

Joe Connor - 210716.0035

JENIFER DOLDE: This is Jenifer Dolde, it's Friday July 16th, 2021, I'm here at CBMM with my colleague Joe Connor. Joe your full name and your date of birth please.

JOE CONNOR: [00:00:14] Joseph Maris Connor, Jr. December 28th, 1981.

DOLDE: Actually just finishing the thought that you were starting as we gathered here, you were talking about just the legacy of some of the people like Joe Liener who were involved in the early years of the museum, many of them as volunteers, you know, how did you get to know about them and what's your impression of their impact on the boat shop?

CONNOR: [00:00:45] Yes, so you know as I picked through pretty much every collection boat, you know, I think the first, especially the first six years I was here I was mainly just doing floating fleet. So we would do the railway season, and then in the winter we would pick usually a project that we could finish in that winter season. So my first couple of years it was doryboat, we did some work on *Martha*, *Rosie Parks* was finishing up like right as I got here, but at that point there weren't very many people in the yard. Danny Sutherland had just left and so I had Rich Scofield, Mike Gorman, Jen Kuhn were on

staff when I started. And with Ed Farley always there because Ed is just, he's always lingering around with his charter business or oystering or something. So he actually, you know, it's been really fun working with him on this project, just because he's been in the community, and he's been in the business here for a really long time and in multiple capacities. So, yeah so trickling down just lunches with Scofield you know filling us in of like oh you know so and so did this and that on a boat that you'd be working on, and you know filling you in. Like the last time any major work was done on that it was Maynard Lowry or Joe Liener, you know. And then you start looking around at what the collection of tools that are, you know, I mean that we're all using, and you look at the names on a lot of them and you know, definitely the best collection that I've come across is Joe Liener's I mean he has I think he was in the Philadelphia Shipyard and came down as a volunteer and really helped with the first *Edna* restoration in the seventies. And you know everybody that I've learned from you know the generation above me has definitely I think held him as kind of like the premier shipwright of this area and I think a lot of people gathered as much as they could from him. And so, you know, what a cool legacy to give to a place to just volunteer

your time and essentially give a lifetime worth of knowledge to as many people as will listen. So that's pretty amazing.

DOLDE: I think one of the points Richard made about him is that you know first of all his way of teaching and explaining, and kind of leading people to probably a better choice. But also that you know for us we've heard of him because he's so prominent here at CBMM, but he never wanted his picture taken so there are a lot of great boat builders out there and you're more like probably the Jim Richardson, you know, the ones who get the attention. You know Richardson he was the spokesmodel or whatever for CBMM for so many years. He said I'm not a better boat builder than this person or that person, but some people just for whatever reason the project they're working on, and he was one of those quieter people that we only have a handful of pictures of. I thought that was an interesting transition. We'll come back to that, but I want to just start out with really the basics which is where you grew up, a little bit about your childhood, and maybe how you got started with this interest of yours.

CONNOR: [00:04:20] Yes, so I was born here on the Eastern Shore, in Centerville, and then at five years old we moved to East Tennessee. But I have a lot of family in the area, and I was privileged enough to spend most of my summers with my

grandmother up there who lives right on the Corsica River. So I don't really you know... like swimming and crabbing, and sailing like they've existed from my earliest memories and so I'd say the Corsica River and the Chester really kind of just drew me in. And the fact that it was connected to the rest of the world I remember being a kid and just playing around on sunfish or you know scooping crabs out of the dam, and just like really daydreaming about the fact that like oh I could get on a boat and go anywhere from here, you know, it's like it's connected, this water is pretty amazing. So I stayed interested in water and have done pretty much every activity you can think of on the water. And at 19 I decided that after kind of playing around with building some surfboards and other stuff that I was going to go get like formally educated in boat building. So I went to the Landing School up in Maine.

DOLDE: Before that did anybody in your family, were you directly taught or did you just kind of...

CONNOR: [00:05:44] Yeah I mean, well not building but definitely using, operating, repairing, maintaining vessels. We had just small sailboats and knock around, you know, we had one I remember it pretty vividly it was called *Putt Putt* and it was just a little like wood crab skiff, you know, with like a six horsepower outboard on it that we used for trout lining and

fishing and whatever. You know just tinkering around with keeping it painted and keeping it from leaking and you know so...

DOLDE: Was that your father's boat?

CONNOR: [00:06:24] Yeah that was my grandfather's, so my dad's dad who, so he was in the navy and when World War 2 was over, he I think he was originally from Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. So, he ended up buying this little plot of land on the Corsica for like ten grand, built himself a little brick rancher and started a pharmacy in Centerville, Connor's Pharmacy. And so my dad grew up there and he died young, I never met my grandfather, so it was always like really enjoyable to go visit my grandmother because we knew that she lived kind of out in the middle of nowhere on Pioneer Point by herself all the time. So like we all enjoyed staying there and there was a ton to do. So we never minded kind of being dropped off there as kids. I'm the third of four so my parents were pretty stoked to have some time to themselves, you know, occasionally in the summertime. So, I got to spend a lot of summer days up there, and I think that was the spark that kind of sent me into the industry was just that place and being able to share that with my siblings and my grandmother.

DOLDE: Did you know much about the larger boats on the Chesapeake either by observation or...

CONNOR: [00:07:49] Yes so the log canoe races are actually right there so I can remember, I remember seeing you know Judge North following the log communities up to it's called Middle Quarter Cove, which is like the first cove in the Corsica, like coming in from the Chester. And I remember seeing those boats and being really curious and kind of just like poking over there, like what's going on, and we'd go out and watch the races and being like wow that's, you know, those things are these crazy water spiders that look like nothing I've ever seen before. Yeah, and then there's obviously the pound nets and all the fishing activities that happened on the Chester I was exposed to. But we wouldn't really, you know, maybe in my youth I remember going to like Chestertown but other than Queen Anne and Kent County like we didn't really, you know what I mean, like I definitely had never ventured down here like to St. Michael's or the museum.

DOLDE: You were just here in the summers?

CONNOR: [00:08:57] Yeah pretty much.

DOLDE: What did your parents do for a living which took them to East Tennessee?

CONNOR: [00:09:02] My dad worked for the government so he when I was first born he was commuting over to D.C. and then he took a job in Oakridge, Tennessee. And yeah so we stayed there as soon as my youngest brother graduated they immediately moved back up here. Then I kind of traveled all over and ended up coming back about 2012, about ten years ago.

DOLDE: I wanted to back you up a little bit because I think it's fascinating, it's actually not dissimilar from Richard's story about spending weekends and summers rather with his grandparents and really becoming connected to this region. You mentioned leaving high school, did you like school?

CONNOR: [00:09:59] Yes, I was a pretty decent student. I'm a good test taker, like I picked things up, but it wasn't, you know, I kind of fumbled around. I got an instate scholarship to the University of Tennessee Chattanooga, kind of hated it, found an abroad program, and went over to the very north of Sweden for a year and got into some engineering programs. And kind of got like a little bit more enamored in building things, and then I ended up after that I decided you know I don't want to... there's nothing that college has to offer me essentially. So yeah I ended up enrolling in the Landing School and got trained in traditional boat building, took my first job right in Portland, Maine. And then from there worked in a couple of

different service yards. I went to New Zealand for a year, worked in the Bay of Islands at probably one of the biggest like full service boatyards that I've ever seen. It was on the north of the North Island, and pretty much it would collect cruisers that were going around the Pacific. There weren't a lot of ports where you could get things done. So, I was working for Ashby's which was like the wood boat part of this giant conglomerate, and we had three different travel lifts, a marine railway, there was sail makers, welders, mechanics, like you name it like all the way through. I think at any given time there were like 600-700 boats on the hard, so it was, that was a real eye-opener to me just to see how you know how busy the industry can be and how much is actually going on in the spectrum, right. Like we were working on a lot of fishing boats, you know, some yachts, but it was all, everything we did was either wood hull or wood interior and then there was a composite shop and a metal shop as you went down. And so I was kind of, at the Landing School they were really like eh there's not a lot of wooden boat work out there, you know what I mean. I feel like they really drove that message home, and so to find a place like that where I saw a lot of wooden boat work, you know what I mean, happening was pretty inspiring and the fact that I was like wow there's probably places like this all over.

DOLDE: What proportion of wooden hulled boats were at that enormous yard?

CONNOR: [00:12:47] Well everything where I was working was wood.

DOLDE: But you don't have a sense of how many hundreds on the hard?

CONNOR: [00:12:55] Yeah, probably maybe like 15%.

DOLDE: Pretty significant.

CONNOR: Yes.

DOLDE: Backing up you mentioned the Landing School, and this may be familiar territory for you, but I'm interested in how the trade, how the skill is taught. It's taught different ways in different places, what do you remember the most about your education and your training there and their approach to it?

CONNOR: [00:13:22] It was very formal; we would have a lecture of this is what we're doing for the next week or two. This is the, you know, but I think one of the best things was just giving me the library of resources, right, because every situation is different especially in restoration or when you're fixing something, you're never hitting the exact same challenge or problem. And so you know it was, I think the most helpful thing was just pointing me towards where to find information when I need it and what that good information was. So, when I

left there I thought I knew something, but I very quickly realized within the first couple of years that it's like anything it's just time and experience, and I think that this trade probably more than all others because it's such a conglomerate of trades, it's not just woodworking, it's not just rigging, it's not just mechanicals or systems or you know foundry work or welding, it's just, it's everything, it's all of them, you know, that you're going to be exposed to.

DOLDE: Did it give you a foundation in most of those areas?

CONNOR: [00:14:41] No, the foundation was in wood boat building, you know, just like small wood boat building. So we're talking like you know how to loft, how to read a set of drawings from a naval architect, and the basics of selecting good materials and how to put things together. But in hindsight it was very, very basic and I think... but you know it's like I said like most other countries that's a four or five year program, right and it was one year. So it's like how much can you cram into one year. And the idea there which I really do like is that they've got a naval architecture program, the traditional wood boat building, and a systems program. So their hope is that people take all three years and get exposed to a lot of different things. But for monetary reasons I went for a

year and just started working and figured I'd figure everything else out hands on so to speak.

DOLDE: From there what was your very first job?

CONNOR: [00:16:01] Very first job was at Portland Yacht Service in Maine, and I just worked there for... we finished up in June, I worked there until like September, so I was just there three or four months and then I got a work visa to New Zealand and immediately went over and started working at the Ashby Yard. And I was there a year, I stayed my full work visa and that was an amazing eye-opener to all the things that I realized I didn't know.

DOLDE: Did you have a particular mentor or mentors there?

CONNOR: [00:16:39] Yeah, the foreman, this guy Ian, he was probably like kind of like a Frank type character except for he was a little more adventurous. He had taken his family around the world twice and you know he had worked in yards all over the world, so it was really fun to be a foreigner. He was a native Kiwi, but he was really you know I think he really took a liking to the fact that I was traveling around and trying to learn, not just like how we do it in the U.S. but how it's done all over the place. And I kind of continued that, I ended up after that in Panama and I was there off and on in Panama for about two years working out of Bocas del Toro, Panama. And that's where I

think that's where I really fell in love with how simple boat building can be and like taking it to another level because I, you know, I helped a few native Panamanians build these Kayukos which are essentially just dug out canoes with a couple of riser planks and they use it to transport island to island. They could fit like 40 people and it's just this massive dugout canoe, but they were so simple to put together. I mean we did almost a 50 footer in like three months and there was three of us working on it.

DOLDE: That you get hooked up that's a very unusual step.

CONNOR: [00:18:15] I had got a boat and I was living on a boat there and I was doing work at a marina. So I was like fitting out interiors and just, you know, whatever I could find, and I ended up there was a few like cruisers who all had the same it's this French manufactured boat called an Amel and I did one interior and that just led to like four other like really similar jobs where I essentially just you know gutted and refitted the interiors of these like 1960s boats that needed some serious upgrades. So anyway as I was doing that I was just moonlighting, because that was to make a little bit of money, you know, to eat. But the Kayukos was like I was like this is awesome, you know, I was like this is so fun. And just going through that whole process I was like you know after being

trained in like lofting and you know the very western approach to putting a boat together and where like I think the average person would go cross-eyed, you know, and you describe what lofting is and how it works, and you know it's like it's a pretty complicated way of building a boat. So seeing like oh we're just going to put a couple of forms, we're going to dig this log out, we're going to send it at about this angle up to the sheer and we're done. I was like this is awesome. So from there I when I was down in Central America I met Eliza who is now my wife, and she was then living in New York. So I kind of chased her to New York and when I first got there I couldn't find any boat work, so I ended up working for a furniture maker for about six or seven months, which was like, it was really fun, you know. I mean just getting to that like small aspect of like detailed you know work and just fine joinery was fun. But pretty soon I got involved with the Scaranos, so they were four Italian brothers and they owned Scarano Boatbuilding in Albany, but they also owned the Classic Harbor line, so while I was in the city I found out that the, I think it was like a Craigs List ad like looking for somebody to do some work on schooners and I was like I'll go and see what this is all about. And I ended up taking a part time position there just sailing after work at the furniture shop and then I immediately liked it so much that I

quit the furniture shop and started working for them full time. And I would maintain and operate their boats in the summer in lower Manhattan right at the Chelsea Piers they had a fleet of six boats, so there were three schooners, and three power boats, and then in the winter the whole fleet would go up to Albany. So I would go up there and do all the maintenance, all the winter maintenance on the boats, pull all the rigs out and kind of go through them.

DOLDE: They were tourist vessels?

CONNOR: [00:21:35] Yeah they were their bread and butter, the Scaranos they build nothing, but coastguard inspected vessels. So they really take advantage of the Jones Act because you have to have a U.S. built boat to operate any kind of charter business, you know, within the United States. So, everything there's one up in Chestertown actually it's called the something packet, River Packet or something and they do the same thing, it carries like 50 people. They do like dinner, cocktail cruises, but in New York Classic Harbor line was pretty much operating like sail down around the statue and back. So I've made that trip a couple of thousand times, but yeah we would go out four times a day, it was long days in the summer, 16 hour days taking those boats out and that was fun, you know, for a while, but I liked the repairing and building so much more that I kind of

quickly wore out of it because I mean I worked my way, I deck handed for a little while, got enough time, got my license, started driving them as a captain. But even at that point it was just like you kind of felt like the bus driver, you know, it's like there's just a bunch of drunk people and you take them down to the statue and back, so it was like okay I'm over it, you know, like I get it. And you know I was like excited when things were like oh my god we lost our steering, this is great, you know, and like I've got something to do finally. So, yeah so about that time, as I was kind of getting fed up with that I started just working in Albany for a short period, so I just stayed up at the boatyard and they had *America 2.0* was up there being built which is a boat that I was really interested in because it was a replica of the schooner *America* and so I really enjoyed kind of getting involved with that. But once that launched and there was pretty much nothing but metal, you know, aluminum hulled boats I was like all right I've got to start...

DOLDE: So you did help with *America 2.0*?

CONNOR: [00:23:41] Yeah, I took the first sail on it it was like probably 2011, and then I helped them bring it down from New York to Key West the first season and actually yeah. So I when I was at the landing school I went to school with Mike Gorman and Matt Engel who Mike was... Mike came here I think

right after the Landing School for a short period as an apprentice, and then yeah so he had come back to the museum, I don't remember when, but was, you know, working and I stopped by and he kind of, he dropped his dream about the log kind of the resurgence of log building and that struck a really big nerve with me because you know, I'd already spent time down in Panama and I was really interested in these like primitive boats. And he was like yeah I think we're going to you know try to build a couple of small log boats and then work our way up to restoring the *Edna Lockwood*. And so I was like that sounds pretty amazing. At the time there wasn't a lot of funds in the boatyard so I started here part time and I built a shop up in Centerville on my family's property and got a sawmill with my brother and we were doing boat repairs, furniture, whatever we could, you know, for a couple of years from probably like 2012, 2014 and I think by probably 2013 or 2014 I was here full time. And then I was just moonlighting up in Centerville with some side projects. And it was about then that they were like all right you can build *Bufflehead* we're going to do that and then that's going to be the predecessor to restoring the *Edna Lockwood*. And so yes and then that whole experience was just amazing. So we took, you know, Pete kind of walked us through the most prominent, you know log canoe builders. And we looked

at a lot of different hulls and what we were going to do, and we ended up taking the boat over, the small boat shed, I'm blanking on the built... Landon is it the Landon canoe that was over in the corner that's like kind of falling apart. So we took that, we took the lines off of that because Landon was, he was renowned but like as you were saying before there's the people that kind of step into the spotlight and then there's the people that just kind of shy away from it. And it seemed like Landon was definitely one that stepped into the spotlight. I think he brought a log canoe to like the world 1890s or maybe like 1905 World's Fair in Chicago when they introduced electricity which I thought was just like kind of funny, but here it is 2021 and I'm building a 17th century reproduction, so it happens. But anyway there was a lot on Landon canoes, and they're supposed to be, you know, pretty well designed. So we took that canoe, and we shrank a little bit just for time, so we ended up building *Bufflehead* in like four or five months over the winter, which was pretty quick. But it was just kind of unbelievable to see firsthand what the challenges were going to be with *Edna* like when we scaled everything up. But we could see that like oh god the wing logs and especially at the ends where they taper was going to be a real problem. You know it was just like it immediately like once you kind of get in the space, which I'm a

very like process, I can't think eight steps ahead I just one step at a time, you know, bean by bean is what Ed says. But that's the way I like to make things, and so going through a small canoe like that and being able to see what was going to happen with *Edna* was just like pretty unbelievable you know, and we documented it. We're like oh yeah we're going to have a lot of trouble with this and that, so that was pretty awesome. And then we got it totally rigged out and have been sailing it for the past four or five years and it's been really fun to tinker with. But it definitely it set us up for the next two and a half, three years for *Edna Lockwood* finding all the material and you know...

DOLDE: That actually was going to be one of my questions because with that project you learned about the challenge of finding materials especially within locally but even within the region. What were some of the biggest challenges and I do want to talk about the *Edna* project as well. What were the biggest challenges you faced with that restoration?

CONNOR: [00:29:02] That we had learned a lot out of the *Bufflehead* but you know it was still one of those where with kind of western boat building it's so well documented, you have all of these reference books, like even for a boat like *The Dove* there's treatises, you know, there's like from the 15, late

1500s that give you the equations for oh you want to build a 40 ton ship well it's going to be this wide, it's going to draw this much, you know. And so you have this very specific kind of reference to go to, whereas we talked to Sidney Dixon which was like one of the only people alive that we knew had done anything really with log boats substantially. But other than that there weren't a lot of resources, so I think just having to rely on your own, you know your own experience was, it was a challenge and in a lot of ways an advantage, right, because it's like you just have to problem solve through it and be like, well to the best of our knowledge this is how it should be. And you know I would say it was pretty amazing having the park service come in, and the way that that whole project ended up coming together was really fun, just because it was so unusual for the way that you would...

DOLDE: The laser scanning?

CONNOR: [00:30:32] ... yeah, the way that you would normal, like normally restore a boat. So you know having that exact shape of the hull helped us out in laying out those logs, like a lot.

DOLDE: Was the plan to cut off the top part of the boat, rebuild the hull, was that the plan from the beginning?

CONNOR: It was.

DOLDE: Because that's been characterized with various work, some of which I won't repeat, but it worked. So I mean it was a radical idea yes?

CONNOR: [00:31:07] Yeah it was, but once we built, once we had built *Bufflehead* we realized that there is just, the way that those logs get drifted together you wouldn't be able to put the hull back with proper drifts by doing it any other way. So it was kind of, it was something that was just you know that was formulated out of necessity because if we wanted to, if we actually wanted to replace the log bottom in kind there was no other way we could even really come up with to do it. You'd have to fasten it differently, you know you'd have to make exceptions, you'd have to put more frames in, and fasten it more like a traditional western hull. And we didn't want to do that, Pete didn't want to do that, and so we were like all right the only alternative really is to build the log hull and then connect it to the topsides and what we do have. So, yeah and I would do it again, some people really disagreed with it, they're like oh you could drop... you couldn't I mean I think I've argued with Ed about it for days and days and days and he still thinks that he could do it, but he's never done a log bottom, and it's, you know, you can't.

DOLDE: You honestly believe there was no other way to do it?

CONNOR: [00:32:33] No, I really don't think there was, because you could have maybe done side... like you could have done one side and then you know other side possibly, but I think you would have ended up you know kind of in the same realm it would have been you know.

DOLDE: Just getting everything to fit that needed to.

CONNOR: Yes.

DOLDE: How did it feel the day that you cut the two pieces apart?

CONNOR: [00:33:06] It was exciting, it was really exciting, you know we had a much smaller crew at that point you know so it was I think there was five of us full time on that. We had three or six but one of the shipwrights was back and forth between the floating fleet and *Edna*. And yeah the day the big crane came, I think more than cutting it apart was because the boat, the last time the boat came out of the water which it was slated to go back off the railway I sent an intern in, Blake, with a vacuum to clean out the bilge. And when he got done I could see straight down through the log, I could see the drift pins that he literally vacuumed the log like out of the boat like there was just nothing. So the bottom was just crumbling to pieces and so there wasn't, you know, cutting it apart to me was like the whole thing needs to be replaced, so that was it.

But when you know the moment came to put the two pieces back together that was like, that was definitely a nail biter, it was like you know because you take a thousand measurements, and you think about it for days and days and you know at that point we'd probably worked on the bottom of the hull for almost a year. It took us you know two years just to find the logs, so you know when those two pieces of the puzzle go to line up it's like god I really hope we did it right this time. And we did, and yeah and it's pretty, what an opportunity you know what I mean like I just, my gratitude for places like this existing is huge. Because you know I've been able to kind of walk through history on like what, you know, what traditional building techniques for some reason were left behind and which ones persevere through until you know our current day and it's really funny like even with *The Dove* I find things and like why weren't they doing this in the fifties or the sixties or you know what I mean like this make sense, this is just a better way of doing it. But there's fads, right and we're people and we're always going to change things and modify things, and you know some stuff gets lost and some stuff makes it through, but I feel like being able to work in such a wide range of history gives you like more and more insight as to why those changes are why certain things kind of make it through.

DOLDE: You do feel that in our collection there's a wide variety of construction but you're also thinking about the people you've worked with as far as learning?

CONNOR: [00:36:08] Yes, absolutely, I mean you think about somebody like Ed for example, his background like everything is out of necessity, it's workboat, it's, you know, oystering, he's seasonal, he's doing charters, he's fishing, he's doing some boat work on the side. And so, you know, his skill set is like so much different than like the legacy of Danny Sutherland who was pretty much like a yacht builder. He built really nice lapstrake, small craft that were finished out like to the T. I think I've seen a couple of photos, he had a shop up in New York and he had taken like an old Ford dealership, and he had all these hulls like hanging in the windows and it's like this really cool, but I mean they're like hot rods, you know, I mean they're like gorgeous varnished, you know, and so yeah that's to me that's a pretty wide spectrum of people. And then the legacy of Joe Liener and what he brought, and you know educated Schofield, who you know I've learned from, is just the kind of service, you know, service yard hull yard which is you know that's a big part of it, like that's where I'd say most of the work is for any of the apprentices that were training here is in the service yards. If you have a way to get the boat in and out

of the water you've got a business, you know, because you're going to be able to pull and repair, and I think that's what most of what Joe Liener was doing on big ships out of Philadelphia for his career. So he saw you know things on a scale that I don't think anybody will see again just because that, you know what I mean, those sized wooden vessels are fading out really quick.

DOLDE: What would be the main difference in how you approach haul out even on a big vessel and a repair, even a major repair versus a new build because that seems like totally and entirely different challenges?

CONNOR: [00:38:21] Yes, it is, it is, it's like to me a new build feels like I don't know it's like a real privilege because you know you get to start from scratch and make all the mistakes that somebody else is going to have to deal with down the line so to speak. But no it's like the restoration, you know it gets a little funny because sometimes you, especially in like museum restoration you see something that like maybe wasn't even the best practice to begin with when the boat was built, but you have to put it back like that. So it takes a real discipline to be like it might not be the best practice in this situation but we're going to put it back like that because that's the way it was. Whereas new build you have the opportunity to collaborate

with a naval architect and a client and be like this doesn't really look like what you're going to want, let's think about this a little bit. And then you know as far as historical reproductions go you have this as I was saying especially in the western world, you have this huge gamut of information that like in the case of *The Dove* it's like not only do we have all these treatises of how British boats were built in the era, but we had actual examples, you know, they've been sitting on the bottom of the ocean for 400 years, the people have been sending these robot submarines down and just studying. So, to be able to look at you know actual images of something built in that era to really give you a sense of like this is how they were putting it together, this is the joinery that they were using, these are the materials they were using to fasten. And like that is yeah I mean what a treat right, you know as a boat builder or even as a captain or somebody it's like you want all the instruments, you want information from every single angle you can possibly get so that you can kind of formulate that and make your best decision and go forward. So I'd say this particular new build it's different than say something that I would have been at Scarano where it's just like it's a more modern boat, it's put together from all of this, thousands of years of people building boats and the best experience that we have. But it doesn't

really have to meet like exact historical accuracy it just needs to be coast guard certified, look like a schooner and you know what I mean like you're good to go. So there's definitely a little bit more restrictions on this but I kind of like, I like that the end product will be something that people will go through and look at and it's probably going to be something that they've rarely seen or never seen, and you know there will be details to it that will be completely foreign to I think people even that build boats now. You know like oh wow that's an interesting detail.

DOLDE: You mentioned a couple of things that are a fundamental difference between the 1970s *Dove* and the *Dove* you're building now. One of those main differences is the information that's available, and to what extent can we be critical of the previous iteration of *Dove* versus now. And the other thing is making conscious decisions based on the budget and what's best practice or what's new practice and compromising, having lots of discussions about that which they also did in the seventies, but they came to different conclusions probably because of budget and because of... so would you, what's your sense of the primary differences between the approach to the project in the seventies versus how you guys approached it?

CONNOR: [00:42:36] So I think there you know I think there's a lot more autonomy in the seventies because it didn't have to meet coast guard requirements, like I would say to me that's like my like our team's biggest hindrance is that we have to take something from the 17th century and make it meet modern regulations and requirements, and I think that that's a tall ask because in a lot of ways it's an oxymoron. It's like getting a modern naval architect to design one of these things, like a modern naval architect is concerned with speed, lightweight, you know, everything that *The Dove* is not essentially. And so I think it's kind of a, that's the continuous battle so I think that the approach in the seventies was, you know I talked to Jim Brightman and a few people that were involved in that project, but from my understanding they took William Baker's drawings and they took like six or seven sections of the hull, set those molds, built the frames, set those up and then hull molded the rest of the boat, which is much closer to how the boat would have been built in the 17th century as far as the layout. Whereas we had to meet all of these coast guard requirements so we needed to know weights and you know like all of these specific things for every little thing and so we ended up having a full set of drawings lofted it out and built every frame. So, it's kind of funny it's like I'd say in the initial layout, you

know, like they were like definitely closer to what would have originally been done. But then going forward from there the techniques used I think is like we switched 180. Because from there the 1970s *Dove* is built like a Chesapeake Bay workboat, you know, galvanized boat spikes, like you know every way that the boat was put together going forward from there was drawing off of Jim Richardson's knowledge of Chesapeake Bay built boats, so I think a lot of decisions were made, it's like oh this is how it's put together, and I think that that was looking at the Baker drawings he gave a great outline of the 40 ton boat, but you know there weren't a lot of super detail drawings of every little intersection of the boat. So I think that they just drew on their experience of building skipjacks and buy boats and different things. And so like the size, the scalings of a lot of the materials I'd say are a lot lighter than were original or that what we've gone back with. And I think a lot of that too is just having the advantage of all of the underwater archeology that's you know what I mean been presented in the last 40 years, like they didn't have that information and maybe that would have changed their decisions, maybe it wouldn't have because again they had a really small budget, so it's like you know it's like there's nothing efficient about doing a project like this, because it's a one-off and you're doing things totally different

than the way that most people are doing it and you know it's like when I visited the Viking Museum, one of the things that I really appreciated was when they started reproducing they found some of the burials and they found some really intact hulls and they saw the way it went together. And their board of governors made a decision that they didn't want to hire any professional boat builders, because they were worried that professional boat builders would just build it the way that they knew how to build it. So they hired a bunch of young people who were just interested in wood working and interested in making Viking boats. And now this was like early 1980s, so now there's like this group of these like unicorns who like that's all they've ever built are these you know Viking replica ships, but they did it you know what I mean in the exact manner. From like writhing out the planks, so splitting the logs like no sawmills, using all the tools that they would have used, going into the forest, and harvesting the pine tar for example. They'd spend, they told me they were spending like a thousand hours like per like 50 liters of pine tar just for the finish, they'd pile up all the pine, cover it in dirt, extract the pine tar, I mean they were doing it all.

DOLDE: So true experimental archeology.

CONNOR: [00:47:48] Yes, in every sense of that idea, yes.

DOLDE: And they committed to this in the eighties.

CONNOR: [00:47:51] So this is the Roskill Museum, but that being said it's like that, you know what I mean you know what I mean like that mentality that you're experience, point being Jim Richardson's experience very much played into you know hey guys like we've got this much money, we've got this much time, do you know what I mean, this is what we're going to do. And so at this juncture the State of Maryland has put and St. Mary City they've put a lot more into it. They had a committee like research it, they had Will Gates and Joe Greeley go through, you know, everything that the current *Dove* didn't have and that they wanted to include, and then they brought in Fred Hocker who obviously is the underwater archeology aspect to provide, you know all the details that they could possibly wish for.

DOLDE: But they're not... they still want skilled boatbuilders, they're trusting the ability of them to help provide interpretation and for you to apply that interpretation.

CONNOR: Yes.

DOLDE: And my impression is when compromises are made they're made, how are they made are they made together, or were they made prior to the build, or are you doing it as you going along, you may be doing a bit of both?

CONNOR: [00:49:11] No, I'd say most of them they were all done, they were all thought out ahead of time, it was all pretty much discussed before the boat was even drawn, most of it anyway. The really big decisions you know like putting external ballasts, you know, strapping 20,000 pounds on the bottom of it instead of loading everything in the interior I think is a great example.

DOLDE: Why was that choice made?

CONNOR: [00:49:42] Stability, that was so that it would meet coastguard stability requirements was the big one. And then you know engines and having any kind of modern systems whatsoever that was made pretty early on that they wanted to have a small galley and have it work as something that people would enjoy going out on for pleasure. So yes, but I think that as far as for me as a builder we've been really lucky that we've really been able to kind of insist on a few, you know what I mean, portions that I think are really important that are both visual and structural that I think people will see. Like the trunnel fastening for example is a huge one, the first name architects we started working with was like oh you can't get a trunnelled boat coastguard fastened and that was just a deal breaker, so we were like well we're going to find somebody who will. Because I know like Harold Burnham is a pretty well-known boat builder up

in Massachusetts and he's built I don't know probably a half dozen I can think of that are all coastguard certified and they're all trunnel fastened. And so I kind of went to him and was like hey how did you do it, who did you go through, who do I need to talk to.

DOLDE: I do want to note that in talking with the seventies guys they did use some trunnels?

CONNOR: Yes.

DOLDE: Okay, all right, but this was just that they supplemented it substantially with the galvanized.

CONNOR: [00:51:21] Yes, which is a big reason you know I think is a big part of where the backbone, you know and then the other is like galvanized or like steel in general is tough on wood boats like the longevity is just not there. So using silicone rods instead of steel is a really big one, and I don't even remember the original question.

DOLDE: My impression was that my uneducated impression was they used no trunnels on the seventies *Dove* and then somebody was talking to me about making them from black locust and so I was trying to understand where the...

CONNOR: [00:52:05] Yes, I think they used trunnels to hold the frames together, the double sawn frames, and then all the planks were fastened with galvanized boats like boat nails essentially

big square boat nails, which it's also like it's a time thing too. It's like you know you get to a point where you're making every little thing like we're casting all of the pieces, and I will say that fastening a plank which is what I've just been doing all day today, to use nails or screws cuts about 75% of the time of fastening. To drill one inch holes through 16 inches of wood and then drive them a lot of times like straight uphill and then wedge both ends over a 24 foot plank is it takes three of us a half day to fasten one plank, whereas like if I was doing that with screws I could do it by myself in about an hour. So you're talking, it's a lot. And luckily Fred Hocker was telling us that the decks were all fastened, so originally when I was going into this I was like I knew obviously John Swain, and you know, I had gone through *Sultana* and looked at *Sultana* and I was really surprised that the decks of *Sultana* were trunnel fastened. And I was like wow and that boat is about 100 years after the *Dove* in history and I was like man that's like you know for some reason I was thinking they were nailing them, anyway so I was like oh I guess we'll be trunnel fastening the decks as well. But Fred Hocker said that you know all the boats he had found they were all nailed decks, they were all like wrought iron nailed decks. So we're going to be going back with silicone bronze screws on the decking which...

DOLDE: So tell me about the silicone because I haven't seen that.

CONNOR: [00:54:15] It's just bronze so it's just the 655 it's what all pretty much any piece of metal that we have, so all of our bolts it's like that orangish yellow metal.

DOLDE: They're dipped or something?

CONNOR: [00:54:32] No, it's just the alloy. So there's a bunch of different types of bronze, there's like manganese bronze, aluminum bronze, naval bronze, but 655 is the like actual alloy but that is the best suited to use in saltwater.

DOLDE: That's a pretty modern, when was that innovation?

CONNOR: [00:54:56] Silicone bronze that's a good question.

DOLDE: I can look it up, I'm just curious.

CONNOR: [00:55:01] I have no idea and that's, you know, and I'd say the third other than historical accuracy coast guard certification I'd say the third, at least for the state, was longevity, that's it's going to last, because they were obviously putting a lot into it, and they want it to last a long time. So that's you know the number one kind of decision maker for using silicone bronze instead of wrought iron. So historically they would have used wrought iron for all of those, like everything bolted, nailed, you know, riveted would have all been wrought iron which is why the life expectancy of the boats

in that time was 5-10 years. So the saltwater hits the wrought iron it just blows it apart essentially.

DOLDE: Do you have an estimate of how long you're hoping, planning for this vessel to... ?

CONNOR: [00:55:57] I think 50 years with a little bit of maintenance, and it could be a lot longer because we used the frames are all live oak which is really really rot resistant and I imagine those are going to be around for hundreds of years, but you know it really I think it could last 70, 80 years with maybe one planking replacement. But yeah I'm thinking it's going to last a long time.

DOLDE: Surprisingly the seventies *Dove* has been around quite a while with significant repair.

CONNOR: [00:56:43] Yeah, and without the use of and it's a known entity why the problems that exist, exist because of the galvanized steel, it's just you know for the same reason the wrought iron gave out, saltwater hit it, it blows up, it blows the wood apart, you know what I mean just like when you're splitting firewood, it's like if you have a bunch of bolts that are holding everything together that are just constantly getting bigger, like eventually something is going to give or rot. And so yes that's what's going on with it, but it was a really well-built boat and I think that you know when was it 78, 79, it was

launched something like that, so I mean I think it has well surpassed its lifespan as far as wooden boats go.

DOLDE: Did you know anything about Jim Richardson having grown up in this area or once you got to wooden boat school was that, was somebody on your radar?

CONNOR: [00:57:46] Yeah, I had, somebody had given me one of his books which is a really funny like kind of quirky little book and I really enjoy it because...

DOLDE: The *Jim Richardson Boat Book* is that the one you have?

CONNOR: [00:57:56] Yeah, it's like maybe a hundred pages or something. So somewhere along the line somebody had given that to me, so I was familiar with him, just firstly through that book, and then as I settled back in here in the last ten years obviously I really got to know about him and then his reputation. And yeah and like I think most people it's like you settle back into an area that you've kind of known from your childhood. But I guess I didn't, I never really put it together like how kind of scrappy and no nonsense Chesapeake Bay boat building really was until I came back. Because as a kid you just kind of like you see it, but you don't pick the details like after you've taken a bunch of them apart and serviced a bunch, you know, and seen boats built from all over Europe and Australia, New Zealand, Asia and like you know at the point

where I came back here I was like oh wow that's like, that's a really simple way of doing that but it works. And I think that that's my biggest admiration for Jim Richardson is that you know the simplest way is always the best way and that's what moves the project forward and I think that's what enabled him to build as many boats as he did, and you know kind of span the career that he had. And that's, you know, I think that's one of my favorite parts of this area, you know what I mean, it's just that style of building and that way of building like kind of came out of necessity in a lot of ways.

DOLDE: And economics.

CONNOR: [00:59:47] Yes and economics, yes, and I think it ultimately it's all purpose built and it's all for a reason you know, and I really like that.

DOLDE: You mentioned and I'm still trying to connect with Jim Brighton, I've talked to Tom, I'm just playing phone tag with him. But what did you learn from Jim Brighton as you moved into this project. You said you chatted with him?

CONNOR: [01:00:09] Yeah, so he works on the project I think almost all the way through and was one of the few. So he was the one that gave me the information example of like how they laid it out, that they didn't loft it, but they just set up, well they lofted six frames and then set it up and ended up

putting batons up and whole molding the rest of it. And you know he's really funny, he also was like you know kind of adamant about how little budget there actually was and you know he had some really funny stories. He was like 'oh by the time we got it planked up I could fit my whole arm through the garboard and the broad strait because the wood was so green,' you know, as it went onto the boat that, you know. And then so yeah but that's again it's like you know ain't nobody got time to watch this wood dry, you know, air dry like we're moving, you know what I mean and that is so, you know, like that is Chesapeake Bay boat building. You know at least what I've encountered, and you know there's still quite a few people out there doing it like that, but yeah I would say that we brought a little bit more of the British or European approach of just the fact that we've been contracted for the state and the full public view and hoopla, like we air-dried everything. We're not, you know what I mean like we're not quite as cowboys as I think they were able to be at that point. But, yeah, and so he gave me a lot and he had some funny stories about Jim, but he was really excited when he found out that the project was going to happen and you know he's like oh it's, you're going to have a good time with it.

DOLDE: Well I'll connect with him eventually that I did, that will help me as I plan my questions for him. Another thing these two projects have in common is being built as you said in public view. Here at CBMM quite a bit more probably than they did although I think people make pilgrimages down to Jim's yard all the time, and we're you know Jim dealt with them I think primarily, but you know in everybody else's estimation we're kind of irritating and ask a lot of the same questions. Tell me about as honestly as you about the challenge of building this vessel in public view.

CONNOR: [01:02:49] Yes, I think it's the, I think at least having the experience of working here for you know a number of years before I started this project definitely helped, but it was one of the thing that immediate, you know, all the yards I worked in before that it's like maybe you were dealing with a client you know whose boat it was who would pop by for like a minute and have a couple of things to say, but it definitely wasn't to the degree. I mean I remember being like underneath the *Rosie Parks* like hanging planks in a hurry because we were behind and it was like you know those first couple of months of just always somebody over your shoulder like are you doing, you know what I mean. And just being in that was like kind of jolting right because it's like I was before that I was in a

dark corner of an Albany boatyard working by myself, you know what I mean like with the headphones on and not really interacting. So I think at first it is a little bit jolting and then more and more I just really, I appreciate it, it's like people want to connect and I think that doing projects like this it's like people always want to weigh in, they always want to give an opinion but that's their way of connecting with a project is what I eventually, it's not that they you know are trying to give any like real advice, they just want to show that they have some connection to it. And I think that that like that's the service, right, that's the service for the community it's connecting whether you're eight years old or you're ninety-eight years old like you can all you know what I mean kind of like be in one project and see it happening and watch the synergy of a bunch of people like putting a plank on and doing whatever. And I think that everybody that comes through they recognize that and then they want a little piece of that, and you can kind of see it in them and they'll start asking you like the same annoying questions, but it's like you know really all they're after is sharing in the experience of what it's like to work towards something like that with a big group of people. And I'm happy to share that because for me that's like the, it's what gets me out of bed in the morning it's fun you know. It's

fun to watch the slow buildup of like finding the tree, get it fashioned in generally the right shape, and somebody spends weeks and weeks you know fitting it and then like that moment where everybody has to like grab an end and like throw it up there and it fits you know just the way you want it, and it all gets fastened. Like this week we put on the outer stern post and two king planks in a day and it's like just to watch it grow like that is really exciting. So I think a lot of times I think it's encouraging, you know, being in the full public view because people are coming through oh wow that's amazing, that's awesome. So like during Covid it was a little weird you know because the cheering section went away and we became more of just a normal kind of yard and there's advantages to that too, but I think all in all I think it's a privilege to be able to be on stage to build it and let people wander through and be part of it. And I think that that's, it gives more of a connection for the boat going forward you know. People will be oh I saw that when it was halfway built and they were doing this, that or the other. So I think it all adds to the story.

DOLDE: You were talking a bit about materials, get back a little bit to some of the basics, talk to me about some of the material choices that were made and why, but also how those

materials are to work with versus maybe more traditional materials.

CONNOR: [01:07:00] Yeah, so it was I think it was Will and Joe Greeley had found evidence that there were tropical hardwoods being used in the early 17th century that the forests of England you know were not completely depleted but were definitely being stressed and that they were trading with North Africa and different places and there's was definitely the existence of, you know, and so that, in the very beginning like it wasn't even really a conversation it was a pretty bold request that the backbone which is the part of the ship, the current ship that is failing which was out of local white oak, and as much of the bottom planking as possible were tropical hardwoods. Because I think that over you know St. Mary's experience with the vessel is that's where they spent the most time and money trying to maintain, and I think that you know obviously they didn't want to have to do that again. So we went with Cortes or Ipe for the backbone, which is a hideously awful material to work with, it makes me itch just looking at it. When you cut it, it has a sheen like when oil hits the top of the water and it turns like every color imaginable it's like purple, red, green, yellow, you know, it's like you know that it's just not good for you just by glancing at it, you know. So the dust of that is extremely

irritable, all the kind of like it has really kind of short dense grain, it sinks in water it doesn't even float, and so it's extremely heavy, it's not fun to work with, the dust is pretty terrible. Angelique is a little better but not a whole lot that's the bottom planking and then live oak is you know true to its name; it's always moving with the seasons it's gaining and losing moisture content and moving all over the place. Which you know it's funny like the things, so you know a lot of things I found out about 17th century boat building, and you know even the way Jim built it is like everything's green. And when you're building with like really green material it's like clay, like it works so much easier all your edge tools like you're working more as much water right as wood grain. So the more water and the bigger those cells are the easier they are to slice especially with like you know hand tools. So you know especially with planking letting things dry out a little bit it becomes a lot more difficult to work. So our framing stock all of the live oak we worked green, and so all of that framing and making all those frames we've worked really green. The planking as I said we've air dried you know so that it swells up tight. But you know I think from everything I've read and all of the information I've gotten from a lot of different people is in the 17th century they would have been like as quick as they could get

it from the forest onto the boat they would have been you know just using the freshest material available. And part of that too is you know until you get any kind of like, even if it's pine tar but until you get stuff on the wood it's like the UV once you take the bark off of a tree the UV is absolutely brutal and I think that like even more so now than probably in the 17th century, it's harsh and it just it really fatigues the lumber.

DOLDE: How does it change it and your ability to work it?

CONNOR: [01:11:11] It dries it out really quick and then it splits and checks it, so it makes it you know kind of unusable in a lot of situations. But so you know and then going forward it's like we used white oak for all the topside planking which I think is a natural choice. Black locust as well for the trunnels which is also, and then as much Osage as we can get our hands on just because it's a very stable material that's not going to move around on you which is very unusual in an organic sense. Fir is a classic deck when you're doing any kind of laid deck these days you're either doing like a yacht deck out of teak. St. Mary's City was extremely adamant that they did not want the boat to look like a yacht and I think that that was mainly Jamestown had two similar boats commissioned and they both were built at a yacht yard up in Maine and they look like yachts. They are teak laid decks with like Sikaflex seams, and

you know so they were like we want a traditional deck. So the choices there are pretty limited you know, and I was able to get my hands on a lot of really nice old growth Doug fir which is what we're going to put down for the decks. I mean that material is pretty incredible and the spars as well, but that's also, that was driven a lot historically too because the natural stability of just getting lighter material as you go up the hull and up the structure I think is a very historically accurate portrayal. And then for spars and everything we also went with fir just because it was in line with the rest of the deck.

DOLDE: And that's coming from the west?

CONNOR: Yes.

DOLDE: What did you get, you got the live oaks from Georgia?

CONNOR: [01:13:18] Live oaks from Georgia, the Angelique and the Cortes were from Serna and all of the fir is from either BC, mainly BC, the broker that I used is in Port Townsend, Washington, but the actual material came from Canada.

DOLDE: Black locust?

CONNOR: [01:13:47] Black locust is New Hampshire, so that's all East Coast and local, Osage is all local, white oak is all local, Atlantic white cedar that just came in this morning that was from Florida. We do have some Atlantic white cedar but not much left most of it's like in the Virginia part of the

Chesapeake Bay and then down into North Carolina, but kind of like longleaf yellow pine it just was so over harvested in native wooden boats that there's not a whole lot of it left on the east coast.

DOLDE: Cedar will be for what?

CONNOR: [01:14:26] Cedar will be the planking on the quarter deck and then also the bulwarks on the main deck.

DOLDE: I know I appreciate that getting this wood and probably the cost of the wood was one of the more challenging parts of the project.

CONNOR: [01:14:46] Just finding good, it's like you put so much, there's so much research that's going in right on the forefront. So you've got like thousands of man hours into just researching, designing, and so you know as a builder you want to have the material that's going to last as long as it possibly can for each part of the boat. And because there's not a lot of these projects going on in traditional wooden boat building in general isn't a really big industry anymore, it's hard to find quality, most everything you find is like second growth with really big growth rings and it's nothing that's going to last very long in a boat. So trying to be picky about your material selection becomes really difficult really quickly and there's just not a whole lot of places that you can find, you know,

really high quality old growth trees. You know there's a lot of really interesting books about it, but you know most of traditional wooden boat building is just material, you know what I mean like the timing of your material, handling, and then the knowledge of what, you know, what trees do what for you. So, I'm like really fascinated in it, but I've read there's a German guy who has put out a book, and essentially the idea is in a true old grove forest a tree sprouts, it grows, it's way under the canopy and it stays way under the canopy for a really long time. And it's storing and waiting for a bigger tree to eventually come down, so it has enough sun. And so what ends up happening is the growth rings are really tiny because it doesn't have this like huge influx of sun and nutrients or whatever for it to grow. So in that setting you get amazing material for building things like boats because you get this like really tight grain, really nice material that's going to last a really long time. But in the modern day and age we have essentially tree farms where like every 70 or 80 years you come through and this is the practice even on the Eastern Shore where it's like you know usually once a generation a big farm will go through, and they'll cut the timber and you know put that away for whatever and then let it regrow and then another 80 years. Well what happens when you do that is that all of those little

saplings get kind of like oversaturated in nutrients and they grow really quick, but the resulting material is like the difference between steel and cotton. It's like it's huge especially when you put it under a lot of fatigue and stress and different things. And so it's kind of his whole point is that it's a new material, it's almost like a completely different material and so you know part of you is like well thank god we don't build wood boats like this anymore because there would be not a single old growth tree left on the planet you know I think I'd buy steel. Because it makes more sense it really does, I mean just a 60 foot ship like this like I've put just in the framing we had 260,000 pounds of live oak you know just to frame the boat, and then you know all in all we've had probably 14 tractor trailer loads of wood, you know, and this is a small, right this is a 40 ton, this is like the smallest ocean going ship. So it's an amazing amount of material, there's no doubt about it. You know I think the challenge is like you know where do you draw the lines with different things. I mean obviously you have restrictions on budget, like you can't you know what I mean like buy like every perfect piece that you would ever want. But I think one way that we've been pretty creative about supplementing it is just being open to what is around in the local area and we've gone and gotten a lot of white oak and a

lot of Osage and a lot of ash and a lot of different things and utilized the fact that you know we do have a sawmill and we can make our own material. And so we've done a lot of that which you know given maybe a larger time span I think it would have been really fun to source it all that way, but the state didn't want to wait 10 years for me to go collect all this from downed trees during storms. But yeah I mean because I did have a sawmill up in Sandersville too I just, you know I've kind of had my fingers on the pulse so now it's like when a storm comes through and trees are coming down like my phone is ringing off the hook for like two weeks, like we've got a loblolly, or we've got a white oak, we've got this, and to me that's like that's a really fun part. Because it's like it's not detritus I mean it's not garbage but in a lot of people's yards it's like they wouldn't have done anything with it, the log would have just sat there and rotted.

DOLDE: Cut it up for firewood if it's fit for that.

CONNOR: [01:20:13] Yeah, at best yeah. And so you know it is fun to be like oh this came down in a storm and now we're going to make boat parts out of it. You know it's like there's something really satisfying about that. But yeah we did have a timeline, so you know we weren't able to do that with all of it,

but I think that is kind of my general approach to material collections.

DOLDE: I think the lack of these resources in our local and regional area is actually a great parallel story to the depletion of other resources like the fisheries and so you know as stewards of history I think you actually just did a really great job of explaining that even though I thought I knew it and I'm sure you get lots of questions about materials. So I will try to do a good job of explaining just all the subtleties of why the decisions were made and it's not just about durability, there's lots of other factors as well. But I think it's interesting to compare it to, you know, your fisheries fade away, boat building fades away in part for a variety of reasons but also because of you know the materials needed to build the boats.

CONNOR: [01:21:23] Yeah and I think you know in boat building it's like I think people will be building wood boats until the last tree is left, just because it's so well suited and it's like you know as we go through these different fads of civilization you know, we're in a point where people are starting to pay more attention to the environment and they do want things that are compostable and whatever, it's like a wooden boat is the best example of that ever, right, like a

thousand years from now there's not going to be any *Dove* it's just going to be, you know there will be some bronze laying around but that's it right like it's biodegradable which is a beautiful, you know what I mean you're in a natural cycle that way, you know, and I think that's part of what I've always really enjoyed about it is, it's, I don't know if you're familiar with Andrew Goldsworthy he's an artist but he does these like they're kind of like these silly things but they never last. He'll take a long time, like he gathered like tons of flower petals just to put in the stream so that for a moment they're like flowing by this one part and they're all there. Or he'll build like there's something really elaborate that'll get reclaimed by the tide, you know, so it's like but I feel like wooden boat building is a lot like that because it's like there's so much that goes into it, but you know the whole time that it's like this is an organic material that will decompose just like my compost pile in the backyard.

DOLDE: If I remember correctly that earlier you characterized yourself as kind of a process person and that's a consistent theme of what I'm hearing from the different...

CONNOR: [01:23:03] And also just like the cycles of things you know it's like I really appreciate that, like I think being introduced to the water it's just like you I think gain a

natural appreciation for that, right, for the tide and the different cycles and seasons. It's like for me this trade very much ties into that, it's just you know there's a real connection in it and I think that like even now it's like I can't look at a forest without just picking out the species, thinking about what I would use, oh that would be a nice keel, or whoa look at the knees on that, and it's like it's a sickness and an obsession but it's also a kind of fun cycle to be a part of.

DOLDE: Just we could touch briefly on you know you're using a variety of tools, so you're using the tools that are best suited for the job, that are more modern, you're also using tools that are very traditional. Talk to me about the pragmatic ways you made choices to use one type of tool versus another.

CONNOR: [01:24:12] Yeah, you know, the tool usage I think is one of the fascinating stories about you know both like 17th century *Dove*, Jim Richardson now because the way that it's all done, and this was actually mostly I picked up from my trip to the Vassar was I didn't realize like how specialized 17th century boat building actually was. You know it's like if you drilled holes you didn't cut, you weren't using a saw, you never looked at a saw you drilled holes, you know, and so you had a guy who came to work, he had all of his different size augers and he

bored holes. And that is all he did, he wasn't allowed to use a saw, he didn't join pieces of wood together, he didn't hang planks, he bored holes. And so when you think about it in that respect you know they'd be working in a yard with three or four hundred people but highly specialized, right like very much like zoomed into that one activity so that you would get really good at it, right because you didn't have the ability to use machines, right so it's like the repetition and that like 10,000 hour theory of getting good at something was really what they were basing the work structure on and I think that now we let everybody do everything. You know I mean every member of my team I think has done like every part of the boat building all the way through because we're so fascinated with it and we want to learn you know what I mean like all these different techniques so that we can be valuable to society so that I can go oh yeah I can read drawings, I can make this, I can make that, I can use all of these different machines and all of these different tools. And so we have this like real push or desire to learn more and more, you know what I mean it's like I don't want to just know how to drill holes, I want to know how to join things, I want to know how to hang planks, I want to know how to weld and cast and all of it. So I think that that is like it's kind of an interesting paradigm to think about anyway, right is

that we have ten people with like a full gamut of machines and tools that they use all day. Whereas it would have been you would have had your tool essentially and that's what you would have done. So I think that yeah it's a, it's a luxury really do you know what I mean to not just be like okay you got really good at boring holes, and you know you're going to continue doing that for the next 35 years or whatever.

DOLDE: Well it's hard to be a process person if you only do one part of the process.

CONNOR: That's exactly right.

DOLDE: And again that's one of the commonalities between all of these boat builders everybody's seeking a different experience learning to add to their tool kit, their skill set, and their tool kit and you don't get that if you do it the 17th century way.

CONNOR: [01:27:32] Exactly and I think that I still love like I still love to use an adze and an axe, but I'm going to do all of my relief cuts with a chainsaw, you know what I mean. I'm not going to... it's like you borrow the things as it makes sense and there are areas where it's just like it doesn't, it's going to take you more time to run the extension cord and get the thing plugged in than it would be to just like grab a saw and make a couple of cuts and you're there, so it's like but you

know I think that yeah I don't know. I think that it is it's learning how to use all of those tools from that era, it's fascinating and it's one of those things that you could take, I don't know if everybody sees it this way, but I definitely do. It's like knowing that people got that good at using one tool, you know, whatever it was does make me really appreciate the fact that I could stay at this for like seven more lifetimes and you still would be like probably not even as good as that person was at whatever. So I think that there's something in that, you see glimpses of it especially with guys like Jeff and Frank who have been doing it a long time where it's like you know how hard whatever they're making or like a cut they're doing or whatever is happening, you know that it's really difficult, but they make it look really easy. And that's like, those little moments that happen where somebody's like doing something that would take us normal like untrained people like a very long time to do and then just doing it like quickly and making it look easy it's like wow you know, it's like I think that's kind of what the aspiration of most boat builders is right, it's just like yeah at some point I hope this gets easier.

DOLDE: Let's talk a little bit more about the crew because one of the interesting things which I'm sure you know about the seventies crew is that most of them were pretty much novices.

My next door neighbor which I think I've mentioned to you Bill Slacum about seven, eight years older he was kind of a master carpenter, he worked with John Swain interestingly enough and I need to follow up on that, I just found that out.

CONNOR: [01:30:11] You actually should because maybe I'm wrong about this, but I think Swain worked for Jim Richardson for a while.

DOLDE: I'm not sure if they worked, maybe Swain's next, I'm hoping to talk to him next week, I just need to make the phone call.

CONNOR: [01:30:23] You should put him on your list because maybe I'm wrong but I'm almost positive...

DOLDE: I know Bill went from John Swain's to Richardson's.

CONNOR: [01:30:32] Maybe they were both working in Cambridge, but I know that Swain worked in Cambridge for a while.

DOLDE: He did he was north of the Choptank where the ferry boat used to be, you know where I'm talking about. That's what Bill said. But you know so Bill had skill, obviously Mr. Jim did, he was aging of course at that point, and Jim Brighton was there, and he you know, with all of these other people, you know, who were now very skilled, you know, Jim Elk, June Wingo had been a waitress, Freddie Asplen very skilled, they worked there on *Constellation* for a year or more beforehand. But yeah

they were novices whereas you have, well you have a range of people, so and then of course there were several women on that crew but again they weren't in it to become boat builders although they became very skilled. So talk to me a little bit about the mix and the crew you have.

CONNOR: [01:31:20] Yes, so I'd say going into it we had quite a few pretty green, you know, what I mean and very novice. But we also obviously Frank [Townsend] and Ed [Farley], you know they're my solid mid to late sixties. They're just gems as far as experience goes, and then Jeff [Reid] and myself both have around about 20 years, you know, experience. But then after that most everybody is like less than you know I think definitely less than ten years, and in a lot of cases less than five years. Michael Allen and Spencer [Sherwood] started here as apprentices you know under Gorman and I, Matt Hummel's like two years in, Clara [Zinky] was brand new, let's see Sam [Hilgartner] is like right about at like six or seven years, you know. But he's really I think his time at the park service out in San Francisco served him very well, or he took advantage of it I think.

DOLDE: He's a specialist in a certain sense, yeah.

CONNOR: [01:32:41] Yeah, he is a specialist, he is an absolute specialist. Cole [Meyerhoff] he was in art school and then got

into boat building, but that's I think you know all in the last five years. So I'd say probably about 60% of the crew you're looking at five years or less of boat building experience. So some experience, definitely experienced with tools, but yeah still pretty new to it. Then I was really excited to get Frank involved just because he's the only one who has actually done this era ship and there are like, the scale of it is just it's kind of, you know, you're like oh yeah it's only 60 feet. And when I think of 60 feet it's like I've built a few boats in that range from scratch new and I've restored a lot of them, but you don't think about like you know it's like *Edna* we could stack *Edna* up like five or six times and then you would get the *Dove*. And so it's like just the amount of material and that you know what I mean it's a lot, it's a lot. So I've definitely appreciated and drawn on his experience of doing a couple of these reproductions before, because there are a lot of moments that he's come through huge of like well we could do it like this and it's like oh yeah that would definitely be the easiest way forward at this point.

DOLDE: Do you have teams or does everybody kind of move around at different aspects of the project?

CONNOR: [01:34:33] Yes, different timing, you know like when we first started I had a crew Spencer, Frank were primarily

lofting, the rest of us were all working on the backbone. And then we got into framing and that was a full crew you know those pieces are just big and heavy and getting the boat framed was like everybody working together all the time. Since then we've broken off, I have a deck crew, and a planking crew, and usually I try to keep at least one Jeff, Ed, Frank, myself with the younger group just to keep it balanced. But for the most part I'm doling out projects, giving people drawings, this is what we need, and then if you have questions come to me, Jeff, Ed, Frank, whoever is around, and it's so far worked out pretty well where it feels like a pretty healthy collaboration.

DOLDE: But you senior guys are teachers and so people have different teaching styles, how would you characterize your own teaching style?

CONNOR: [01:35:50] Yes, I'm very much like I'm going to explain this, I'm going to explain it to you, I'm going to do it a couple of times, and then I want you to try. That's the way I've always been is just like everybody, a lot of this stuff until like you just need to get it in your hand and physically feel out what it is to do it. And then I feel like that has been my best with apprentices and with everybody because it's like I do like the kind of the Japanese adage of like you just watch, you just watch, and you just watch. But I think to keep

that generation of people engaged and wanting to work it's like a little much, and so I definitely try to, I push people to get hands on, you know, probably maybe even before they're like completely comfortable with it, just because I think it helps, really helps their own engagement in the process. And thinking about like oh okay once we do this, we do this, and thinking about the processes and really trying to get them in my headspace of these are all the things that we have to do to get to the point we want to get to, and I don't want to be the one to always have to be like okay, now it's a, b, c, d, e, like to be able to try to train somebody so that they see b, c, d at like halfway through a being done is my goal. So that they are not like oh this weekend I'm going to go to the beach, because it's like you can drift out, people drift out out there all the time, and that becomes dangerous in and of itself. It's like so I think keeping people like very engaged, very focused on everything that's going on is kind of my teaching style. It's like I want you here and I think that for most tradesmen that engagement and that movement and that ability to kind of like shut the cell phone off and clear your head for a minute that's the zen that I think we're all looking for is like those days that you come in and have coffee and then all of a sudden it's like four o'clock and you're like what just happened. And then

you kind of look at what just happened and you're like oh my god I did that today it's amazing. But like really you've just been in this kind of cycle of a, b, c, d, e, a, b, c, d, e, and going through it, and you're just making it, and you're pretty much for the most part unconscious. I think it definitely is easier I think for the senior people to just come to work and plug into that than it is, you know, because I see the scramble sometimes where it's just like young guys are just kind of going in circles like looking almost like they're looking for a tool but not able to find it. But really it's just they can't see b, c, and d so they're like okay.

DOLDE: So it does take a while for them?

CONNOR: [01:39:09] It absolutely does, you know, and that's why having somebody there who is in that rhythm and continuing that rhythm they can just look over and be like what am I, oh yeah, yeah, that's what we're doing, all right we're going. But it's also I don't know.

DOLDE: Repetition, just going through the process, doing it over and over, muscle memory.

CONNOR: [01:39:39] Yes, and it's like you don't even really think about it, it's like you just, you go to the stack, and you start thinking why are you doing that, like okay yeah we're cleaning off all the green or all the sides so that we can see

the piece completely so that we can make the decision that this is a good enough piece of wood to use for this. You know and then going through that process so many times you don't even really, you no longer think about it. And I think that everybody on this crew anyway is like they're in it, you know, it's like there's no kind of toe in the water, it's like you're either in it or you're not in it and it becomes pretty evident.

DOLDE: So when Jim Richardson built this boat one of the most annoying questions as it was characterized to me was people coming in and talking about it being a dying trade. So that was 40 plus years ago. To what extent do you get the sense that people perceive what you do in that way and then I presume you push back on that. To what extent do you defy that?

CONNOR: [01:40:55] I think that for me just knowing how many things I'm capable of, knowing that traditional wooden boat building absolutely is a dying trade, but the skill set that accompanies it I think is, it's like when they say in today's day and age a farmer is the most qualified worker in the workforce. And they're like well why is that, it's like well he knows a little bit about electricity, he knows a little bit about mechanics, he knows a little bit about construction, knows a little bit about, and so you know you take somebody with that skill set and that background and knowledge, and you can plug

them in to like a million different trades and a million different things, because they have the general sense of how things work. And I think that that is the knowledge of that for me is like yeah well this particular trade might be, but like I can operate a million different machines, I can operate a crane, I can cast, I can weld, so as far as like I've been employed since I was 14 and I don't think that I'll ever be unemployed because it's like... and I feel the same way about the apprentices and you know I've kind of always shared that it's like the sentiment that yeah traditional wooden boat building might be a dying thing and you might do it your whole life, you might not, but you're at least going to have a really dynamic tool kit to where it's like you're able to problem solve I think on a level that's beyond most trades because even we're so specialized in the way that we do everything whether it's house construction or whatever you're doing that it's like that system of a, b, c, d, e has no wiggle room for autonomy. Whereas in what we do you just come up against things where it's like oh my god I didn't see this completely like sap wood, like rotten piece like we've got to take that out, oh but this is here, and this is here, do we have to take all of that out. So then just like the problem solving process I think is something that is inherent in the trade because there's a ton of them that are

always coming up and I, you know, at certain points kind of I think about it it's like most of what I do isn't really the skill of manufacturing something, it's the ability to not just like drop the tools and be like this is just like how can anybody, you know it's like well let's see we can do this, we can do this, we can do this. Okay yes that's the best and doing that with people and the collaboration and I think that that skillset in particular is something that I would point to when people are like it's a dying trade or whatever, I'd be like yeah but like this person has been at it for five years and they can do all of this which is really applicable to a lot of different things. And so it's like you could go a lot of different directions.

DOLDE: Well you answered that, you made an important distinction because you're talking about the skills and the approach to work, and skill set that's needed. Now if you take another step back and you think about maybe your emotional, your commitment to preserving the skills and preserving the trade, and preserving history that's a separate question right, about dying trade. What do you feel about that future?

CONNOR: [01:44:51] Yes, I mean like I said I guess I just feel like there will be people making boats out of wood unless there are no more trees. And a lot of that I think too is the

privilege of the places I've been able to travel. You know it's like the East Coast, the Caribbean coast of Panama, like there won't be steel boats there in my lifetime. Like they are going to be living, you know what I mean and completely tethered to wooden boats to trade goods, to fish, to do everything, and so I guess to me I'm like yeah you know maybe in a western mindset it does look like a dying trade and whatever, but I guess there's a part of me that's like oh somewhere on the planet as long as there's a tree there's going to be a guy making a boat out of it. Like that's just kind of what I... and maybe that's not true but that's kind of how I feel.

DOLDE: I think that's perfectly legitimate I think that it is a very trite statement to call something a dying trade, and so it's almost a provoking question for me to ask you that because you've made a case for the skills, and you've made a case for the boat itself. Well this has been a wide ranging conversation; I think there's probably more details we could go over. Is there anything you want to add? I think we should wrap up for at least for today, until the next time. But anything in particular you think I've...

CONNOR: [01:46:29] No. I can't wait to see especially everything that you've come up with from the first build, I think that that's...

DOLDE: Well we'll be transcribing, it will be transcribed,
I'm going to stop.

END OF AUDIO FILE