. You know, it's all what, you know, I mean, you can have all the guys all running back and forth on their recumbent bicycles and all that kind of stuff all you want, but as long as you're going to live in an industrial society, as long as you're going to continue to insist on having cheap gas for your car, you're gonna have people like me moving that and providing those products for your lifestyle that you've chosen to have.

M.Z.: Yeah. It's just part of the fabric of our—

M.G.: That's what you get, you know? Yeah, if you want to change it, then change it. But you're gonna be, you know. You're not going to have your Frigidaire washer and dryer over there, you know? Because you're not going to be able to afford the electricity for it. So, you know, it's whatever you want. I mean, I try and, you know, I mean I'm doing the cutting wood for the wood burning fireplace and trying to do the renewable thing as much as you know, recycling and doing all that stuff. But it's an industrial society we live in, so you might as well just figure on dealing with it. You know?

M.Z.: Yeah. And I think that's going to be one of the interesting things about this exhibit, I hope, is that, you know, it's such a essential part of our daily life, the kind of work that you're doing. But it's also kind of invisible. Even though they're so big, you know, it's something that I think—

M.G.: They're under the radar. Definitely.

M.Z.: Exactly.

M.G.: And it's so efficient. I mean, you can say, well, rail. There's one, this 195-foot barge would fill twenty-five railcars with product. So you're talking about with the two barges, that's a fifty-railcar train that we are delivering, and we can do it quicker. The railroad apparently, and I thought they would get stuff quicker to wherever they were going, like

say from Texas to have a, say you wanted 3,200 tons of product to go from Texas to Philadelphia. The railroad will not, not only is it more expensive to have the railroad do it, but they will also take a longer period of time than a barge getting it there. So it's cheaper and quicker for a barge to deliver product. Assuming that you have the port that can provide the loading and discharge facilities for the product that you're talking about. By cheaper, like, I mean 25 percent, you know? Of what a rail cost would be. Way cheaper.

M.Z.: That's significant, yeah. And so, the barges are kind of more connected to the trucking system on land than to the railroad system. Is that right? I mean, how is the grain getting to these ports? Or the, whatever, product? Whatever bulk product?

M.G.: Well, I mean, this guy is loading, you know, he's taking his combine and he's dumping his corn into a tractor-trailer and then hauling it up to some grain elevator somewhere. And I know in the case of Seaford, the trucks would come in and they have these, it's kind of neat to watch it. I mean, these trucks pull in and they just, they have like this hydraulic thing that just dump, the whole rig just goes up in the air and the back just dumps out and then it's like screw augers that take it up to the grain elevator, and they dry it and I don't know, whatever it is the grain elevators do to grain. You know, they process it somewhat and make it more economically, you know, valuable. And then it gets dumped in the barges or railcars. Uh-huh.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. So it is railcars as well that are delivering.

M.G.: Yeah, our competition is basically rail. You know, you have to say well, and that was recognized even at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, it was recognized that the railroads were going to be interfering with waterborne traffic whenever possible because it was to their advantage. Because they had a disadvantage economically, you know? So that's why waterborne traffic has always got right-of-way. Railroads have to open up their bridges to waterborne traffic. It was federal law.

M.Z.: And it comes from that kind of original competition?

M.G.: Because the railroad could say no, you can't get through here because we've got a train coming. You know? We can't open for you. And they might hold it up for days or something, you know, just to screw with the waterborne traffic, just to make it more attractive to the customers to have their product delivered by rail. And they can't do that, you know?

M.Z.: Uh-huh. So let's get back to your story then. So there you are, getting this kind of crash course training on Denny Berg's vessels and you were with him for eight years, you said? Or six years?

M.G.: Six years. Yeah, it was about six years.

M.Z.: Six years. And it took you about a year before you started feeling comfortable.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Did you move up to being captain while you were working for him, or did that come later?

M.G.: Oh yeah. Yeah, I was probably, I mean, I was—well, we were working twenty-and-ten. So what that is, is you, for every, because you have a captain and a mate on the boat and then somebody off in that ten day period. So the relief captain is, he's a captain for ten days and then he's a mate for ten days. You've got a captain and then a mate and then a relief captain who's, like, captain a little bit and mate a little bit. So, yeah, I was, I probably got, it was probably two years I was relief captain. Yeah.

And then I guess I became captain. We moved around so much. If you had the two boats running, I was captain. And if one boat was broke down, I was relief captain. And it just moved around. And it doesn't really much matter because the mate just, he runs the boat on the mate's watch, and the captain runs the boat on the captain's watch. The difference is that if something bad happens, the mate can go down and knock on the captain's door and say, "We got a problem." You know? The captain can't do that. That's really about the only difference. You know? Which is actually significant, but, you know. (Laughter)

M.Z.: But for day-to-day, you're doing the same work basically.

M.G.: I find that the biggest, because I've, the kind I worked, they were just two or three days this last time, the last time I was off, I was three days' late getting home because I had to work over as mate on one of the other boats. The quality of the—and this is in New York Harbor—the quality of the people that you're dealing with on the mate's watch is, because now you're dealing with, it's industry-wide standard is the mate's watch is from twelve to six, you know?

So when you're working from twelve to six, you're dealing with mates. So where did those mates come from? You know? How much experience do they have? And it's a, sometimes it's really noticeable. You can really tell the difference between, you know, working on the captain's watch, you kind of get used to it, because, you know, I'm used to just being around other captains and everybody kind of knows what they need to do and where they need to be and all that kind of stuff. You don't necessarily get that when you're running on the mate's watch, you know? (Laughter)

M.Z.: So those aren't necessarily folks that are coming out of these Marine academies and whatnot, then. Is it, I mean, can you describe that? What the crews are like these days? Who's getting into the industry? Just a kind of mix, variety of people?

M.G.: Yeah, yeah. It's a variety. I mean, we do have people, we have a mate trainee program with Vane Bro, active mate trainee program. I think they probably have maybe three guys at any given time that are working their way through the trainee program. A lot of

them are maritime academy graduates that fill those spots which makes the—well I came up, what's called come up through the hawse pipe. You know? I started out as a deckhand AB and then worked my, I didn't have any really formal maritime academy training or anything like that, you know?

So it's almost like the guys that want to really be in the industry and want to get a wheelhouse position are being squeezed out because there's so many of these maritime academy graduates that also are looking to get into the industry. And they've kind of gotten a bad reputation. It doesn't really seem to, you know? I have to say, more often than not, it really doesn't work out with the—they have to really be focused. They have to be focused before they even go to the maritime academy as freshman, as eighteen-year-olds, knowing that they want to go in the industry on the tugboat, and they're gonna have to put their four years in at that maritime academy. Don't see that very often. You know? I'd say probably two out of ten.

M.Z.: So they generally have their sights set on something fancier, something with more prestige?

M.G.: They're looking for a free education. You know. Kings Point's free.

M.Z.: No kidding. Huh.

M.G.: Yeah. You've got to, it's just like the Naval Academy. You know, your congressman, you know. It's political, you know. Well some of them, I don't even know how they work. Maine Maritime and Massachusetts and Fort Schuyler, which is uh—

M.Z.: New York.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: In the Bronx.

M.G.: SUNY, must be—

M.Z.: SUNY something.

M.G.: State University of New York, or something like that?

M.Z.: Yes, that's what SUNY is, yeah.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: So what kind of jobs are they expecting? They're not expecting to work in tugs? What are they expecting to do when they get out of those academies?

M.G.: Well, apparently, you can go, you have two different career paths. You can go into the engine room or you can go into the wheelhouse. And if you go the engineering route at these maritime academies, you're pretty much qualified to run a power plant. Steam turbines and all that kind of stuff, you know? And they can weld and refrigeration. It's a pretty good technical background that they have. But the wheelhouse, I don't know what they do to tell you the truth. You know? It's mind boggling. Because they teach, like, the ship stuff, and I mean, I've gone to these—because I have to go to school now for radar and it's, like, every five years I gotta do something stupid, you know.

So, periodically, and I went to advanced firefighting I guess, is the last time I had to deal with ship people. It's just amazing to watch these guys in action. Because inevitably, what happens is you have a class of twenty or twenty-five people running through these things and it's a hands-on. I mean, they actually have, you know, you're in a classroom situation and this alarm goes off and then you got to go out 'cause they have a mockup of a ship out in the backyard. And you've got to put out the fire.

Invariably, it's the tugboat guys that end up taking, putting the fire out. Because the ship guys, they move in herds, you know? With a ship, you've got eighteen to twenty-five people on the ship and, I mean, it's the old story is, you know, "Yeah, I was in my room and the fan blade was dirty so I took the screen off the fan to wipe off the blades to get the dust off of it and the ship electrician found out about it and he basically filed a complaint, a union complaint because that was his overtime that he wasn't getting because I cleaned off the fan blades." That sort of thing, you know. That's what you get with the ship stuff.

M.Z.: Yeah.

M.G.: And that's why you don't have an American fleet in ships, too. They just go to Panamanian registry or what have you. You know?

M.Z.: Uh-huh. So, as far as you are concerned, you'd rather be working with people who came up through, what did you say? Through the hawse pipe?

M.G.: Hawse pipe. Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yes I would. Because they're committed. They're focused on doing, you know, they know what the deal is.

M.Z.: And they've encountered more real world situations and they know how to deal with it?

M.G.: Right. You can go ahead and tell them they need to go down there and splice that bad spot out of that line or whatever, and they know how to do it. You know? Whereas, I mean, maybe they teach that at the maritime academy, but then the guy's just liable to turn around and says, "I spent four years getting my license; I'm not splicing line." You know? I don't need that.

M.Z.: So do you feel like, in retrospect, that you, appreciate the training that you got with Denny Berg?

M.G.: Oh yeah. Oh, there's no question about it. No question.

M.Z.: And what did you go on to after that?

M.G.: I went over to Salisbury Towing, pushing exclusively rock because they were a division of Arundel. At the same day that I joined Salisbury Towing, Arundel was being absorbed by Florida Rock. And now, Florida Rock has since been absorbed by Vulcan Materials. So, but it's all rock. Aggregates. Concrete and all that sort of stuff. So, I don't know how long I did that. Maybe three years. Three years I guess I, pushed rock around. From Havre de Grace, there's a quarry up there. You can see it when you go across the 95, when you're northbound on 95 and you look down there's a, you always see tugboats and some barges just right there on the south bank of Havre de Grace. Big quarry there. And they also had a quarry in Pocomoke and it was sand. Sand quarry. And so we would take sand out of there and Breton Bay on the Potomac River.

So just moving stuff around with that. I ended up on the *Nighthawk* with them, which is another wire boat. Multi-barge tows coming out of Pocomoke up to Brooklyn Park. They have a plant up there. At the time, they were building the, I think it was the Orioles' stadium, so there was a lot of concrete there. There was a lot of sand and rock and stuff. Had to go in there for that. So did that, and then, I think that was '92, '93, it was like, well, another recession. That was it. Laid off. And then I turned right around and got a job in the oil industry, oil side of it. And I found out how much money I was leaving on the table. Because that's where the money is, is pushing oil around, you know? Because the risk is, it's like I tell my kids, you know, it's like if you're talking about making money, is the more responsibility you have, the more money you're gonna make. That's how it goes. You pick your level of comfort and stick with it, you know?

M.Z.: So that was in the nineties that you got into that?

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: In the mid-nineties?

M.G.: Uh-huh.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. And that's what you've been doing ever since?

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: And with Vane the whole time?

M.G.: No. Originally, that was with Compass Marine. And basically, being absorbed, Compass, and basically being absorbed, a whole bunch of other companies too. They've really become a significant force in the—since I've been there, eighteen years, I think it's eighteen. I'm in my eighteenth year now, with Vane Brothers.

M.Z.: Overall, do you like working for them?

M.G.: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

M.Z.: It's a good company?

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: And would you say, in general, you know, this career that you chose, back then, has it been pretty satisfying for you?

M.G.: Yeah. Yeah, because you know, I know that I can, you know, if something happened, if I didn't want to—basically, I could get a job back with Salisbury Towing if I wanted to. You know, at this point. So, and it's a lot less because now instead of, you know, worrying about rupturing a barge and having an oil spill or something like that, I could be with Salisbury Towing and just dump a load of rock somewhere. You know? Basically, I'm just improving the bottom, is what I'm doing. I'm making a oyster habitat, you know, if I have a, you know, I'll probably get a letter of commendation for doing that, you know? (Laughter)

M.Z.: That's funny. So yeah, if you get to a point or an age where you just don't want so much responsibility, you can kind of take a step back and go on a lower-level thing. Maybe less pay, but—

M.G.: I had a deckhand, he just recently retired. And what it was, it was basically his health got too, he had health issues. But, he worked for Vane's predecessor up in Philly, Maritrans. He was a mate on a big tugboat going up and down the coast, and he did that for years. And as he got older, he was my deckhand. He still, he kept up a 1,600 ton license, you know? But he was my AB on the boat. And it was great. I just handed the grub money over to him, he did the shopping, he kept both tours of the deck crew, sort of what needed painting and maintaining and everything. Oh, it was wonderful, you know? And he was just sliding through. He just, basically, just didn't want to be home. You know? He wanted to work on a tugboat. So everybody—it was wonderful, you know? I really miss him.

M.Z.: He wanted the money coming in and he didn't want all the responsibility.

M.G.: I mean, yeah, sure, I mean everybody wants money coming in. But that wasn't his, the money wasn't the primary thing. It was keeping busy. He just liked being on a tugboat. He lives in Rock Hall.

M.Z.: Does he?

M.G.: Uh-huh. Yeah.

M.Z.: What's his name?

M.G.: Ed Black.

M.Z.: Ed Black. So, do you feel the same way? Like, would you say that about yourself? "I like being on a tugboat"?

M.G.: No. I mean, I'm on a ten-year countdown here now, you know? As far as retirement. But I do like being on a tugboat. And I would like to think that I could keep my name in the industry to work, you know, a week every couple months. Do something like that. Fill in for somebody going on vacation, or if they need somebody, I would do something like that. You know? But as far as—because I'm a little bit more interested, I can't really justify it, if I'm going to spend time on a tugboat, I'm going to go ahead and get the maximum amount of money that by being away from home, you know, I'm going to maximize my daily pay, you know? Is what I'm interested in.

M.Z.: Yeah.

M.G.: Otherwise, I'll run a trotline out here in Tilghman Creek, you know? (Laughter) Because that's really what I like doing anyway, you know?

M.Z.: Have you done that? Have you worked as a waterman?

M.G.: No. I mean, I've done a trotline, but I haven't collected any money for it. I've got the license for it and everything. I just haven't done it.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. Well you were, when we were talking in front of your house earlier today, you were saying that you're basically an antisocial person?

M.G.: Uh-huh.

M.Z.: So is that part of the factor where you'd say, "No, I don't really like working on a tugboat"? I mean, what, um—

M.G.: No, I do like working on a tugboat.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. Well, when I was asking you about Ed Black, I asked you, do you feel the same way, would you say that about yourself, that you just like being on a tugboat?

M.G.: Oh.

M.Z.: But, so you meant more like, as you get older, as you retire, you wouldn't be interested in just working as a deckhand.

M.G.: No. Right. Yeah, that's what I meant. Right.

M.Z.: But you would say that yeah, you like being on a tugboat.

M.G.: Yeah. I like it, in a way. And I like going up and down the coast. Not up and down the coast. I like going up and down the Bay. You know? Is really what I like doing.

M.Z.: What is it that you like about that? And why do you like that and you don't like going up and down the coast?

M.G.: I like watching sunsets and sunrises. You know? I like watching the water. And with a wire boat as opposed to having a hawser, I mean, you know, I just string the barge out behind me and I don't really have any, you know, the boats all have autopilot and stuff, and you're basically, you're just kind of like a watch stander capacity. You're just watching and making sure that nothing let's go, you know?

You're not really, at least at the stage of the level that I'm at, you know, I'm not really putting a whole lot of effort into the operation. I'm just kind of like playing with all my electronic things, you know? I'm changing the gain on the radar or moving my chart plotter in and out and, you know, changing the routes and double-checking the light characteristics of some lighthouse somewhere. You know? That's all the stuff that I kind of enjoy doing.

M.Z.: And then just being able to see the river and see, like you say, the sunsets and—

M.G.: Yeah. And I'm away from, you know, I have my own little world, you know? It's just me and another four guys, you know? That's it. And really, only another one or two guys, because two of the guys are always in bed so I never even see them half the time, you know?

M.Z.: So you said that you're an antisocial person and you're comfortable with that?

M.G.: Oh, yeah.

M.Z.: And this is a good setting for your kind of personality.

M.G.: Right. Yeah. And I think that's true of most people that spend it, that have a career—there's some exceptions. A friend of mine, he amazes me every time I'm around him. Just a gregarious, outgoing guy. And on his time off, he runs the *Spirit of Philadelphia* up there. He runs a dinner boat, you know? And he does the, he calls it the Captain Stubing thing, you know? He's got the hat and all the, you know, and he just loves it. You know? So there's exceptions, there's no hard and fast rules. That's his thing, and really, I can't imagine developing a personality to do that, you know? I'm just amazed every time I'm around him and I see that, you know? So.

M.Z.: Well there's so many different kinds of people in the world, you know. Thank God, I guess. (Laughter)

M.G.: Yeah. That's right.

M.Z.: So, when you're with such a small number of people, what is that like? I mean, does it become a kind of family, or does it sort of depend on who ends up on the boat, or—can you talk about that a little bit? What the relationships are like?

M.G.: It's family. And one of the irksome things that, because we've become a corporation, now we have a human resources department, two years ago, you know, it's just like, somebody got the how to be human resources. And so, now we have these yearly, these annual evaluation forms that I, because I'm the department head of the boat, you know, being the captain, now I have to do a eval—and it's this form letter. You know, the good things that they've done, the bad things.

You've seen these things, right? They're just a standardized human resources for every corporate Amer—but we're talking tugboat crew here. These guys are my family. I'm with them just as much as I am with my regular family. If I'm working two-and-two, that automatically means that half of my time is with these guys. And I'm supposed to pretend like this has any meaning for any—it really ticked me off seriously.

So I basically, the first time I was required to fill it out, I told, it was like, the engineer was bald, so I suggested he go sees, you know, Hair for Men, you know. And the one guy was overweight, and he needed to get hooked up with, you know, the girl that's lost fifty pounds on TV. One guy's a Tangerine, and I says, "These English as second languages is" you know, and that all came back. And then, because I'm supposed to be evaluated by my, by the port captain. (Laughter) And I was on another boat at the time.

We were running up and down the coast and we never, you know, I'm doing all this by fax, but you have to, you know, I mean I could do my crew because I was there, but for me to get my evaluation, the face to face thing wasn't going to happen because we were never face-to-face. So I just took it upon myself to fill my own out, you know? I said, "Here." You know, I signed it and everything and says, "Here, you can use this one." And it was like, you know, borderline, psychotic, schizophrenic, sexually repressed and recommend having a female deckhand and all this kind of stuff on there. He made a face-to-face on that one. (Laughter)

So it was like, I found pretty early on that there's the sense of humor and, because, and it's still, here's like the last one that I went to. We went through the thing, and it's like, okay, where do I sign? You know? And he says, "Okay, I'll make a copy for you if you want." And it was like, I thought we had established that this doesn't mean anything to me. Don't give me a copy of this. You know? Just file it away wherever you're gonna.

You know, I've been hired, I'll probably work for a half a dozen different outfits in the, I guess, twenty-nine years that I've been in the industry. And mostly, I've been hired by phone. I haven't really even, you know, I say I have a license, I guess I fax them a copy of my license or whatever and they say, "Okay, the boat's down there in Norfolk. Be there. Be there at eight o'clock in the morning, tomorrow morning." You know? That's

how it goes. Because it's my license that's getting hired, you know? And if I haven't screwed the pooch anywhere, it's a very small culture and the word gets out.

So I don't need this yearly evaluation thing. It just irks the poop out of me. (Laughter) Because it's pointless. These guys are my family. If they didn't work out, I wouldn't need that evaluation. I would just have them off the boat. I don't need an evaluation to make that happen. You know? So what's your point?

M.Z.: I guess that's one of the, like, ironies of these—you know you're working in petroleum. Things are bound to get kind of corporatized, you know, as everything sort of consolidates and that's how they make their money, right? By becoming a bigger and bigger entity.

M.G.: And exactly. And that's what it is, that's always the—whatever line of bullshit comes down, it's always like, well, it's what our customers are requiring. And it's exactly it.

M.Z.: But even as the technology changes and the corporations change, I guess a lot of the just daily life reality on board the tug kind of stays the same as the old days. I mean, I'm sure all the navigation, all the electronics, everything that you have now, is a whole different world. But some of the day-to-day life, it stays the same.

M.G.: Right. It's the same. You're working, you know, you've got the engineer that floats around and makes sure, you know, more often than not, he goes—well, of course, now we don't really have too many light bulbs, they're all LED and all these CFL things. So, you know. But anyway, the engineer goes around, changes fuses and keeps things running just like it's always been. And you know, you've got the captain's watch relieving the mate's watch and it's like deciding what the big—calorie intake is an issue, I mean, we eat well on the boat. So you don't really want to have—Denny was always big on, he always had three meals a day. But we worked, we were, there was a lot of grunt labor involved. We burned some calories with that operation. You know, you're jacking these hatches and doing all that kind of stuff.

But doing what we're doing on these oil barges, you were doing an awful lot of sitting around and you know, the eating thing, it's like we have one hot meal a day, so, and that's pretty much the way it's always been, you know, you decide well who's going to, are we going to have the big meal for lunch? Which means that the captain's watch deckhand would do the cooking, or we have dinner, which means the mate's watch deckhand would do the cooking. That's, like, the big issue. But it's just, like, you know, pull out the chicken and throw it in the oven. You know? I mean, come on.

That's how it's, 'cause this new boat that I'm on, you know, it got all crewed up in May, so we're all new guys. You know, boom, there's five guys, don't know each other. One, my mate is from New Hampshire, my engineer is from upstate New York. I brought my deckhand over with me from Portsmouth. And my other deckhand is from Secretary. So, you know you gather them all together and say, "Okay, well whose watch am I going to be on?" And it's like, "Who can cook?" You know? (Laughter) And if you can cook,

okay, you're on the mate's watch, we'll have the dinner as the big meal of the day. Okay. And that's how it goes. And that must've been how it's always been. You know?

M.Z.: Yeah. Yeah. If you're not family to start, you're family by the end.

M.G.: Sure. Yeah.

M.Z.: So, I know we've been talking for a while and you probably want to get on with your life, but just maybe to wrap things up, how has it been for your family at home to have this kind of lifestyle? Maybe I'll talk to Karen about this some other time. But has that been, was that a difficult adjustment for you all, or—

M.G.: It wasn't an adjustment at all. Because that's all my kids have known.

M.Z.: So for them, it's just normal to have Dad home for two week and off for two weeks.

M.G.: Because I always made a point of, 'cause I was off for two weeks. I could always go off and do something and in the summer, we could do anything. Anywhere, anytime. You know? And I always did stuff, you know?

M.Z.: Were you ever able to take the kids or did you ever want to take the kids on the boat? Did they get to experience the actual life or were they—

M.G.: No. You know, no. They—I'm trying to think. There's an issue now with the oil. You know, you can't—and it's also a, you know, having guests on the boat. Basically it's frowned on because of the, just the insurance liability situation. You know? But they never really showed much—because I have a sailboat, you know, it's like, we always, when I was home, if we wanted to go out on the water, we'd take them out on the boat for a week. You know?

M.Z.: Yeah. So how about Karen? Has she gone on board at all?

M.G.: Yeah, she's made a couple trips with me.

M.Z.: Yeah. And does she feel pretty proud of you? And your kids? Do they feel proud of you for the work you've done?

M.G.: No, she doesn't care. (Laughter) You know? I'm with the kids and made a comment, something, a comment, one of my kids at one point in time, talking about, you know, I'm like alpha waterman, you know, as far as their peer—you know what their parents did at St. Michaels or whatever, you know?

M.Z.: Oh, really?

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: So, like, compared to watermen and stuff, you're—

M.G.: Watermen make excellent tugboat crew because they are, for one thing, they're used to being on the water. They know what a bowline looks like, you know? That's a big benefit. You don't have to explain that to them. And they just understand the general concept, you know? Basically, I think, not so much Tilghman, but Tangier Island down there in Virginia, probably, we have to have 80 percent of the male population has to be working for Vane Brothers on that island. It's an incredible number of Tangiermen that are with, if they're not with Vane Brothers, then they're with Express Marine or one or two other fairly local outfits.

M.Z.: So it's becoming more and more of an option for them as the commercial fishing becomes—

M.G.: Oh yeah. It should be, if they had any sense. But—

M.Z.: And what did you say before? Tangiermen? So they speak English as a second language? Is that what you said?

M.G.: You ever been around any Tangerines? Yeah. (Laughter) Oh yeah.

M.Z.: That's funny. And that, so when they get out on the tugboats, you said they make really good deckhands. So they tend to feel pretty comfortable right from the get go? With the whole thing?

M.G.: Yeah. Well they, because they've grown up in that culture because so many of their uncles and cousins and brothers have been on tugboats, they know what the deal is, you know? Because they've been around that culture, more or less.

M.Z.: So this isn't a new phenomenon? This is something that's been for awhile that people kind of shift from being watermen, being tugboats, they kind of do both? Or is it more recent?

M.G.: Well, I think that it's a tough thing to abandon being a waterman. You know? I mean, these guys are really hanging on. You know? Because they're in business for themselves. But, you know, wake up and smell the coffee, dude. There's no crabs, no oysters, what are you gonna do?

M.Z.: Yeah.

M.G.: And the thing with the Tangier, because they have that ferry, you know, they can't, it's not like they can have it, I mean, where are they gonna go? Crisfield? To get a nine-to-five job somewhere? So they can live on their island, what they more often than not have inherited. They have this pretty nice house that's prone to flooding, you know, but it's a pretty nice place to live. And a community that, you know, just a tight—talk about a family! I mean, those people are so interconnected, it's unbelievable, you know? So,

and this, by being on the tugboat, they can, because they only have to deal with the getting on and off the mainland once every two weeks. It makes since, you know, for them.

M.Z.: Yeah. And it makes since for the industry, too, it sounds like. You know, to have these guys working for them because the learning curve isn't as steep.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Somebody mentioned to me that there have, over the years, the term waterman has applied to both tugboat people and, like, you know, commercial fishing people. I don't know if that's true. Have you ever heard that?

M.G.: Uh-uh.

M.Z.: Yeah. That sounded—

M.G.: Waterman is an old English term for, basically, ferrymen, as I understand the genesis of the term, it came over from Thames River ferrymen and stuff like that. Actually, there were watermen that made their lives, you know, ferrying people or doing different things around the Thames River in London. And that term just carried over to just the generic sort of term for what a waterman is on the Chesapeake Bay, you know? I don't see the tugboat, I don't see that.

M.Z.: You've never heard that. It's never used. Yeah, it surprised me that that was brought up 'cause I didn't think that that would be the same kind of, well it's not the same kind of work. You know, I was wondering about, I've interviewed a lot of commercial fishing people, mostly down in Florida. And there's that sense of independence that you just brought up. You know. And that's a lot of, as you know, a lot of what they value about the work that they do.

And so I was wondering how, and it seems like it affects a lot how they kind of look at the sea itself, you know. It's like this place that they're very familiar with, very comfortable with. It's almost like an extension of their home for them. And they feel that kind of connection to it. And of course it's their source of livelihood. But what is that like for you working in the tug industry? I mean, I guess you don't have the same, I would imagine you don't have the same sense of independence because you're working for somebody else.

M.G.: No. Yeah, I'm an employee. You know? I'm basically a, you know, I mean, I'm getting a daily rate, you know? And I mean, you know, it's strictly as I get paid for the days I work. You know? That's it. And if I want to take time, which I'm, basically, I mean, I'll take, I'm at the point now where I want to take a lot more time off because I just don't need to make all as much money as I'm making basically. (Laughter) So I, you know, improve the quality of life and just do my thing. But you were talking about being comfortable in whatever it is I'm doing. I've been, over the last ten years because this

company's expanded so much, I've found myself getting pushed more and more into basically pushing the envelope of my comfort level.

Because basically, all I want to do is run the Chesapeake Bay. That's really what I, you know, I really love—and when I first started working for Vane Brothers, that's what I was doing. I was doing an awful lot of moving black oil into Salisbury. And that's one of the reasons why I was hired is because I had all the recency for, I knew the Wicomico River so well, you know. 'Cause that's what I did for, like, three times a week for five years. And then as these boats, as Vane Brothers got bigger and bigger and bigger, their boats got bigger and bigger and bigger, and then all of a sudden, I'm moving up to Philadelphia. Then I'm moving up to New York. And then I'm moving up to, the boat that I just came off of before I got on my new boat in May, I was loading in Yorktown, Virginia, for Portland, Maine.

So all of those was getting out of my comfort level because I wasn't familiar with any of that area. You know? Now I've got recency for New Haven and New Bedford and Quincy and Boston and Newington in New Hampshire. All these places that I would just as soon not have ever experienced if I'd have had my choice, you know? But that's how it goes, you know?

M.Z.: Yeah. Yeah, that's just how the industry is going, I guess. How does it work then? You go, I mean is your, you always go meet your boat in the same place, or you're going all over?

M.G.: No. Well, I am now because we're basically stationed in New York. When I was on the *Endeavor*, the boat I was on previously, we would fly more often than not to wherever. You know, Providence or Boston or Portland.

M.Z.: And your barge gets loaded there with petroleum and then you're just delivering it to another depot someplace else?

M.G.: Yeah, but usually it loaded in, it would load – well with the *Endeavor*, going up to the New England—what we were doing was, it was a military contract for jet fuel. So we were always loading either at the depots either in Yorktown, which is the Coast Guard dock in Yorktown, or Craney Island, which is the Navy. One was Air Force and one was Navy for the product. One's JP-5 and one's JP-8 or something like that. And I don't really know what the differences are. But then we'd go up to whatever Air Force base needed fuel. Or Navy base.

M.Z.: And what is it now, with the, what is it? *Oyster Creek*? What are you doing with that? Not the same thing? It's not fuel?

M.G.: No. Bunkering ships. Putting fuel in ships.

M.Z.: So is that kind of, do you have to travel real long distances for that?

M.G.: No. Unh-uh. Forty-five minutes, an hour. Lots of times, 'cause it's New York. New York is just a whole 'nother ballgame. Getting dock space is an issue. To get the time allotted to load the barge. So quite often, we'll go ahead and position the barge, put the product in the barge, and then go off somewhere and then wait for the ship to show up. And that can be sometimes a couple days. Just sitting on product just waiting for the ship to show up. Because that was when we had the schedule, allowed us to get the fuel from the dock.

M.Z.: Uh-huh. It's kind of like airport traffic control.

M.G.: Yeah, well, dispatchers are definitely doing that. In fact, our dispatcher is a former air traffic controller. So he's, you know, yeah.

M.Z.: Huh. Interesting. Well yeah, I can see how you would miss working on the Bay. You know, compared to that.

M.G.: Oh, it's crazy out there. I mean it's just so—yeah, I mean it's good and the reason I got away from the *Endeavor*, I liked the boat, I liked everything about it. I liked the crew. Well, I took one of the crew with me. But I'm going offshore. It's like playing around with a—and when you run from Yorktown to Portland, it's probably, if everything goes right, you're talking with a loaded barge, it's a little bit over a week to get from Yorktown to Portland. And you're playing with different weather systems.

So I'm, you know, it was like when I'm scheduled, because you have to call up, you're required to have a pilot to go through Cape Cod Canal, so now you've got to work up an ETA, you've got to figure out what your tides are doing, you have to have calm to go through Hell Gate on the East River, you have to have calm. You know, you've got to schedule that for the right state of tide to go through there. I had the whole chart table filled up with either tide predictions or weather reports to figure out where I'm going and what I'm doing so I know in what order to call these people to make all this stuff happen, you know?

And it's like, why am I doing this? You know? And I'm not even making as much money as what I would be, because the pay scale is based on the horsepower of the tugs. So the *Endeavor* was a 2,200 horsepower tugboat. So it was like, tell me again why I'm doing this? So I put in for the, that's why I put in for the new boat. You know? So. 'Cause I had every intention of just staying on the *Endeavor* until retirement, is what my original plan was. Because, well just because. But as it turned out, you know, now I'm up in New York and I'm doing these one-hour or forty-five minute, hour-and-a-half moves of just intense concentration. I don't even want people up in the wheelhouse.

I don't want the deckhand or the engineer up there in the wheelhouse with me talking because I have three radios and they're all constantly blaring. I've got Vessel Traffic Control keeping track of what I'm doing. I've got ferries going back and forth that are throwing wakes into things. I have to be on top of them. You know? It's just a, it's a really intense work environment compared to what I could be doing just with my feet

kicked up on the board on autopilot going up and down the Chesapeake Bay, you know? But that's where the money is, so.

M.Z.: Well who know what you'll end up doing, you know, when you scale back. You can go back to the Bay and, you know.

M.G.: Right. Right. I'm probably not going to. You know? I'm probably just going to just walk right away from it at this point. Because, you know, the regula—everything has just gotten so, I've heard this all through my whole career, it says, "Eh, it's not as much fun as it used to be." You know? But it's really true. I mean, you can, just the paperwork that I have to do now is just, you know.

When I first got hired for Vane Brothers, there was the CEO made a big point of saying, "We know paperwork's a pain in the neck and we're not gonna require you to do it." Well, now they've got all these highfalutin companies. You know, Sunoco and BP and ConocoPhillips and all that. They're insisting on all this paperwork because they have their paper shufflers that they have to feed, too, you know, so. There was a theory that shit rolls downhill, we fill out the paperwork so that they can do whatever they do with it. I mean, it's mostly meaningless.

We don't even have logs anymore. We have these tear sheet things. We have a loose leaf notebook that, we tear these sheets out, and then at the beginning and end of each tour, they get sent up to the office in a manila envelope and they go somewhere, you know? We don't have any logs on the boats. Which is really, because, you're not supposed, that's a felony to falsify, that's one of the things that you learn when you're sitting for the Coast Guard test. A falsified log is a felony. I mean, it's a legal document. Whatever you put in to a log is a legal document. Well, we don't even have one now. You know? (Laughter)

M.Z.: What did you used to put in to the logs? Is that like your location? The weather? You know, any kind of incidents.

M.G.: Yeah. Crew you have on board. You know. Any overtime. Somebody stayed up over a period of time. Equipment failures. Stuff like that. Now you have a separate, you have an equipment, basically they, well we've got all these pieces of paper but what it comes down to is anytime anything untoward happens, we have to answer to the Coast Guard because we're regulated so intensely. And there's a certain form for the Coast Guard that is their generic thing that covers any problems. It's called the 2692. So that has become the company's incident report.

The problem there is that there are some situations, theoretically, that the company should be made aware of, but by my filling out the 2692 by definition means that the Coast Guard needs to be informed. Well the company doesn't particularly want to inform the Coast Guard about every little nitpicking thing that goes on because then they develop a reputation of always having problems, you know? So it's like, you know and I

point this out to people, it's like you don't really want me to fill out a—because I'm obligated. No, you're not filling out, you're not obligated to call the Coast Guard.

And it's like, are you going to talk to them the next time Ed, Ed Black, the deckhand that I talked about up in Rock Hall, he went out because he strained his back on the boat, and he was just so old that he just didn't, probably ended up having back surgery and everything else over the situation. So this happened when we were offshore. So the company, you know, filled out the 2692. Next thing I knew is I'm getting this phone call from the Coast Guard wanting to know, you know, putting the time frame together. "Well what time did you notify the office?" And then, "Well, we have on record as we weren't notified 'til six hours after that. Why is that?" And it was like, because it didn't meet the threshold, and the company was doing that. "You sir, are required—nee nee nee nee nee nee." And it's like, okay.

That's the nature of my business, and that's kind of why I always kind of say well, you know, at some point in time, flipping hamburgers at McDonald's isn't such an awful thing, you know? (Laughter) Because at some point, that sort of thing is just going to be a deal breaker for me, you know? I mean.

M.Z.: So it's been a good life, but it's not something, just with the way the industry has changed, it's not something—

M.G.: I've been lucky. You know? Somebody like Denny, you know, he—talk about not doing paperwork, you know? It's like, yeah. And I got in at a good time. You know? But I'm seeing how it's going, and it's not going to get any better. It should, because there's not really any reason for it. I mean with this age of—I mean, this is like the thing that I showed you with the boat. The company has, they have these little pieces of equipment that, it's a proprietary thing that Vane Brothers has to show not just the boats, but the bar—all their pickup trucks and everything all have these little transponders on them.

Well, they give their customers the access to that file, that chart. So they don't need copies of my log. They can call it up on their computer anytime they want. Let's get with the program here, people, you know? But you're not feeding that paperwork-shuffling crowd in the office if you do that, so. You know, there's no middle management guy that's going to say, "Well, if we did that, then I wouldn't need my job. My job would become unnecessary." That's not going to happen. Not unless somebody way up says, "We don't need you anymore." And I guess that probably is coming in this economy, but, you know.

M.Z.: So I guess we've covered a lot of ground here. Is there anything else that you want to add that we haven't talked about that you think is important? Like, when we're putting this exhibit together, do you have any ideas for, like, well, um this is the most important part of the story of tugs on the Chesapeake? You mentioned your grandfather. We didn't even talk about that. He was in the tug?

M.G.: Apparently. Yeah, he died when I was pretty young.

M.Z.: So your involvement wasn't, like, directly related to that? You weren't, like, trying to follow in Grandpa's footsteps?

M.G.: No, not at all. It was kind of neat when I found out that he actually had some history in the tugboat industry, but it was totally serendipitous.

M.Z.: Do you find that much in the industry that, are there a lot of people who are kind of following in their father's or uncle's or grandfather's—

M.G.: Oh, the Tangerines are all, you know, there's multi-generation. And a lot of the North Carolinians, too. The coastal Carolinians do that because it's a good-paying job, and they can live that far away. They can live a seven-hour commute from the tugboat because they're only making that commute once every two weeks. So you can live a long ways away from the boat. We've got people in the company that live in Florida. You know? They just fly up every two weeks.

M.Z.: Yeah.

M.G.: Yeah, so you can pretty much, if it wasn't for the Chesapeake Bay, I wouldn't be living in Maryland, you know. There's nothing I like about Maryland. I mean, politically, or you know, anything else. But, you know, the Chesapeake Bay's got me, so I'm willing to pay the price of having to put up with O'Malley, you know. (Laughter)

M.Z.: And the Bay, it's just being on the water and all of that.

M.G.: Yeah. Uh-huh.

M.Z.: Well, maybe we can close with that. Can you just kind of sum up a little bit what it is about the Bay that keeps you here?

M.G.: Well, man, Tilghman Creek is considered one of the finest cruising locations on the Bay. And I've always thought that the Chesapeake Bay itself, in total, was probably the second-best cruising geographic region in the world, you know, behind British Virgin Islands. I kind of like them. And maybe the Dalmatians in Yugoslavia or something like that. But, man, it's like how can you beat the cruising country of the Chesapeake Bay, you know? Sail for five or six hours and drop anchor and be out of the swell.

And, you know, at certain times of the year, anyway, the wind changes so you can basically, for sailboating, you can fair weather sail in any direction you want because the wind's always changing direction, you know? So it's not like you have a—like in Corpus, it was always blew southeast, you know? Here, it's not that way. The wind always changes direction. A lot, anyway. So, anyway. Yeah. Sea nettles. Sea nettles are a bad thing.

M.Z.: But other than that, it's all good.

M.G.: Yeah.

M.Z.: Well that's so interesting, though, that you have both ends of the spectrum. You know, from the kind of simplicity, I guess, of sailing to the kind of industrial nature of the tugs and barges.

M.G.: I don't really see sailing as being simple, but you know.

M.Z.: Oh, I don't mean simple, like easy. I guess I just mean, um, I don't know. The technology of it, you know? Relying on sail power than like all the fuel and all of that that's involved with the tugs and the barges. Just that it's more driven by the boat itself and by the wind, you know.

M.G.: I was always struck by the – because the *Quaker* was a single screw tugboat, single engine, single wheel. I was always struck by when handling it, just light boat with a barge is a whole 'nother situation, but you do a lot of moving around with a tug, just without a barge on it. The handling characteristics of the single engine tugboat and the sailboat, full keel sailboat, the power to weight are just about the same. The big rudder and, you know, as long as you get the thing moving and you get the water flow over the rudder, they both would just kind of drift along and it's amazing how similar they both handle. You know? The sailboat under power, and the tugboat. I was always struck by that, you know?

M.Z.: That's very interesting. I guess it completely contradicts what I was just saying.
(Laughter)

M.G.: Well yeah, you don't have a sailboat to go to power. In reality, most people do. Probably the average sailboat owner probably motors 80 percent of the time. But in theory, you're supposed to be sailing a sailboat, so it doesn't apply. You know, it's a different situation.

M.Z.: Well thank you so much. I really appreciate talking to you. Was there anything else you want to add before we turn it off?

M.G.: Unh-uh. God only knows what you're going to come up with out of all that, but, you know, I guess.

M.Z.: Oh, I think there's some really good stories here.

M.G.: (Laughter) Yeah, okay.

M.Z.: Thanks so much. I'll go ahead and turn it off now.

(End of interview.)

