

Slacum, Bill - 210710 0024

DOLDE: I always forget the date. All right, now, we'll start. This is Jenifer Dolde, it's Saturday, July 10th, 2021. I am here in Cambridge, Maryland with my old neighbor, Bill Slacum. Bill, your full name, and your date of birth?

SLACUM: [00:00:18] William Edward, and my date of birth, 1945, October 23rd.

DOLDE: Okay. Very good. Well, you know, we will get into more about the *Dove* project, but I wanted to start out with where you grew up, what your life was like, what your parents did for a living, and a little bit about your childhood.

SLACUM: [00:00:46] Oh. Spent a lot of time on the river.

DOLDE: Where were you?

SLACUM: [00:00:50] I grew up on Choptank Avenue, and that was ... it was only like three blocks from the Choptank. Once I ... actually, I guess I learned to swim before my parents would let me ... give me free reign, so to speak. But they were very good about it, because I was, you know, had friends and we all could swim and boat and, you know, it was good growing up, I'll tell you what. It's one of the great things that I look back on my life and I'm thinking that river, access to that river was just so important to a kid growing up in Cambridge. I mean, I was

thinking about myself, basically, but it was, you know, pretty special. In fact, I have friends that I still get to gather with that are the source of a lot of that, you know. Friends that you used to ... God, we used to ... I think back on it. We had a skiff that we would sink and get underneath of it, sunk, with an air pocket. And it ... we'd get under there and try to tie each other up. And it got to be pretty bad, you know.

Risky business. Of course, we didn't think so.

DOLDE: It was a game? Or just ...

SLACUM: [00:02:42] Yeah, it was a game! Yeah. Yeah.

DOLDE: And so, little wooden skiffs, did you sail as well?

SLACUM: [00:02:52] Didn't sail, really. I think my father would've liked to have had a sailboat, because he sailed as a kid. But we didn't have a sailboat, **and** rowboat. And then when we got a motor, we thought we ... man. It's funny how technology does change your life, in a way, you know, that first we're paddling, and then rowing, and then we got a little outboard that would barely push the boat, and then we got a 12 horsepower, and we could do anything we needed to do with that little motor. It was fun. I wouldn't trade anything for my childhood.

DOLDE: Were you guys ... were you fishing, crabbing, just going about ...

SLACUM: [00:03:55] Fishing, crabbing, just, you know, making stuff up. I mean, we ... God, I'll never forget. There was a work boat that tied up at a pole off of West End Avenue, which is our hang out, and we built a ... we had permission to build a little building to keep our gear in, and it became the very, very poor man's yacht club. I don't know if you're familiar with that reference. Poor man ... there was a poor man's yacht club, and we just stole the name, and painted it on the side of the ...

DOLDE: Did you really?

SLACUM: [00:04:45] The kid ... the neighbors got a charge out of us, I think. I mean, we were very entertaining. And respectful of their property. We never had one complaint that I recall, you know, getting in anybody's business or interfering with their life in any way. In fact, they really liked having us around, I think. Just as security.

DOLDE: Most of the kids lived within walking distance?

SLACUM: [00:05:16] Yeah, oh yeah. We all did. Bicycles, occasionally, but mostly walking. And as we got older, our bicycles would carry us further. We soon learned that to come out this way, and ... what's the name of the place, the Indian burial place? I can't ... do you remember?

[Added - Sandy Hill in Algonquin]

DOLDE: It's not ringing a bell right now, but ...

SLACUM: [00:05:52] Yeah. And, you know, we go out there and dig in the Indian graveyard. I mean, a whole mound of sand was an ancient burial ground, essentially. I mean, I can't remember the last time there were Native Americans living in the vicinity, but Sandy, Sandy Hill.

DOLDE: Well, it's in that vicinity. I'm not sure if it had a specific name, so that's what I was ...

SLACUM: [00:06:28] Yeah, it's, you know, we started on out **Lewis**, West End, and then as the bikes would carry us and we stayed out of trouble, we could go farther. You know, I guess it was a plan for our parents, from our parents. As long as we behave and were respectful of other people's, you know, life, then, you know, we could go pretty well where we wanted to, which was pretty nice.

DOLDE: What did your father do for a living?

SLACUM: [00:07:10] He worked for Phillips' Packing Company. He was an accountant, and just, you know, that's all I ever remember him doing.

DOLDE: Was your mom at home?

SLACUM: [00:07:20] No, she was a registered nurse, working at the state hospital, and I'm sure she kept an eye on us, too.

But the neighbors ... I mean, I'm thinking of the lady that was on one side of my parents, we didn't really have much contact with her. She was an older lady, and was thankful we didn't ...

DOLDE: Disturb her, yeah.

SLACUM: [00:07:56] On the other side was an electrician that was a friend of my father's, and it was, I knew all the neighbors. And if I got in any kind of trouble, I mean, we just call, call, call **mountain**. Yelped, "hey, we need help!" Never, hardly ever happened, but ...

DOLDE: Now, in those years, were you fixing stuff, you know

SLACUM: [00:08:29] Fixing stuff, building stuff. That building behind my father's house became so many things. It was an airplane, we put a cockpit in there, and pretended to fly, and God, what else was it. I guess it was a ship part of the time, and it was just fun making stuff up, using your imagination. And I guess, my friend Reggie and I talk about those days where you ... I don't think the kids today have those opportunities.

DOLDE: They're distracted by other things. So you just grabbed material, scrap laying around in people's yards ...

SLACUM: [00:09:21] Yeah, we'd find scrap. Casing, a lot of stuff came in wooden cases, and we'd get permission to get the

cases if they were behind the businesses, and, uh, we'd ..., build stuff.

DOLDE: Right. And had your father showed you ...

SLACUM: [00:09:40] I'd love to ... I'd love to know if any of that ... I don't think any of it survived.

DOLDE: Yeah. You ever take a picture of it?

SLACUM: [00:09:49] There's somewhere, but I

DOLDE: Well, I love the very poor man's yacht club, I mean, that's just outstanding.

SLACUM: [00:09:56] Yeah, that was a ... and that was so funny, we got so many ..., so much ... notoriety is not the word, but I think the neighbors enjoyed our activity as much as we did. I think they enjoyed watching. It was fun. It was fun.

DOLDE: Had your dad ... did you work on projects together, was that something he did as well?

SLACUM: [00:10:32] Yeah, he was very mechanical, and he built a table saw for himself. You know, it was fascinating. He's very resourceful, and very clever, and almost as clever as Reggie and I.

DOLDE: Okay, so I was going to ask you. Your siblings, you had ...

SLACUM: [00:10:59] I had my brother Bob, who was ... he was a baseball player, that's basically all he did in the summer. And

it did him well, I mean, he ended up going to Hopkins and playing baseball. I mean, it was no such thing in those days as Hopkins for scholarships, but I guess in a way they were scholarships, but ...

SLACUM: [00:11:30] ... Paul's father's name.

DOLDE: Gosh, Doc. Yeah, but that's not his name.

SLACUM: [00:11:39] Doctor Hawkinson.

DOLDE: Yeah, Marcie is his mom, but his name has gone right out of my head, but she took wonderful photographs. And, you know, it's interesting, there was a photographer named Robert de Gast who came to the ...

SLACUM: [00:11:52] Yeah, I remember that name.

DOLDE: Well, and there's many photos of you, and I'll show you some. I'll show you some at the end, a little ancient history, but they're wonderful. He was, you know, a wonderful photographer.

SLACUM: [00:12:05] I'm trying to think of what year ... I can't place it in time.

DOLDE: Oh, '76 to '78, I think. Yeah.

SLACUM: [00:12:13] Okay.

DOLDE: I mean, planning started a little bit earlier, the launch was ... I should remember, I've forgotten the date of the

launch, but yeah. And so I was pretty young at the time, too, and I just remember you steam-bending some things, and making some ...

SLACUM: [00:12:30] Yeah, I did a lot of stuff at the house, I mean, I had ... I guess the thing that I did mainly, I had one room and I had a little building behind there that was ... I had a lathe in there that I got a lot of work from, you know, turning.

DOLDE: Well, we can talk more about your childhood, but since we're kind of moving this way, you know, tell me a little bit about how you connected with Jim Richardson and started to do some work for him.

SLACUM: [00:13:03] I started to ... I worked ... I was teaching school and realized that there was no future in that for me.

DOLDE: What were you teaching?

SLACUM: [00:13:15] Seventh-grade science. Something, you know ...

DOLDE: So you had been ... we skipped that, but you went to college. Where did you go to college?

SLACUM: [00:13:21] Uh, I started at the University of Maryland and I ended up ... we eloped, and Mary Ellen was in Minnesota, and so I moved on out to Minnesota, and we lived out there for

the first years of our marriage and enjoyed it. But our parents wanted us closer, and that was the right move.

DOLDE: So, were you teaching science out there, or here or a little bit of both?

SLACUM: [00:14:00] A little bit of both. And, it was certainly an interesting time to be doing anything, honestly. I'm blanking out here.

DOLDE: Well, you were just saying that you decided teaching wasn't for you, and then I was asking how you met Mr. Jim and got connected with doing some work for him.

SLACUM: [00:14:26] That's ... when I quit teaching, I ... God, I got a job in a boatyard, John Swain. Do you remember ... do you know the name John Swain?

DOLDE: It's not the same John Swain who's still working?

SLACUM: [00:14:46] Yeah.

DOLDE: Okay, yes. Yeah, he did *Sultana*. I follow his van down the highway almost every day. I actually was thinking about talking to him just about boat-building in general. Really?

SLACUM: [00:14:56] He's been doing it a long time. He'd be a good man to talk to. I worked for him a number of years, and then ... what happened to him?

DOLDE: Where was he? Where was he working?

SLACUM: [00:15:14] He had a shop at the ferryboat, that building.

DOLDE: Oh, across the bridge? The ferryboat ... the north end of the Choptank?

SLACUM: [00:15:25] Yeah. And we did a lot of ... we built a bunch of hulls, which was sort of interesting. Very interesting people.

DOLDE: So were these wooden boats?

SLACUM: [00:15:41] Wooden boats.

DOLDE: For watermen, for sailors?

SLACUM: [00:15:45] All sorts of things. I mean, there was a guy named Eric Steinlein who was a naval architect, and he's passed away, I'm certain.

DOLDE: I know his son. His son is a collector and helps ... we buy things from him for the museum, so I've met him and I know his father by reputation, so.

SLACUM: [00:16:07] Yeah, he was a card, or his father was.

DOLDE: So what did you build for Eric Steinlein?

SLACUM: [00:16:23] His own boat. He researched John Swain, and realized that he had the skills, he thought that, you know, to do ... what was the name of that boat? I'm sorry.

DOLDE: That's all right. What kind of boat was it?

SLACUM: [00:16:48] It was a sail ... two-masted sailboat. It looked ... I can picture it in my mind, but I can't describe it.

DOLDE: Well, the good news about this is I can ... I'll ask other people about it, there's other ways for me to probably get that kind of information.

SLACUM: [00:17:08] I don't know what ever became of that, I mean, I'm sure he's passed away at this point. But he was an interesting man, it was so nice working for a guy like that. He was working at the Smithsonian, doing part of their curating small boats, I believe.

DOLDE: Well, I know that Howard Chapelle did that.

SLACUM: [00:17:38] Yeah, yeah. You should hear those two talk about each other, oh Lord.

DOLDE: Chapelle and Steinlein?

SLACUM: [00:17:44] Yeah. They occasionally displayed professional differences, I can't swear to it, but you know, they both had their opinions, and you better not take the opposite opinion. So I just stayed out of it. I didn't know enough about it to offer an opinion.

DOLDE: So they were both kind of at the yard?

SLACUM: [00:18:10] At times.

DOLDE: And why was Chapelle there?

SLACUM: [00:18:14] He was writing the book, I forget which one. And he'd stop by just for "local color," quote-unquote, and I think he and Steinlein ran into each other several times, and they knew each other historically, and it was fascinating, listening to those two. Because, I mean, Chapelle ... do you know that name? Do you know Howard Chapelle?

DOLDE: Yes, our library at the museum is named for him.

SLACUM: [00:18:48] Yeah, yeah. That's interesting.

DOLDE: And we have some of his ... it is, yes.

SLACUM: [00:18:54] He ... you know, he knew his stuff. I mean, he drove Jim Richardson crazy. I think there was a little jealousy there.

DOLDE: Oh, really?

SLACUM: [00:19:06] Yeah. Even though they were professionally on different planes ... in fact, I've got Chapelle's book somewhere, the one on boat building.

DOLDE: So you had some hand skills already, but did John Swain teach you, show you things?

SLACUM: [00:19:27] I learned a lot from John. You know, we were about the same age. Yeah, I did. I learned a lot from John. And he probably learned something from me. How to shoot the bull.

DOLDE: Well, in your studies of science, you know, was it physics, was that more of your forte or your interest?

SLACUM: [00:19:51] No, not especially. Biology was what I was cutting my teeth on. But, they were interesting people. I've been very fortunate. I mean, when I think back, of the people that I've met that have crossed my path in life? It's pretty special. I don't know if that happens today or not. I can't tell.

DOLDE: So you mentioned the two-masted sailing vessel. Do you remember working on any, I don't know, workboats for crabbing?

SLACUM: [00:20:35] There were some workboats. That was mostly repair, although we did a hull for a waterman from the western shore and I can't remember his name. That was a nice boat. I wonder if that still exists. We're starting to get old now for a workboat. That thing was built in the late '60s, early '70s, and it depends on how he took care of it, I guess. You know, how it survived. That's the story of wooden boats. If you take care of them, they'll last a long, long time. And in fact, Steinlein had one that he built as a young man, and he was not young anymore. God, I hate ... **Terre Naught**, I think was maybe the name, and he sort of adopted ... not adopted me, but was interested in what I was doing as well as what he was doing. I

mean, he just couldn't believe that somebody would throw their college degree under the bus and I felt like saying at times, you did the same thing, essentially. I mean, you got a degree in probably some kind of engineering or naval architecture and now here you're hanging out in boatyards. Of course, that was an ego thing, I mean, he was able to build ... you could have his hulls built for other people, which was pretty nice.

DOLDE: So he just took an interest in you? Did he advise you in any way, or just curious?

SLACUM: [00:22:43] Little bit, but I can't come up with a ... excuse me, I mean. Huh. I've got a summer cold, somehow.

DOLDE: Well, it happens. If at any point you need to stop or anything, get a glass of water, let me know and we can pause.

SLACUM: [00:23:04] I'm good.

DOLDE: So how long did you work for John Swain?

SLACUM: [00:23:10] Maybe five years? Something like that.

DOLDE: Can we ... do you have a sense of the time, like the approximate year or range of years for that?

SLACUM: [00:23:24] It was in the '70s, but I don't ... I could find it, perhaps.

DOLDE: And where did you ...

SLACUM: [00:23:33] I'm looking around ...

DOLDE: What did you do next? What did you do after John Swain?

SLACUM: [00:23:41] After Swain, that's ... I think that's when I went to work for Richardson, and then I went on my own after that. I realized that I wasn't making any money anyway, so I might as well ... and people started to get me to do things for them, so it's kind of the way it worked. It was sort of fascinating in a way, that ... how stuff ... work comes to you. I'm sure you have the same thing.

DOLDE: Reputation and connections, and ... absolutely, it does. And sometimes you have to work it, and sometimes you don't. If you're really good, and it comes to you, like you are.

SLACUM: [00:24:24] You know, it was ... I was ... I felt very lucky. I met ... you know, in my life I've met some fabulous people.

DOLDE: Did you know Jim Richardson before you started to work for him? How did that begin? Or maybe you knew him by reputation.

SLACUM: [00:24:41] You knew him by reputation, and then when I ... I guess he came along after Swain, I think. And they were jealous of each other. I mean, that must be a thing with boat builders.

DOLDE: Maybe.

SLACUM: [00:25:04] You know, there's a lot of ego involved in it. In fact, Captain Jim was building the boat ... his own bugeye at that point, and it was ... the *Dove* was under construction in his yard, but he wasn't directly involved in that part of it, only as a consultant, and I guess Jim Brighton ran the actual ...

DOLDE: Yeah, yeah. So when you started there, had the project already begun?

SLACUM: [00:25:44] No, it was beginning, and the masts and rigging stuff ... the logs were there, the masts, the main mast, we worked on that for the *Pride*, and God, I think it was ... I mean, that mast was just this big around.

DOLDE: Oh, was that actually ... was that *Constellation*, or *Pride*? Did they work on the *Pride* one too? I know they worked on the *Constellation* mast, but ...

SLACUM: [00:26:23] Maybe that's the one that I'm thinking of.

DOLDE: Okay. I know about that time, but he did so many things. But you worked on that as well?

SLACUM: [00:26:31] Yeah, I did whatever. You know, when you're doing that stuff, you take whatever you can get, to a certain point. And then I started doing house work, and I got some great opportunities in that, I mean, really nice interiors

and kitchens and, in fact, I'm as proud of that stuff as I am as the boat stuff. I worked for some really nice people.

DOLDE: And after ... so you pretty much did that type of work from the time you left Richardson's through retirement?

SLACUM: [00:27:14] Yeah, recently. In fact, the building outside is full of tools that I don't really use anymore. I sold two of the big ... I ended up buying stationary power tools and work ... I did a lot of subcontract work, and then I realized that, well, for one thing, my hands were giving out. This hand is not worth 10 cents, this one's probably worth a dime, or 15 cents. You give up your body. It's a lot like, I guess anybody who does anything physical. I think a bricklayer's ... all the bricklayers I know are lame, crippled. And I asked a friend of mine, who's a bricklayer, don't you lay brick anymore? I got some jobs if you're interested. He says, no, I can't do it. I can't do it anymore, I'm just physically unable. It takes a toll on you, that thing. Bricklayers.

DOLDE: And my understanding from those I've talked to is that pretty much it was all hand tools at Jim Richardson's.

SLACUM: [00:28:37] He had power tools, but a lot of the work was hand tools.

DOLDE: I mean, that mast you were ... was that where you would use ...

SLACUM: [00:28:45] Yeah, yeah. It came to us ... that mast came to us in the round, so we just had to put **antennae** on the butts, and then chop ... put places for the cross ... what do they call them. You can tell ...

DOLDE: For just the spars?

SLACUM: [00:29:20] The spars, you know, and it was fun. I enjoyed all of it. I enjoyed my career tremendously. Good people, oh my God.

DOLDE: And that's one of the other things I particularly was hoping to ask about, and I know you said there's a lot of young people working on the *Dove*. Some of them probably a lot younger than you at that time.

SLACUM: [00:29:47] Yeah, I was a senior, seriously.

DOLDE: And they lived at the farm next door and things like that, but tell me some of the people you remember, and their ... you know.

SLACUM: [00:29:59] Well, I mean, Freddy Asplen worked there. He was high energy, and June Wingo. I don't know if she ever married.

DOLDE: I think she has a long-term partner. I'm talking to her this week, she's in Maine.

SLACUM: [00:30:24] Okay. She was a very strong woman, I mean, Captain Jim said, I hate seeing her do that kind of work, but you know, William, she's stronger than I am. And she was.

DOLDE: That's what I've heard.

SLACUM: [00:30:41] Anyway, she was very able. That tickled me, that day. "William, she's stronger than I am."

DOLDE: I love it, I love it. Yeah, so who else do you remember being one of the leaders, or a newer.. Somebody who was learning?

SLACUM: [00:31:01] Jim Elk was working for Captain Jim at that point. Tom Howell actually was working on his own projects, but we were all at the yard together.

DOLDE: So did everyone ... how was the work structured? Were there teams? You know, you said Jim kinda ran it. Brighton.

SLACUM: [00:31:29] Yeah, it depended on how much work there was. I mean everybody just kind of threw in with whoever needed the help, which was a pretty nice thing. I mean, when I think of ... I worked with almost everybody there at one time or another. It was a good group of people. All focused, I mean, you know, once they understood what had to be done, get out of their way. Sort of fascinating. I don't think that exists anymore. It may.

DOLDE: It's rare. I would agree.

SLACUM: [00:32:13] But I don't remember anything after those days that approached it.

DOLDE: It does seem like it was rather unique. Well, and then that's ...

SLACUM: [00:32:38] It's free spirits, and that's ... we were all hippies. I looked just like I look now.

DOLDE: Well, and the word hippie, I mean, wasn't always meant nicely, but you said free spirits. What else do you think, you know, what do you think of when you think of those people, and as you call them, hippies?

SLACUM: [00:32:51] Well, they were just ... they were my friends. And, you do what you can to help them. I mean, some of them, they'd come and go and it depended on the task involved. And it was good days, good days. Lots of days on end. Oh my God, winter. What project was that? That may have been the *Dove*. That was a cold winter, you can look that up. And we're out there, laying on the ground, drilling holes for the fastenings that held the planking on, and I've never been so cold in my life. I mean, when I think back on it ... I mean, we all wore gloves to work, and fleece, and it was unbelievably cold.

DOLDE: But it was nothing more than a shelter over it, it wasn't enclosed.

SLACUM: [00:34:05] It was a shelter, and there was one little corner where it was almost like a parlor stove, and we'd go over ... if you didn't eat in your car where it was a teeny bit warmer, you ate next to that little stove. And I'll tell you what, that part was not enjoyable, thinking back on it. Frozen. I stayed frozen.

DOLDE: And you'd lived in Minnesota.

SLACUM: [00:34:41] Yeah, it was ... I didn't work outside in Minnesota, because the people out there were much smarter. They ... in fact, I didn't really even do any physical work out there. It was when I came back that I started working at the boatyard, and then working ... restored a couple houses right after that.

DOLDE: Was the summer just as bad, or you felt more, that was easier to handle? Working out in the heat like it's been in the last couple weeks here.

SLACUM: [00:35:23] The heat never bothered me. But the cold, I mean, you could not ... I couldn't come up with a way to warm myself while I was working. I mean, I spent some money on coveralls and that type of thing. Good boots. But you couldn't ... you couldn't win. You could try, but you couldn't win.

DOLDE: So what specific tasks, what kinds of things did you work on? Like, what parts? You talked about working on

Constellation's mast, maybe the *Dove's* mast as well? I know Tom and Rad Wheatley worked on.

SLACUM: [00:36:09] Yeah, they did. I worked primarily on the hull and the decking and that type of thing. I didn't ... they had people who wanted to work on the masts, and I didn't care. It wasn't as interesting to me as ...

DOLDE: So with the planking, there was a steam box. What do you remember about that?

SLACUM: [00:36:36] There was, there was. Because she was very bluff in the bow, and you had to steam these planks that were this thick. And then convince them to bend. I mean, I tell you what, we had a couple explode on us. You bend and the energy of them when it releases, and it just [explosion sound].

DOLDE: Can you talk to me about that process of putting the planks in and then how you proceeded to get it onto the hull?

SLACUM: [00:37:12] Yeah, well, we would roll ... we had this thing that looked like a cannon. A steam box, on wheels, and you'd roll that thing close to the boat and heat the chamber that was full of water and get that going, and then put the piece in and it would ... God. I've lost track of the time of how long it took to heat up. But you know, you soon learn how long it needed to stay in there, simply by trying too soon to bend it.

DOLDE: Were different pieces, different planks different? Or do they behave in a similar way?

SLACUM: [00:38:12] They were different. Because the ones in the bow, they were like this, and so you're bending a tight bend.

DOLDE: Yeah, almost ... well, it's not quite 90 degrees, but it's approaching it.

SLACUM: [00:38:29] Yeah, it was a tight bend, and like I said, several of them would ...

DOLDE: Would just break, and splinter?

SLACUM: [00:38:39] There was a saying then that if she creaks, she's strong, if she breaks, she's gone.

DOLDE: Who said that? That was just everybody? Everybody said that? That's a good one.

SLACUM: [00:38:52] That was just everybody. If she creaks, she's strong, if she breaks, she's gone. And we broke several. It's hard to imagine breaking something like that. I mean, that it ... and then the guard rails, oh my God. They were, you know, this big. They were small trees. And you do the same thing, you heat them up, and then somebody with a clamp gets to clamp on the front, and then you start bending it and it just ... they would go. Like you said, though, like I said, it's ...

you'd hear them creak and creak and creak and creak and then
pow! It scared me every time.

DOLDE: I imagine. What do you remember about the sources for
the wood and the different wood types you'd use?

SLACUM: [00:40:02] Almost everybody gave us some wood. Some
of it, Spicer's Lumber, and what they didn't have off their own
yard, they could get from ... they were owned by somebody else.

DOLDE: They had a lot of the pine?

SLACUM: [00:40:18] The pine was primarily what they provided.
And oak, I forget where our oak came from. The *Dove* was planked
with oak, I mean. That stuff, you could bend that pretty
easily.

DOLDE: What was the worst one for creaking and exploding?

SLACUM: [00:40:42] I'm trying to think of what we ... we broke
a bunch of fir. Just, it didn't have the innate moisture
content, so it would, you know, it would get to a certain point
where it wouldn't go anymore, and you keep the pressure on it,
and before long, if she creaks, she's strong.

DOLDE: You never put stuff back in the steam box, or
sometimes you would?

SLACUM: [00:41:19] Sometimes you would. It's so important.
You were just trying to save the piece, and Captain Jim was
very, you know, he wanted us to use everything cautiously. I

don't think he hadn't really planned the expense on that project.

DOLDE: Meaning he didn't want you to waste pieces, well, "waste," quote-unquote, or, you know, ruin it, not be able to use it.

SLACUM: [00:41:51] I was the only one on the crew that had any experience.

DOLDE: Okay. Well, they were. A lot of them were very young, out of high school.

SLACUM: [00:42:00] Very young. Freddy Asplen, and June, and Joe Balderson and ...

DOLDE: So they didn't have ... I mean, I'll be talking to them and asking them, but I know Paul Hawkinson said that he didn't really have any experience, but the others didn't either?

SLACUM: [00:42:16] Not much.

DOLDE: It amazes me that they were able to do it, so they ...

SLACUM: [00:42:21] Well, Captain Jim had a way of telling you what to do that you could comprehend and appreciate, and people ... and the highly motivated young people, I mean, they wanted to do the best they could. Not like ... I think some today are just rude beasts, I mean.

DOLDE: Well, how did he teach? What was he like as a teacher, did you ever observe him doing that?

SLACUM: [00:42:53] Who's that?

DOLDE: Jim. How would he teach people?

SLACUM: [00:42:55] He would just talk to you, mostly privately. He didn't want to show anybody up, and he just ... he would ... this needs to happen, and this needs to happen, and you know, he would take you through the steps, and then you'd go back to the steam box and blow up another one.

DOLDE: So when there was a mistake made, you're saying, he would call somebody inside and say, maybe do this and this?

SLACUM: [00:43:29] Yeah. Offer suggestions, because he had made all the mistakes himself, and was making them daily. He was still working, I don't know how old he was, but ...

DOLDE: 70s.

SLACUM: [00:43:38] He was not in good health, and he was there every day. He'd walk down ... for a while, he'd walk down from his house, which was probably less than a quarter of a mile, and he'd walk to the yard, and then it got so that we knew something was different because he would start riding the car down, and we were pretty smart, too. We picked up on things that were going on that pertained to us, and we didn't want ... you know, I had his ear because I had more experience, and we had conferences about what had to happen next and that type of thing, and everybody just turned to and did the work.

DOLDE: And any injuries or anything like that? Any injuries, anybody ever get hurt?

SLACUM: [00:44:56] I fell off the boat.

DOLDE: Goodness.

SLACUM: [00:44:58] Right onto the ground on my back. It's a wonder.

DOLDE: Knocked the breath out of you.

SLACUM: [00:45:04] Yeah. It took me a minute or two to get up.

DOLDE: This is unrelated, but that maple tree between our yards, growing ... you know, when your yard and my yard? I was swinging in that at about that time, and the branch broke, fell flat on my back, wasn't as far as you, and I remember thinking, I'm not going to be able to breathe. You know? I'm dying. So it's a scary thing to have the breath knocked out of you.

SLACUM: [00:45:29] Is that after we lived there?

DOLDE: You know, it might have been. Do you know when you moved from Church Creek? I think I may have been 10 or 11 versus the time of the *Dove*, which was a few years earlier. You might've been there. That tree came down a couple years ago, they had to take it down. I was really sad to see it go.

SLACUM: [00:45:48] Yeah, yeah, I know what you mean.

DOLDE: I have a lot of fond memories of a tree, I really do.
Your workshop is still there.

SLACUM: [00:45:57] Anybody living there?

DOLDE: The young ... well, the man who worked for Blackwater still owns it, and they live ... they actually moved, bought another house in Church Creek, but they rent that one out as an Airbnb, so not as a ... you know. And they've done some work on it, and I mean, it could probably use some more work, but that's an old house. So it's there, and Mom makes friends with everybody who comes, and gives them things from the garden, so. Well, that's really going back to, again, now it's my fault for getting off-topic. So you really did have kind of a little bit of a supervisory or leadership role, and Jim Brighton, perhaps.

SLACUM: [00:46:46] Yeah, Jim ... he wasn't there every day.
You know, he had other things going.

DOLDE: Yeah, I was very surprised how many things were happening, I mean, Tom was building ... was he working on Mr. Jim, the bay boat at that time? There was a lot things happening in various structures.

SLACUM: [00:47:05] There were lots of things ... that happened later. A little bit later. And I'm trying to think of what he work... he had something else in there. And there was a bunch of spar work that happened during that time, and Captain Jim

would pull people off ..., the people who were particularly good at that kind of work, he'd give them a different task, and they, everybody liked to change the venue a little bit. I mean, just to get ... to do something different. We all liked that, I mean, I know on my end.

DOLDE: What was the pay like?

SLACUM: [00:47:56] Oh, it was awful. It was awful. I remember Mrs. Richardson, when I first went in there, she pulled me into the office and she said, "Mr. Slacum, we're paying you more than we're paying anybody else, so we're expecting more out of you." And I thought, that's like my first week there, I mean, I hadn't messed up or ... and I said, you can pretty well count on me to do what's required. And that frosted her cookies a little bit, that I would talk back to her, but I did, and I never had another word from her.

DOLDE: My understanding is that she kinda did a lot of the business aspect of it.

SLACUM: [00:48:52] Oh, yeah. Captain Jim, I think he hated it when she would lecture people on what their responsibilities were, and I told her, I said I know what I'm responsible for, I know what I have to do, and I don't need reminding.

DOLDE: Well. Tell it like it is, and then move on, right?

SLACUM: [00:49:21] That's it. That's pretty much how it worked.

DOLDE: Did you meet William Baker?

SLACUM: [00:49:32] I did, I don't have any recollection of him, but he would stop in.

DOLDE: So you don't remember his interactions with Jim?

SLACUM: [00:49:44] No, that was a private thing. You know.

DOLDE: So how did Jim ... how did you all apply the design by William Baker, you know, from a model? You didn't loft, right?

SLACUM: [00:50:01] We did half breadths of the boat, where you loft half dimensions of the boat. I don't think we drew her out full-size.

DOLDE: No patterns?

SLACUM: [00:50:17] No, mostly we were just making it up as it goes along. Because I was used to the traditional boat building. I mean, I knew how to loft and stuff like that, which was ... [dog barks]

DOLDE: I guess Sam is back there. So that's interesting, you were used to doing it in more formal way, but that's not what Jim did, so ...

SLACUM: [00:51:07] He didn't ... he really didn't have the ... in his mind, anyway, he had part of it, but he didn't ... we didn't start with a full **side**. The last boat I worked on with

Swain, we drew out full size in a little shed next to the ... and it was 30 some feet long. And I'll tell you what it did, it cut out the mistakes. When you've got a full picture of what the boat is supposed to do, you can actually take wooden patterns off of the loft and make up a stack of stuff and that really speeded things up.

DOLDE: So you would say that in not doing it that way, there may have been a few more mistakes?

SLACUM: [00:52:06] Yeah, but the crew understood what had to be done, and he interpreted pretty well what he wanted, and we just worked along. We're getting back to ... they didn't pay us anything, speak of. I'm not complaining even now, I mean, you just ... you get enough to buy beer.

DOLDE: Well, so then ... that's what they cared about, was there a motivation about working on an important project for you or maybe anybody else? Maybe you were different than them?

SLACUM: [00:52:47] I never thought about it. You know, it's just another job.

DOLDE: Well, but other people did feel differently, right? They would show up, and they wanted to see him, there were reporters. Tell me what you remember about the reporters. Universally, they seemed to have been a little irritating.

SLACUM: [00:53:11] They were irritating and nosy, and I guess that's what a reporter does to a certain extent, but you know, generally nice people. It's just, leave me alone, I'm working. You know, they seldom would leave you alone.

DOLDE: Well, they probably talked to Mr. Jim quite a bit.

SLACUM: [00:53:33] They did, they did talk to him. And he didn't want to talk to them either, because the way we had the tasks organized, we all sort of took the clue from him, and if he's talking too much the other way, work slows down.

DOLDE: I understand that schoolchildren also came to visit?

SLACUM: [00:54:04] There were lots of school trips, and you know ...

DOLDE: How did you feel about that?

SLACUM: [00:54:12] It didn't bother me.

DOLDE: Well, you were a teacher. Did you interact with ... the crew interact with the young people?

SLACUM: [00:54:21] To a minor extent. I mean, it was no ... I probably interacted as much as anybody, because I knew most of the teachers that were coming, and I thought it was important. I said, we've got this job right now. If we can't sell the next one, we're unemployed. That's pretty much the way it worked in the boat world.

DOLDE: So the hope was, by getting attention for this project, it would lead to the next project. Right, right. That's actually a very good point.

SLACUM: [00:55:07] I mean, people had trouble understanding that. I don't know why.

DOLDE: The others working on it? The others working ...

SLACUM: [00:55:16] Yeah. Well, they had never followed one through the way we did, you know. If you've got work to do ... and that's why I thought it was important to talk to people that visit the yard that are essentially sizing us up to find out if what we're doing is what they want. And so, you're hoping to get a job from the last job.

DOLDE: So prospective customers would also come, as well as the ...

SLACUM: [00:56:03] Oh yeah, oh yeah. I mean, they always weren't introduced as that, but you could tell just the way people talked what they were interested in. It was interesting, working. I was a young man.

DOLDE: One of the things that seems to be unique about the Dove crew was the fact that there were men and women working together. So there were other women ...

SLACUM: [00:56:33] It was very unusual. Cathy Moore, and June.

DOLDE: Jim married ... there's another Cathy that Jim Elk ended up marrying.

SLACUM: [00:56:45] Oh, Jim ...

DOLDE: Jim Elk married Cathy Kiorpes.

SLACUM: [00:56:52] Jim Elk ... what was her name?

DOLDE: And then there was somebody named Tami Willy, who painted at the end?

SLACUM: [00:56:59] Yeah, she was a high school grad. Really young, yeah.

DOLDE: Really young. Just did painting.

SLACUM: [00:57:04] And the men enjoyed her. **We're** okay near her.

DOLDE: So that's what I was getting at, you know. Obviously you have somebody like June who ... what were the working relationships like? Everybody have an equal role? I mean, some people ...

SLACUM: [00:57:20] Well, not ... I don't know about equal, but I mean you kinda would yield to what they were doing, and they would yield to what you were doing, and it all got done somehow. It's a miracle.

DOLDE: So, but there was no ... it sounds like there were no problems with the men and women working together?

SLACUM: [00:57:44] Not really. Because the ones that were truly single, they would end up throwing in together.

DOLDE: And then a lot of them did live at ... sorry, I'm trying to remember the name of the guy, Fred Davis?

SLACUM: [00:58:13] Fred Davis.

DOLDE: Yeah. So, a lot of them lived there at that farm?

SLACUM: [00:58:17] Yeah, and that was real close. Yeah, Fred Davis. Fred never worked on the projects, he was wealthy. I mean, he didn't have to work on the projects. He worked on his own projects, but he'd just carry on. It was sort of fascinating times, when I think about it. You know, he made a lot of friends. Still, if I see somebody on the street ...

DOLDE: So who is still around that you remember? Even if they didn't work on *Dove*. I keep getting ... my list keeps growing longer, but ...

SLACUM: [00:59:04] You got Jay Dayton.

DOLDE: Yep.

SLACUM: [00:59:07] I'm trying to think of the people that lived on the road where the boatyard was. There was a little house that they ... I can't picture who lived there, I swear to God. I guess Fred Davis' house is the one ...

DOLDE: Well, that's what ... okay. So that actually is something I wanted to ask you about, because ... and I do

remember, you know, it sounds like it was a wonderful group of people working together. But what did the people in the community think about the project? Did you have a sense? Because you lived elsewhere.

SLACUM: [00:59:54] Yeah, I didn't ... I don't think anybody understood what was going on, to be honest.

DOLDE: Well, they knew there was a big boat being built, but they didn't ...

SLACUM: [01:00:00] Young men and women working on it, and you know ...

DOLDE: The interest was more from people from the outside?

SLACUM: [01:00:20] There was a lot of interest from the outside.

DOLDE: I mean, I'm just wondering, you know, other local boat builders, watermen, people from down below. Did they dismiss it, did they have no interest whatsoever?

SLACUM: [01:00:37] Nah, they pretty much saw that we didn't know what the heck we were doing, even though we ... the biggest problem we had was in materials. Some of the materials weren't what they should've been, and some of them started to rot almost immediately.

DOLDE: Why would that have happened?

SLACUM: [01:01:05] It was bad stuff to begin with.

DOLDE: Had been sitting too long, or?

SLACUM: [01:01:07] It came from the lumber yards in poor condition, some of them. And you know, so we ...

DOLDE: And you weren't able to hold the lumber yards accountable for that?

SLACUM: [01:01:25] That was part of the problem. There was no way to get back at what ... because you didn't tend to pay full price, and so you just take what you can get kind of thing.

DOLDE: Did it seem like the project ended up being more expensive than what was anticipate?

SLACUM: [01:01:51] It probably did, although I was not privy to that kind of information. And it, you know, because of the ... I'm not sure what ... some of the stuff just wasn't as good as it needed to be, and the boat started to rot almost immediately.

DOLDE: Well, yeah, so there was [sneezes] ... excuse me. I know they had to do some repairs less than five years later.

SLACUM: [01:02:25] Yeah, it was quick.

DOLDE: Were you part of that?

SLACUM: [01:02:28] No, I don't even know where I was at that point. I'd finished with that.

DOLDE: We were talking before we started, when Sam came in, about some of the ceremonies. So you brought your family to the keel laying of the *Dove*?

SLACUM: [01:02:47] Yeah, I'm trying to think if my wife came or not.

DOLDE: Sam was there.

SLACUM: [01:02:52] Sam was there, and we didn't have Rachel yet, so.

DOLDE: And he ... the photographer captured him on the keel?

SLACUM: [01:03:02] Yeah. He was fa... actually, he was a young kid, he was fascinated by the whole thing. So he got to spend a lot of time down there, ultimately.

DOLDE: Did he? Well, you did say you did some of the work at home, so what kinds of things would you bring home to work on?

SLACUM: [01:03:24] I had a lathe at home, and I did a bunch of turning. You know, there's a ..., there was a pile of stuff that had to be turned. You know, what are they called ...

"trunnels," treenails.

DOLDE: Yep, yep. They were black locust, somebody thought? That's pretty hard wood.

SLACUM: [01:03:50] It's hard. And I would turn ... if they got behind, I could turn. And you soon learn the tricks. You

can turn stuff quick, if you have to. And there are tricks that you can exercise.

DOLDE: Are the tricks of the trade, such as it were? You can't tell me?

SLACUM: [01:04:15] Well, if you needed a stick in the round, this long, out of locusts, you hang it in the lathe and just ... you run a rough cut along with this chisel, and then you can take a wrench, is the way we did it. If you need stuff that's three quarters of an inch in diameter, you take a three-quarter open-end wrench, and you rough the thing out, bigger than it needed to be, and then you take the wrench and run it in and then run it along, and it would cut to the exact size. And it was quick. It got to a point where sometimes you were doing it just to keep ... well, we're out, why don't you go to the lathe and turn a bunch of 'em.

DOLDE: Were you doing blocks or dead-eyes or anything like that?

SLACUM: [01:05:31] Yeah, yeah. I think all the rigging, we did. Different people. June was ... she made a lot of the parts for the rigging. So it was ... everybody had their tasks, you know.

DOLDE: So you ... was that the last boat that you worked on as a job?

SLACUM: [01:06:05] It was the last big project.

DOLDE: Now ...

SLACUM: [01:06:11] No, go ahead.

DOLDE: I was going to say, you were a science teacher, you know, this project was about history, about preserving heritage. Was that something that you were aware of, that you felt sort of?

SLACUM: [01:06:25] Yeah, yeah. I was a Renaissance man.

DOLDE: That's what I hear, actually. That's what I knew. I remember my dad saying you could do anything.

SLACUM: [01:06:38] And I could, because I would. And you know, you soon ... you learn to turn stuff, you learn to ... I did a lot of watercolors, stuff like that, which had nothing to do with the boat.

DOLDE: Are you self-taught? Did you take classes in ...

SLACUM: [01:07:08] I took a class from Maryland Institute in watercolor. Drove to Baltimore every day for a whole summer.

DOLDE: Was this during college? High school?

SLACUM: [01:07:27] I was out of college.

DOLDE: Oh, an adult, okay.

SLACUM: [01:07:30] Well, I haven't actually grown into adulthood yet.

DOLDE: Okay, maybe someday.

SLACUM: [01:07:35] Someday. I hope it doesn't take too long.
[laughter] But you know, I had a lot of friends who were
artists.

DOLDE: Many of our shipyard crew studied art, and are
artists. Which is something that was surprising, and now it
doesn't surprise me anymore, so.

SLACUM: [01:08:03] Yeah, it's the free spirit part of it. You
know, where ... I don't know. Nobody's going to tell me what to
do.

DOLDE: And that's one of the ... is that something that you
felt that group had in common? You know, wanting to just do
their own thing and not ...

SLACUM: [01:08:21] To a certain extent. But everybody had to
turn to actually work and build the boat, so some of the people
understood and some of them didn't.

DOLDE: Okay, so fair enough. That was a challenge for some
people, did they not last long, or they ...

SLACUM: [01:08:37] There was a ... I don't know how many W2s
ended in that period of time, but they were coming and going.

DOLDE: What would happen, would they just quit? Or would Mr.
Jim say you're not working out?

SLACUM: [01:08:58] No, he never did that. He would just ...
most of them got uncomfortable, and quit. You know, they

weren't satisfied with ... they were highly motivated people, and they weren't satisfied with what was happening in their own life. And I was fortunate in that I had a lot of experience at Swain's, which kept me going. I didn't even really need to talk to Captain Jim much except it was a good way to spend 15 minutes. Did you ever meet him? No?

DOLDE: No, you know, he and my grandmother were second cousins. I don't think they knew it, though. You know how ...

SLACUM: [01:09:50] Yeah, I'm trying to think, what was your grandmother's name?

DOLDE: Well, she ... her mother was Richardson. She was a Willis.

SLACUM: [01:10:00] Next to the boatyard. I remember, or next to the graveyard.

DOLDE: Yeah, where my aunt lived. And she lived as well, yes, exactly.

SLACUM: [01:10:12] Is your aunt, she ...

DOLDE: She passed last year. She was 95.

SLACUM: [01:10:17] I was going to say, she was not a young woman at that point.

DOLDE: Yeah, she was 95. She had not been well, she had a tough last year or two, and during COVID, so we didn't have the

usual services and all of that. Thank you for asking. Mom is great. My mom is, you know.

SLACUM: [01:10:40] How old is your mom?

DOLDE: She's 82.

SLACUM: [01:10:42] She's what?

DOLDE: 82.

SLACUM: [01:10:44] Yeah. I'm in my late 70s.

DOLDE: **That's time for you.**

SLACUM: [01:10:53] Late-ish 70s.

DOLDE: Well, so let's ... the launch of the boat, that was another ceremony. Were you there for the launch? There was a lot of dignitaries there, and ...

SLACUM: [01:11:04] Well, there was, yeah. I was there for the ...

DOLDE: Well, there was probably two launches, right?

SLACUM: [01:11:11] There were a couple of launches. And we got the boat up onto Jim ... Tom Howell's railway.

DOLDE: Now, how did you do that? Oh, good, that's a story. Tell me.

SLACUM: [01:11:27] It was extremely dangerous.

DOLDE: Yeah. Tell me about it!

SLACUM: [01:11:32] I mean you're jacking the boat up, I mean, this is ... I'm trying to get something that works.

DOLDE: Yeah, I'll move this.

SLACUM: [01:11:44] It fits the railway.

DOLDE: At an angle, yes.

SLACUM: [01:11:48] You know, the boat was on a trailer ...

DOLDE: The boat's flat. Was it built on a trailer of sorts?
It was built on ...

SLACUM: [01:11:58] We put it on a trailer, and then got it,
rolled it over to the ... God, I'm blocking on names. The ramp.

DOLDE: The railway.

SLACUM: [01:12:13] The railway. And then jack it up to the
same height and ...

DOLDE: Jacked up the tongue of the trailer? Or was it a
flatbed trailer?

SLACUM: [01:12:30] I think it was a flatbed trailer, so we end
up jacking the boat. I mean, like I say, it was ... scared the
hell out of me.

DOLDE: And then how did you get it ... move it over to the
side?

SLACUM: [01:12:43] Big come-alongs. And why somebody wasn't
killed doing that, I'll never know.

DOLDE: There were scary moments? Rocking, or?

SLACUM: [01:12:55] In my mind, there were. But not everybody
had the experience of what could happen. I mean, they weren't

thinking along those lines. We didn't kill anybody, which is good.

DOLDE: That is very good. Some scary moments where you had to sound the ... tell people to get out of the way, or was it ... yeah?

SLACUM: [01:13:21] Yeah, kind of. You know, you're jacking this thing from the side, one over.

DOLDE: Straps around it? So how did you pull it over? The come-along was attached to ... was it strapped, or?

SLACUM: [01:13:40] The come-along seemed like it was ... Captain Jim made a hook.

DOLDE: Right into the keel?

SLACUM: [01:13:27] He made a couple, actually, a couple of them that were ... you could pull the boat. I mean, just manhandle it. And womanhandle it.

DOLDE: That's right. But it made it.

SLACUM: [01:14:11] It was a relief, that day. I mean, everybody was relieved. Captain Jim was relieved no one died.

DOLDE: So it took a good part of the day.

SLACUM: [01:14:21] It took a good part of the day, and it was scary. I mean, I wasn't used to doing that kind of scary work. I mean, I did enough scary work, but you know, you soon ... you're thinking, why are we doing this this way?

DOLDE: Was it the size of it? (sneezes) Excuse me. Or the
...

SLACUM: [01:14:42] It was big.

DOLDE: It was a more rudimentary kind of yard?

SLACUM: [01:14:46] Have you been over ... they're working on
one now at the Maritime Museum?

DOLDE: Yes. I see the size of it, yeah. And I will be
watching when they move that, from a distance. But I'm sure
they have, you know, a plan in place. Exactly. Well, so, and
you were used to more mechanical, safer methods, but Jim's yard
just wasn't set up for that? Is that just not the way he did
things?

SLACUM: [01:15:18] It's not the way he did things. He goes
back to the previous century, and you know, a lot of what we
did, we copied our grandfathers. There were several boatyards
along the river where I grew up. I think of Louis Tyler, that
had a boat building operation on a small railway at the foot of
Willis Street. And Captain Jay, Jay Tyler was his father's
name, and Louis was the son. And I never knew Captain Jay, but
apparently he was a genius. Captain Richardson would tell me
about these characters.

DOLDE: Smaller boats, what were they building?

SLACUM: [01:16:24] They built a little bit of everything. And I wish I had paid more attention and written stuff down when Jim was talking about what went on in Cambridge in the 1800s, early 1900s. I mean, it was some stuff going on.

DOLDE: Where ... do you have a sense of how he learned his trade? Did his father also work in ...

SLACUM: [01:16:52] I guess the family was just in it. It wasn't like you went to school. It just was ... you'd soon jump into whatever it was that you were going to do.

DOLDE: But at that point in time, he was ... obviously there were still boatbuilders, but he was the last of a generation, that's for sure.

SLACUM: [01:17:25] Yeah, and that's ..., and I don't know if he felt responsibility along those lines, or if ... I don't know. But it was a joy working for him, because he knew all that history. He lived a good bit of it, and we'd get him talking, and he could tell you something about the stuff that was going on in Cambridge at that time, or before me. There was ... I wish I'd written a bunch of that down, that was fascinating.

DOLDE: I bet. I know my perception growing up in this area was that he was a legend, and I never understood why, and his legacy, do you agree with that, and why do you think he ...

yeah, Captain Jim, why do you think he in particular has become ...

SLACUM: [01:18:30] Well, he took on some stuff, and he lost his butt on a lot of it, because he had idiots working for him. He built the windmill. I'm trying to think of all the stuff he ...

DOLDE: Well, he did projects for the Smithsonian. You know.

SLACUM: [01:18:57] He did stuff for the ..., and it was fascinating, all the different things he was involved with.

DOLDE: You think that's one of the things that drew attention to him, is because he did such a variety of things?

SLACUM: [01:19:09] He did a variety of things, and like you said, he became a local legend, so he was the one who ... he was the last one that still was building in that style, I guess is the right word. And you know, he could do almost anything. I think his mind was an exploded diagram, where you got this, and you got to build it, so you blow it up. There it is.

DOLDE: He saw it in three dimensions, and then he saw the parts come away from it.

SLACUM: [01:20:00] He saw parts come away from it. Not everybody did. I was getting a little bit of it, but not to the degree he had it, because he was doing interesting things. I

mean, like I say, I'm trying to think of ... a bunch of boats.
Built a windmill.

DOLDE: And then *Jenny Norman* was there at the end, the
bugeye.

SLACUM: [01:20:25] Yeah, and the bugeye, and by then, his
stack of materials had deteriorated, so you know, some of the
stock that he was using was sub-par. I mean, I don't know if
that boat still exists or not.

DOLDE: Did you ever see him again before he passed?

SLACUM: [01:20:55] I would go down there periodically, and he
always enjoyed seeing me. He'd go, sit down here and talk to
me! He liked keeping track of some of us, and I happily was one
of them. He was a big part of my life for those years. And you
know, I guess being his son-in-law was the biggest curse that
ever happened to anybody. I mean, he would help you do whatever
it was you needed to do as a son-in-law, but you know, I think
he was ... I'm not sure what the words are. He just ... he
needed a different group of people around him, I think.

DOLDE: People from outside, outside the family.

SLACUM: [01:21:59] Yeah, outside the family essentially,
because there was a lot of pressure on the two daughters were
married to two of the son-in-laws. There was Judy and Jane,
were married to the son-in-laws. And I think there were some

hard feelings, I mean, somebody should've done this, and I didn't get that job because this happened.

DOLDE: Well, I'm sure it's a hard dynamic.

SLACUM: [01:22:37] Yeah, I wouldn't have wanted to be part of it, I know that. It's tough **sledding** for somebody.

DOLDE: Yeah, well. So it does definitely sound like this had a huge influence even though you didn't end up building boats the rest of your life, you know, the craftsmanship, the independence, you know, working and learning new things.

SLACUM: [01:23:00] I never have been able to work for anybody. It's just ... I can do it myself. I can figure it out and build it myself.

DOLDE: Ultimately, it sounds like that was the best path for you, it sounds like.

SLACUM: [01:23:17] Yeah, it was. I mean, and I knew enough people by then, because he had friends who would come down there. Joe Brocato was the blacksmith in town. He was an old man, but he would come down and visit and talk. Ed Bramble. I mean, what a group that was. Captain Jim for woodwork. Ed Bramble. God, he could do anything. He was a mechanical genius. You know, if you needed something built, you know, out of metal, just call him up and he'd build it. I mean, it was incredible. And he'd come down on his motorcycle ...

DOLDE: This is Bramble?

SLACUM: [01:24:12] Yeah, he was not young at that point. I mean, we feared for him. And Joe Brocato. The days that were interesting were where when Joe Brocato, Ed Bramble, and Captain Jim got together and would sit by the wood fire, and ... interesting. Interesting people.

DOLDE: What did they like to talk about?

SLACUM: [01:24:42] Just, their trades. You know, they had different specialties.

DOLDE: Had they built something, either of them or both, for Jim to use in his yard? Did they build anything for him that he used?

SLACUM: [01:24:58] I can't recall if that ... probably was.

DOLDE: I heard a story about the rickety ship saw.

SLACUM: [01:25:06] Yeah, he could ... Ed Bramble could fix anything. I mean, talk about a genius. That was Leonardo, you know, several centuries later. I mean, he just was ... I've never been around anybody that smart. I mean, he just ... he was a true genius. I mean, I don't think he understood it, just how talented he was, and his brain how it worked, and it was ... I mean, he was fascinating to talk to. And you know, Joe Brocato wasn't as dynamic as ...

DOLDE: Did he do the forging for any of the parts for *Dove*?

SLACUM: [01:25:57] I think he did, some of it. And Captain ... or, what's the name who I was talking to before. Ed Bramble could do anything. I mean, he could build anything out of metal. I mean, probably wood too, but he just ... if Captain Jim said I need something, he was essentially a toolmaker, and if you needed a tool that would do a job and you could interpret it to Ed Bramble, it was as good as done. I mean, he was really interesting, I thought.

DOLDE: Would you know what parts they might've made for the project?

SLACUM: [01:26:48] Not really.

DOLDE: Because we casted pintles and gudgeons. We actually did metal casting at the museum, so just curious if you were aware of that. But they sound like fascinating people.

SLACUM: [01:27:01] They were. I mean, they were, you know, just ... Ed Bramble, I swear he could do ... you start talking to him, and he just ... he had it before you did, you know, and that's it!

DOLDE: And so you have a ... you're aware we're building the new *Dove* there at the museum, but you haven't seen it or anything like that?

SLACUM: [01:27:29] No, I wasn't really, truly aware of the status.

DOLDE: Yeah. Well, if you decide you want to come and take a look, give me a call, and I'll make sure you can get in closer.

SLACUM: [01:27:40] You got a card, or?

DOLDE: Yeah, I do have a card. So, before we ... I stop the recording, was anything else you wanted to add about ... you've told me wonderful stories, I really appreciate it.

SLACUM: [01:27:50] You know, he just ... it was an important part of my life. My kids, well, Sam was born and Rachel wasn't yet, and you know, it was neat. I mean, Sam ended up with a connection to that time, you know, when he was at the keel laying ceremony, he climbed up on the thing, and it was pretty incredible. And he was extremely bright himself, and you know, made a lot of friends in his life that could do things, too, you know. Fascinating times.

DOLDE: All right. Well, thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE