

Hilgartner, Sam - 210713 0028

DOLDE: Let me get started with just my usual which is this is Jennifer Dolde. It is Tuesday, July 13, 2021. I'm here at CBMM with Sam Hilgartner. Sam, your full name and your date of birth please?

HILGARTNER: [00:00:17] Samuel Thomas Hilgartner. May 31, 1991.

DOLDE: Sam, tell me about like where you grew up and your childhood.

HILGARTNER: [00:00:24] I grew up in Baltimore and I grew up an only child but in a neighborhood with tons of kids, so very social. A lot of fun. Skateboarding. Kind of in adolescent years I was really into art. I went to an art high school, so really incredible school that was very formative and that was where I first kind of developed sort of a mentor relationship that felt very different than the sort of parent... sorry, the sort of student/teacher relationships that I was used to. So high school I went to was a lot of... it was a magnet school so you had to apply to get accepted so presumably the kids there either wanted to be there or their parents really wanted them to be there and it was a great place. It really taught me critical thinking. I learned a lot about history through art and

also because it was a magnet school it meant that I was able to interact with kids that were from all over Baltimore rather than just my little neighborhood which is a... where I grew up was pretty working class, kind of insular, sort of like a small town socially, but not.

DOLDE: What part of Baltimore was it?

HILGARTNER: [00:01:55] It's like northeast Baltimore, like Parkville Hamilton. So I grew up skateboarding in the city but also in the county. I'd go on the light rail and we'd go all over skateboarding. So I was all over. I was all over, but as a kid we were really like locked into that neighborhood around Hartford Road. That all exploded in high school. A good friend of mine, Steven Daly, who was here volunteering yesterday, we both went to Italy together through a scholarship when we were 15 and we've both gone on into crafts and trades out of fine arts which was our background, which is not an uncommon story but gives you a way of thinking about art and craft and gives you an introduction to, I think, thinking through like the lens of craftsmanship because in art there's an element of craftsmanship. So that was kind of my background.

DOLDE: What was the name of the high school?

HILGARTNER: [00:03:12] Carver Center. So...

DOLDE: And your... growing up, your family, your parents, you were... have siblings?

HILGARTNER: [00:03:22] No, no siblings.

DOLDE: Oh, you said only child.

HILGARTNER: [00:03:26] Yeah, no siblings, but...

DOLDE: A background in your parents or your guardians in working with their hands or in craftsmanship?

HILGARTNER: [00:03:34] Yeah. I mean not, you know, I think there can be elements of craft everywhere, but I wouldn't call what my dad did craftsmanship. He was an electrical technician. He worked on very large machines that essentially stuffed and folded envelopes for automatic data processing, ADP. And there were these, you know, his tool kit was a very small canvas bag filled with little teeny mirrors and tweezers and tiny screwdrivers and so he was working on machines that mostly ran on kind of laser input and they're very finicky and I think they had like eight or nine machines in this warehouse. They only ran maybe three or four at a time, but the idea is they break down so fast that they have to transfer over constantly between all these machines and then they have the technicians that go in and fix them constantly, a fulltime job, they're inhouse. So he did that and my mom did a bunch of kind of random jobs mostly when I was a kid.

DOLDE: Did you work on projects together like around the house?

HILGARTNER: [00:04:55] Yeah. He was... my parents were both from Baltimore, but they... my dad like as a kid had a dirt bike and he was into cars. He was really into cars, working on cars. He was always tinkering in the garage. We built like skateboard ramps together, we built skateboards. He had a little bass fishing boat that we took out on Loch Raven Reservoir. He actually found it in a parking lot and just had his eye on it and weeks went by and he called... I don't know who it would be. The NVA and I guess the Department of Natural Resources as well to figure out like how do you reclaim like an old boat on a trailer. And he got it. Legally as far as I know and we enjoyed it. It was like a little crappy tin nothing, just little boat.

DOLDE: Fishing, just zooming about?

HILGARTNER: [00:05:54] Fishing, yeah. He was really into fishing. So yeah, we tinkered on this little boat and we tinkered on bikes. I was really into cycling and we did a lot of kind of work on bikes and stuff. My first job was working in a bike shop. We were always just doing stuff like that. And he was pretty handy. I wouldn't say he was like a handyman or anything like that, but he was very into

cars, very into auto mechanics, and he was definitely good at what he did which is very niche and bizarre and I never really appreciated it as a child or as a kid or even as an early... in my early twenties. And now I kind of do.

DOLDE: A lot of precision.

HILGARTNER: [00:06:47] Yeah. He passed away in 2017, cancer. So a lot of... I was kind of like doing a lot of different stuff. I was working on boats which he thought was cool, but I didn't move back to Maryland until after he had passed away and it's always been interesting to reflect on the kind of stuff that I'm doing now, the things I'm involved in, my lifestyle is, I think... yeah, I kind of like... I understand him more because of where I live and the things that I do now, which is an interesting reflection for me being out here.

DOLDE: Absolutely. We have an all-new appreciation for our parents and maybe what they were trying to do and how they lived their lives as we continue to live ours. The high school you went to is very interesting. I assume you were always doing project-based kinds of things. Anything in particular that really was meaningful to you?

HILGARTNER: [00:07:41] I remember everything. It was a very critical school so the whole philosophy was critique, taking critique. Everything we did was critiqued heavily

by students, by teachers. You really checked your emotions at the door. Which also kind of allowed you to experience what I think is real sort of liberal arts. Like that's the liberal aspect is to think through humanities in a removed way. And to reflect through a lens of tradition and culture and history which strives towards some aspect of progress all the while. And I think as far as big projects, I mean yeah, I made really... the school is strict so in the beginning it's... they teach what's called naturalism which is a style of... it's kind of a philosophy of observation in representational art. So it's what would be considered a pretty conservative style of teaching art where you really focus on observation, representation. So you're drawing from life like the plein air painters out here and it matures you fast and it disciplines you. We were doing... we were painting... doing nude model figure painting and drawing when we were 14 and not like laughing about it. It was a very mature group of people. But later in the school you could kind of loosen up and some colleges are like this. A lot of colleges are almost like the inverse of this style which is interesting. Which I think is valid too and it's a way that so later you can really branch out. But it's always through the study of other artists so you're never removed... maybe that's the

slightly elitist aspect that I kind of appreciate too is that it's always through a link to a tradition and to a conversation with other artists. Which again is like the humanities aspect is everything you do... you did something and you're echoing or mimicking or giving homage to something another artist has done. So a lot of emphasis on learning art and later learning 20th century art, but in the beginning it's not. So later I was doing like huge expressive paintings and stuff and in the beginning I was painting a very traditional kind of conservative style, drawing too.

DOLDE: You didn't find that at all limiting? I mean I'm just thinking of the adolescent spirit, you know, wanting to do your own thing and they're inhibiting my creativity. At the time, and it sounds like you have a perspective on it now...

HILGARTNER: [00:10:44] I mean not really and I was one of the more out there artists. By the end I mean my artists that I looked at in 20th century were fairly avant garde like Joseph Beuys and stuff like that. So pretty conceptual. Very... I mean nonrepresentational. Definitely I wasn't doing any artmaking from observation anymore. All photo reference or completely abstract. So no, I never really felt that way and I've always felt like

one of the things is that when there is discipline and structure you actually are granted freedom. If that disciplined structure is something you consent to then it means that it frees you up from a certain burden of choice. So to some degree you made your mind up about higher level things and then you can find freedom beneath more and more and more. And I think that goes for craft as well with boat building. It's like there are certain things that you have agreed to a long time ago so you don't have to go through that every time you go about making some part of a boat or making furniture or whatever.

DOLDE: And was this primarily the school is for visual arts or were there other arts?

HILGARTNER: [00:12:00] There were other arts. It was kind of like college. There are majors and you do apply for your major. It's difficult to transfer. So I was in visual art, but there was... there's theater. There was... what are the other ones? Actually, there is carpentry.

DOLDE: But you didn't do that?

HILGARTNER: [00:12:22] No, I didn't. And this is going to sound super snobby, I don't feel this way at all now, but then, because art... the school is really an art school. people knew it for fine arts so people kind of turn their nose up at that stuff. It was a small program, the

carpentry thing, but now I think that's awesome. I think that's the kind of thing I would support and think there should be more of in high school. But yeah, so... oh, there was also cosmetology. There are some smaller studies. There was...

DOLDE: Was there writing and digital arts and things like that?

HILGARTNER: [00:12:53] Yeah, there was literary arts.

Digital arts were in visual arts and visual arts, there were like sub-majors. I mean your discipline was art, but you were... after your first year you pick sculpture, painting, photography, or at the time it was called multimedia. I think it's now... I don't know what they call it. And then they had telemedia which is film. So painting and sculpture were always... they put a lot of resources into that. They were the bigger departments or more competitive.

DOLDE: Well, I digress, but it certainly seems that this was very much a formative experience for you so I think that everything you're saying sounds like it's going to be applicable later on.

HILGARTNER: [00:13:44] Oh, it's critical.

DOLDE: So after high school what did you do?

HILGARTNER: [00:13:52] I went to Virginia Commonwealth University for sculpture and I was really disappointed. It was the kind of thing where now I'm with 18-year-olds and they're laughing and making jokes at a nude model. They don't know anything about art. They're there because their parents want them to be there and they think they have to get a degree in something and they're partying. A lot of the friends I went to in high school, they had already like been there, done that. It really was a mature group of people and I was just so disappointed and disillusioned. And I talked to advisors and they kept saying, "Just hang in there. Wait till junior year, wait till senior year." And it's like, well, that's a ways away to me at the time. Also being passionate about other things like I was really into cycling in college. I was on the bike team and on a couple other bike teams and also I was just adventurous, I was getting into meditation and into reading. So I talked to a teacher. I was like, "I have all these other things I want to do essentially, long story short." And I was kind of... I needed one adult or someone... I mean I was an adult, I guess, technically, but I wanted someone who was like a mentor to give me some direction and I was like, "I'm thinking about dropping out of college." This was first semester sophomore year. And he said, "What would

you do if you did?" And I said, "I would go on a bike tour. I'd go to New Mexico and I'd stay at this Buddhist monastery." He was like, "Would you really do it?" I'm like, "Yeah, absolutely." He's like, "You should drop out then." Like if you're just going to go and move back in with your parents, then don't drop out, but if you have direction and passion and you want to go explore, you can always come back. So he was like, "Go for it." I thought that was awesome. I was like, "Wow, really?" I was almost scared by that because I was like oh, wow.

DOLDE: He gave you permission to do that.

HILGARTNER: [00:16:00] And that's what I did. So I left and I bike toured with a friend, the Blue Ridge Parkway, and we did all kinds of crazy stuff and I was in this kind of fringe community. I was riding freight trains and doing crazy stuff. I stayed at this anarchist, primitivist, off grid community in the mountains in North Carolina. Really some nuts, but some interesting people too.

DOLDE: How long were you there?

HILGARTNER: [00:16:30] I was there like a month and a half or something like that, a month. And this was like... just among these really interesting but very much... these are wild people doing their own kind of thing everywhere I went. And then eventually I went to this monastery. I was

studying Buddhism in Richmond and going to a meditation center and exploring different traditions and learning about it. I was interested in it initially because there was a link to the art, like some conceptual stuff. And yeah, I went to monastery and I stayed there for a year and I was in New Mexico outside of Santa Fe. It's called Upaya. It's a Zen monastery slash retreat center. There's a monastic practice there and there are monastics there, but then there's also lay people and they support themselves through retreats and meditation intensives and other media and education and stuff like that. That was what I did. And then I went to California. I followed a girl to California I met in New Mexico and I just was pretty listless there. It was kind of a rough year because I had so much structure in monastery, super rigid, but again that's really where that idea of discipline kind of comes from that has been a thread through my life and was very clear in New Mexico. You have a strict schedule, roles, expectations. You can have ideas and opinions, but it's an old Buddhist order called Soto Zen Buddhism and there's not... there are certain things that just you're not going to change them. It's like if you went to a Catholic cathedral and you were like, "Hey, I don't really like this imagery or these clothes. How about we have a

meeting?" You know what I mean? It's just like Soto is a huge school of Buddhism in Japan and there are things that just aren't going to change and you just know that and you're just like oh, that's the way it is and you just do it. So then when I got out and was in California it was like I was... there was no structure. I was just with a bunch of crazy people and was totally confused, didn't know what I was doing, working all kinds of weird random odd jobs trying to make money. Was on like food stamps, was working installing solar panels and doing irrigation and selling irrigation. I was a bike messenger for a little bit in San Francisco. And then I... this is kind of the end of the story. I had this dream about sailing sort of and I told a friend about it. She was like kind of a hippie and she was like, "Oh, wow, you should sail." She was like, "My ex-boyfriend worked on a schooner." She called it a schooner. I didn't know what it was either so I was calling it a schooner. And then she was just like, "I'll talk to him." And it was the schooner *Adventuress* in Washington built in 1913. And I didn't... I called them and I was like let me get a job and sent in an application, no experience, and I... it was declined. No job. So I was like that's the end of it. And I didn't feel super strongly about it. And a month went by or something and I

got a call and they were like, "Hey, our deckhand just backed out. You can be an unpaid intern, but we need you like in three weeks or something." And my job was pretty good selling solar panels for being like 20 years old. I was making decent money, working hard, but it wasn't... I knew it was like I don't really want to do this. So I left and I went to Port Townsend, Washington, and went out on this shooner. And didn't know anything, that was it. That was the beginning of it all.

DOLDE: So you did everything. You were deckhand, you did what you were told?

HILGARTNER: [00:20:58] Yeah. Yeah, I was a deckhand.

DOLDE: And you'd never done any sailing?

HILGARTNER: [00:21:02] I'd never sailed in my life. Never been on a sailboat. I didn't know anything about sailing. Never even thought about it. Never even crossed my mind.

DOLDE: So how long did you work?

HILGARTNER: [00:21:14] Their seasons are short. I was on for, I think it's like four months or it might be like four and a half months or something like that. They really believe in splitting the season up in the year. I think that's a clear water model. They follow a kind of clear water educational model but also crew model and stuff. And then I got off and I went to Alaska. And also, with this

crazy guy that I met at that anarchist community in North Carolina and we hitchhiked to Alaska and it was pretty fun and we just hung out in this crazy place called Meyers Chuck which is the smallest town in southeast Alaska with a zip code. And I did a stint of gillnet fishing which is really hard and weird and stayed with a guy that I met at the monastery actually who was a commercial fisherman in Alaska which is how I got connected with that. He does commercial fishing and then he goes down to the monastery and he stays there for four months every year. He was an interesting guy named Greg. And yeah, I just hang out there and while I was there I was looking at tall ships. I was super into it and wanted to get on the next boat. I finished the *Adventuress* season and applied for *Pride of Baltimore* which seemed to be... that's the ship you try to get a job on. Everyone who sails on *Pride of Baltimore* talks about it that way and thinks about it that way at least. And kind of a similar thing. They really like to have like two years of experience. I didn't have it. And they weren't really... they have crew changes sort of where they switch over their season. They have longer seasons and they weren't really in a crew changeover and then someone decided to leave and they called me and they were like, "Hey, we can"... it was the same thing. I was like,

wow. So I flew out to Chicago. Hitchhiked back down to Seattle from Meyers Chuck and then flew to Chicago and got on the *Pride of Baltimore*. And it was amazing. We sailed to the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence Seaway, and down the coast. We stopped mostly in small towns in Ontario. We didn't go to a lot of towns in the US and the lakes on the way out. A lot of crazy little towns. And it was first time in Maine. Went to Maine too, New York, Boston. And I was on that for a while. I think maybe six months or something like that through into the winter. We sailed late that year into Christmas. The season ended at Christmas which is kind of crazy. We were sailing in December doing these media things and filming stuff and it was interesting. It was so cold in Baltimore by then.

DOLDE: And you saw family when you were back in Baltimore?

HILGARTNER: [00:24:28] Yeah, saw family. We weren't in Baltimore for very long. I mean it was just the end of the season. I think it was probably like two months, October, November... I guess we were there for three months or so. Saw my mom and dad. I'd been gone for a while and I didn't visit them that often either. When I was in California, I only saw them... or in New Mexico I only visited them once every six months or something, or less. Think I went eight months one time. We were close, we talked all the time.

And then I went back out to Washington for winter maintenance on the *Adventuress* which is a thing you do and like you do on tall ships. You do these maintenance seasons and stuff. And was the engineer's assistant, this woman Katie. Can't remember her last name. Katie G. I want to say Katie [Gialani?]. That's not right. And that was where I met Bob Dows for the first time. And it was cool. Definitely not into replacing like black water tanks and plumbing which is a lot of what we did. And was applying for jobs for the spring working on boats.

DOLDE: So you were hooked by then? You were [overlapping dialogue; inaudible].

HILGARTNER: [00:26:00] I was like okay, I'm going to just follow this. And it was kind of, honestly, I wasn't that into the community. I...

DOLDE: The tall ship community?

HILGARTNER: [00:26:06] No, I wasn't. I thought it was a little hokey. I mean I'm being totally honest. I still do. But I knew I was learning a lot. Because I really wanted to do it because I wanted to learn how to sail and I wanted to become more like resourceful sailor, proficient. And I kind of thought it was a little hokey, the sentimentality and like some of the programming, honestly. Some of the educational programming I thought was

ineffective and sort of self-serving and I thought it was just a way of these ships finding validity in their fundraising to keep the ships alive. I was pretty cynical. I'm less cynical now. I was really cynical and I was really doing it for myself. I didn't believe in the missions or anything of any of the boats. I was comfortable enough to carry on with it, but I didn't... I wasn't... that wasn't why I was doing it. I wasn't like I didn't believe in these educational missions or anything on the tall ships and at the time at least. Later things changed for sure. So then I applied to work on the schooner *Virginia* and they were going to the... I think the Bahamas and then like some other... maybe some other Caribbean... maybe it was just the Bahamas and then New England or something. And then I also heard about working for Oliver Hazard Perry which is like new big ship, old hull but a new rig, up in Rhode Island. I had met the captain actually very briefly at a tall ship conference while I was on *Pride of Baltimore* and I was kind of applying for both these things at the same time. really wanted to keep sailing, but also knew this is rare. I knew they were going to have entry level rigging positions. They wanted people, like a couple of seasons on tall ships with some boatswainery so I knew I was qualified and I was

like oh, this could be cool, I'm going to learn how to do some rigging. And I ended up going for that. I got the job and then that was the same year Virginia sort of folded and the Ocean Classrooms Foundation, I think, sort of went under. I don't know where they're at now, but they didn't end up sailing that season. A bunch of tall ships went down. Not literally. The organizations went down and they sat for a year or two.

DOLDE: So that was a good call.

HILGARTNER: [00:28:38] Great call. Because I learned a ton.

It was a [NASE/nasty?] organization with the lead rigger, Jim Barry. I'm really grateful for him. He was the lead and I worked with Dan Cleveland, this guy Theo, and Josh Paine. All of them I'm still friends with. They were kind of the leads. Jim Barry was the master rigger organizing everything. This is a big three masted ship rig. Pretty sure it's a ship rig. Not a barque.

DOLDE: It was all very traditional?

HILGARTNER: [00:29:16] Traditional like what I would call, it's late 19th, early 20th century. So traditional wire rope rigging, wire splicing, wire seizing, square rig boat. So I learned those things that people really want to learn which are like wire seizing, wire splicing, and we got a lot of repetition with it. It wasn't the cleanest work. I

mean we were like... in hindsight, I didn't know at the time. I left... I did... we pretty much finished the standing rig while I was there. We lived... we all lived... our crew housing was the Founder's Brook Inn which was a motel in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. It was a total dump. It was awful. It was the wintertime, it was cold. I had never spent a lot of time in New England and it really put a bad taste in my mouth. I now like a lot of New England, but at the time it was like... so I traveled around a little bit while I was there on days off and I was just like this place is a dump, man, there's no way I could ever live up here. But I learned a ton and met some good friends. Becca Buckler, I met her there. That was her first rigging job, it was my first rigging job. She taught me actually how to serve, I remember, which was pretty cool. But then I... we were working with this dude named Magno who was really cool and he worked summer seasons at San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park where they have these summer rigging positions that open up every year. They're usually like four to six months long and that was coming up. We were finishing the standing rigging. There was some stuff with the... I honestly forget the details, but the organization with Oliver Hazard Perry was pretty shaky in the beginning and a lot of people

were leaving. I didn't leave on any bad terms or with any bad taste in my mouth. I was just like okay, well, we're kind of done this part of the rig, it's pretty much over. And I applied for this thing in San Francisco where I hadn't been for a couple of years now and got it with Josh Paine who was there and Magno. It was his second or third year. And we went out there, had an awesome time. realized that I didn't really know how to wire splice or wire seize. I was doing pretty ugly work at Oliver Hazard Perry and worked with this guy named Jojo. Awesome, awesome sailor and rigger and [Christian Nemy?] who was a lead rigger at San Francisco. Courtney Anderson. Those are pretty big names in the rigging world. Definitely Christian Nemy. And like learned... really refined things. Learned like how to make things clean, make things pretty, practice. A lot of repetition. Getting a lot of wire work in a solid year is rare and I'm really grateful for that. A lot of people don't get that. That kind of stuff, you can learn it and you do a few, but if you're not doing it a lot it's just gone. A lot of people will say, "Oh, I did that once" or, "I learned how to splice wire one time," but if you don't do it 50 times it's just going to be gone. So I was so glad because we were just getting juicy project after project on *Balclutha*.

DOLDE: Why was it unusual to be doing that in such... for such a long period of time? Because they're using other types of rope?

HILGARTNER: [00:32:51] No, because it's rare to have these big sort of uprig or refits where you're building an entirely new rig for a ship rather than doing like little repair replacement where you're just like... I mean boats will literally have a boatswain who replaces one piece of wire rigging and they're like YouTubing instructions on how to make a wire splice. And it's fine, it's going to hold, probably, if they follow a sequence. It's really ugly, it's okay, it's not going to break most likely. And that's how a lot of these kinds of things are. But out there we were doing a whole bunch of new pieces for *Balclutha*. We had a list of pieces to make. Just like Oliver Hazard Perry. So I just went right off of this job building all this wire right onto *Balclutha*. Also, similar kind of ship, full rig ship, windjammer, bigger. So it was also just getting the size, like getting really big wire rigging work is unusual. And...

DOLDE: Maybe in the sense of not doing piece work. You're understanding the full structure. You're getting a sense for the whole process of creating... I mean not... it was a full rerigging?

HILGARTNER: [00:34:11] No. But it was a lot of pieces. I mean it was six months work... worth of rigging. And uprig. So that was where I really felt... got comfortable with doing uprig which is the second skill set of rigging. I mean the first is... and they're not ordered, but you're building things and then you're installing and install is a whole different challenge, way of thinking, skill set. I mean that's what now in modern or contemporary usage that's what people need when they say rigging. If you're a rigger for a big construction company or something it means you're the one who figures out how to move really heavy stuff around safely. So you learn how to do that when you're working on a large ship and you're installing new pieces and you're doing it a lot. So that was really cool.

DOLDE: Did you come here from San Francisco?

HILGARTNER: [00:35:13] I did, but in between... so I... that was a summer position and it ended and this guy Jojo, he worked on these boats in the Netherlands through this company called... or organization called... well, it is a company. It's not nonprofit. Called Fairtransport. And I went out there to the Netherlands and worked on this boat called *Nordlys* which was a new rig build. So again. And I went out there and I felt pretty comfortable and competent doing this kind of rigging, like building new pieces of

standing rigging, wire rigging, and I got there and I thought I was just sort of volunteering, going to learn some things maybe from someone and see a part of the world I've never seen. They flew me out there and I got there and they said, "Oh, the rigger is here." I was like that's not me, man. I've been doing this for like... at the time it was almost a year, but you know. And I in hindsight probably shouldn't have done this, but I was pretty... I was not pretty much, I was the de facto lead rigger of this boat, putting together all the standing rigging. There's more I could say about that, but I did it and I built all the standing rigging. Didn't do the uprig. Handed the project over to my good friend Chad [Lousing?] who I sailed with on *Pride of Baltimore*. And I was offered a permanent position at San Francisco Maritime. This is all volunteering in the Netherlands. And was offered a permanent position at San Francisco Maritime and I really wanted to be there. I was extremely excited and Courtney Anderson said, "You've got to commit." It's informal, but the government hiring process is... it's quite involved. It takes a lot of resources and money and time, as hiring does anywhere that's an institution. And he asked me to commit to three years. And it was a furloughed position, subject to furlough. So every year I would have a furlough

and it could change. I was guaranteed six months every year. Some years maybe I'd get eight or even more. So that was another part of it is like you have to figure out something. So I was kind of like well... so I took it and I did it three years and in between I did some awesome stuff on my furloughs. Sailed on *Picton Castle*. Did a transatlantic on *Picton Castle* from Lunenburg to Morocco. It was amazing. And then would go back towards... I think the last two years I had long times there. I didn't have long furloughs. I think one year I only had a two-month furlough and the other year might have been a three-month furlough. The first year was a full six months, I think. He was always able later to get me more time and we built an entire new rig for Thayer, which was amazing, and an entire new rig for the *Alma*. And then a whole bunch more work for *Balclutha* and then my last year there I was given permission, it was very generous of them, to work parttime and I wanted to go to the Arques School of wooden boat building in Sausalito because I always felt like I need to flesh out my wood working skills. Because in rigging there's a lot of wood working, but it's just not frequent so you don't get a foundation really. You have to get it elsewhere. So that was like well, this guy Bob Darr, I started doing these Saturday classes. He has Saturday boat

building classes and I just... this guy was an amazing mentor. I was really drawn to him and I was just like I've got to work with this guy, I've got to learn with this... from this guy. And I asked the park, I said, "What would you guys think if I did four days a week... no, three days a week?" And then my plan was to do four days a week with Bob Darr and work the seven days a week for a year. And they were like... they gave me permission because I had a furloughed position. I couldn't have done it if I didn't have the furloughed position. So instead of... because it's just money allotment. So instead of them having three or four months off, I just worked for a whole year, but just three days a week. So if I didn't have that position, I wouldn't have been able to do it and then I worked with Bob Darr and learned traditional boat building and worked with this amazing person. And then I came here.

DOLDE: And you came here... well, so, yeah, we're... I want to keep talking. I don't know if... we'll have to keep our ear out and see if we hear Jeff, but so we were... were we advertising for somebody for *Edna Lockwood*? How did you hear about the job here?

HILGARTNER: [00:40:34] This is funny. So when I was doing my furlough... it's a... I thought this was so weird, but you go on unemployment when you're furloughed, but it

wasn't like oh, I don't know when I'm going back. I know when my start date, but you still have to every week, you have to say you're looking for jobs. When you're on unemployment you have to fill out... so I would just... and I didn't want to make it up. I don't know. I was always paranoid, are they checking this or not? I think a couple of times I just made something up, put it in there. So eventually I started looking for actual jobs to put in there that seemed legit and I saw Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, *Edna Lockwood*. I always loved Chesapeake boats. Sailing on *Pride of Baltimore*, sailing around with like *Lady Maryland* I got to know the nonprofit skipjacks. I just fell in love with Chesapeake boats. Also, shortly before my dad died one of the last things we did is we did a day trip down to Deal Island where my parents had a small property. Not with a house on it, just a wooded lot. It's still there, they still have it. And I had no experience of the eastern shore other than going to Deal Island occasionally. Which is a real experience of the eastern shore. And I just was like... I found it so alluring and mysterious and strange and it was such a kind of, I don't know, contrapuntal to the New England and also the northwest snobby kind of... I mean I love that stuff like from a crafts perspective, but I love the skipjack thing.

I was just like this gritty kind of DIY just like make it happen sort of ethos and esthetic and I was just like... I thought the eastern shore was beautiful. So I always had that memory. One of the last things I did with him is go down to visit the property. He had friends, two friends, down there that were both watermen and it was crabbing season and they had a bunch of crabs and we hung out down there and I was like this is so crazy, such a weird spot. And then I saw that job on *Edna Lockwood* and I was like... I was just putting it in as kind of fake thing on this unemployment stuff, but I was like man, that's awesome, like restoring *Edna Lockwood*. So I applied for an apprenticeship and they said I was actually overqualified and then Mike Gorman called me and he was like, "We can make something happen. We can make something work." And I was like, "I really shouldn't. I'm committed to the year here and want to fulfill that." So I came and visited here when I would visit my parents. I visited two or three times and on one of my last visits maybe in late... yeah, it was in... it was right after my dad died. It was in the fall of 2017. Joe was like, "We might get this *Dove* thing. You could be the rigger." We're at [C/Sea?] Street, me, Joe, and Mike Gorman and it like all happened. And then like I planned on it. I sent in an estimate for the

material cost for the rigging and while I was in San Francisco and I was out here in May finishing... helping finishing the *Edna*. When I first saw the *Edna* it was right when it was starting, I think, or maybe they were some ways through but... so that was how I got kind of connected out here. And...

DOLDE: I didn't know all of that was happening behind the scenes. Did you know anything about *Dove* either historically or... well, from the tall ship world as it were? It's a little...

HILGARTNER: [00:44:31] Not at all. The *Dove* never was at any of the events that I went to, you know, downrig festival at the *Pride of Baltimore* or Chestertown, *Sultana*. *Dove* was not on the radar also because we're the schooner thing, Great Chesapeake Bay Schooner Race, I just never saw the *Dove*. Didn't know anything about the *Dove*. Wasn't interested in colonial history. Actually, when Joe told me about it, I wasn't interested. I was kind of like eh, I'm not that into the [copper?] nickel thing. I always thought that was kind of corny. And then I was like all right, I'm going to read about this, I'm going to look into it. Sat down and, like a lot of things, the more you learn it opens up, becomes broader, you realize that... I found the kind of... contemplating on some of the original sort of

conceptions of the colony of Maryland, I found that process of investigation to be sort of compelling. It really opened things up for me like thinking about the colonial story of Maryland as it is distinguished, apart from some of the colonial stories. So it was interesting. I got more and more sucked in, more and more attracted to the idea. And then I was kind of obsessed with it and I just did tons of research and then I was just like... at some point, it was slow, I just completely turned and I was just like really into it. But at first I was just like, you know, just didn't really interest me.

DOLDE: So it was actually the colonization, the history of the... nothing really about... and so you... but you were familiar with the '70s vessel? Had you come across anything about Jim Richardson until you...

HILGARTNER: [00:46:24] No. Never came across Jim Richardson. No, never. I mean the idea of doing this... there was a craft thing too like the fiber rigging, the 17th century rigging I was interested in. It seemed really cool.

DOLDE: Had you done any of that work?

HILGARTNER: [00:46:43] Yeah, I mean in... even in the more modern, which I would call late 19th, early 20th century, there are things that are very similar. It's just with

wire, not with fiber. I know with the fiber there's parts of doing some running rigging work or work where standing and running rigging collide. You might do things that more resemble the norms of the 17th century, but they're kind of exceptional in the 19th or 20th century. So there's nothing that we're doing that I've never encountered before. It's just doing so much of this kind of fiber stuff that isn't just running rigging. It's different.

DOLDE: I'm going to pause here for a second. You want to [tape off/then on] coalescing for me. All right, so we were talking about just the... the rigging for *Dove* versus other things you've worked on. Is... fiber work is, I presume, easier physically? Easier to handle?

HILGARTNER: [00:47:39] Yeah, it's easier on the body. It has its own challenges, but there... it's easier on the body. I wouldn't say it's easier. It has its own challenges. There's less regularity. Boats that I work on I would call modern which people think, you know, like America's Cup modern yacht, it's hydrofoiling. I mean modern, I mean like 19th, 20th century. They're industrial. They're out of the industrial era. The ships have a lot of regularity, predictability in construction, in style, formality, convention. As you go further and further back in time there's less and less and less of that. So with a

lot of this the pieces that we're building, they're very specific to the function or to the placement in the rig. They're not as replaceable or you can't necessarily swap out one piece for another, exchange something for another. So that's an overarching sort of theme in the craft. And if you went back another 100 years it would be even more so.

DOLDE: Had you already been a student, as it were, of historic rigging or did you have to do a lot of research? I know you did a lot of research for this project. So one of the main differences of course between the '70s *Dove* and this *Dove* is the rigging. So I don't know where to start on that, but why don't we talk a little bit about that?

HILGARTNER: [00:49:23] I mean I've always been a nerd, I've always been a reader. When I was in Oakland, I cofounded with a group of people this thing called Oakland Free University and it was a part of this thing called the Bay Area Public School. I was always into humanities, reading, literature, history, philosophy. So I've always just like... everything I've done I've always had a library. When I was working on *Balclutha* I learned all about windjammers, all about these larger steel hulled sailing vessels out of northern Europe. I was like... so I always like dive into stuff and... but the colonial era ship

building was not something that I was familiar with or that I had read about or that I cared that much about. And then the first book you come across you really need to dig deep to get past the common references and one of the common references is Baker and his... some of his treatments in colonial ships, the *Mayflower* and other colonial is one of his book... books. And he deals with the *Dove* and then *Adventure* down in South Carolina and his basic argument, which is the argument for this type of rig that we call a boyer, is what has been followed. That's like... and it's very speculative. It's always going to be. We don't have the ship. We don't have any real archeology other than some comparative archeology, meaning ships of a similar size and time period and area, but we just don't know. There's not a great painting or etching of it. We have a little tile which is like really nothing.

DOLDE: Very representational, not literal.

HILGARTNER: [00:51:18] We know how many people were on the ship, we know the ship's size, and we know roughly, we can kind of infer when it was built, but we don't even know when it was built or where it was built. So his thing about the boyer is I wouldn't say compelling, but it makes total sense. There's no reason why to think that wouldn't be likely, not just possible but likely. So going along

with that, and that was also what Will Gates, he seemed to be convinced by that. I mean that was their starting point was Baker's idea of the boyer and the two-masted and it's common, it's in paintings, it's in Dutch paintings, English paintings, Scandinavian paintings, so yeah.

DOLDE: But they didn't go with that back in the '70s.

HILGARTNER: [00:52:08] No, and there were other ideas of the Dove. But there were paintings and things of... not historic, but later 20th century artist's renditions of the Dove that were like a kind of a catch rig or boyer rig. Yeah, and they did go with it.

DOLDE: Did you... I mean I've been to the symposium. Did you get a sense of why? Because I'm not getting those kinds of details on rigging, that thought behind it from the...

HILGARTNER: [00:52:40] I can't really speak like authoritatively on that. I have heard that one of the ideas is that it doesn't really resemble the archetypal 17th century ocean going vessel, like a three masted barque we'd call it now. different terminology then. But...

DOLDE: Meaning people's conception of what it could look like?

HILGARTNER: [00:53:06] Yeah, exactly. You see this boyer rig and you don't necessarily think like that's the 17th century colonial boat like *Mayflower* or something that's

like a classic kind of... people close their eyes and you say, "Oh, colonial sailing vessel" and they see that. There's a lot of weird boats from the 17th century, even earlier, 16th century like caravels and stuff or fore and aft rig, the [team?] rig like some of Columbus's boats. So there was a lot of wild types going along in that time period and the boyer wasn't wild, it was pretty common. You see old paintings of near coastal scenes, a lot of fore and aft boats, you'll see mostly single masted boats, maybe a square [spritzel?] and then here and there you'll see some boyers. There's plenty of etchings of them. So studying the paintings is critical and the models and the work of other historians and archeologists and things has been really critical.

DOLDE: So for this project who... other than you who is doing the research on the rig and who was making those decisions in the process?

HILGARTNER: [00:54:20] [Sophie?] Will has always had ideas as to what the rig might look like to certain levels of detail. The big picture though has been Will, originally someone named Joseph Greeley as well, Will Gates. I'm sure there are people part of St. Mary's that I don't know of that are before Will or maybe when Will started there, but... and then that's pretty much been it, honestly.

[Iver?] hasn't had a ton of... he takes what sort of we... the general consensus between us, I mean he'll kind of run with that. He might have opinions and things, but he hasn't guided the general design of the rig really at all and neither really has Joe or Frank. But Will and I agree on most of it. The big thing I pushed for in the beginning was the sprit instead of the gaff and that took a lot of convincing and we still came to kind of a half conclusion because we were building really around the sprit, but we built a gaff just in case they want to rig it as a gaff, gaff rigged boat. But there's no historical precedent for it. There's no paintings from the time period that show gaffs. You can't find a painting or a model that has it of a gaff rigged boat really until the late 1640s and then the 1650s and then even then there's just a few of them and there's a bunch of sprit rigs. In a kind of an industry that is just inherently conservative even if there were some gaff rig boats in the 1620s... there probably weren't and if there were I definitely wouldn't have like taken one across the ocean or tried this rig out in colonial America. It's very unlikely. The sprit is everywhere. I mean it's all the way to the end of the century, it's everywhere, so.

DOLDE: But you were nonetheless pushing for the gaff?

HILGARTNER: [00:56:35] The sprit.

DOLDE: Oh, you were pushing for the sprit? Okay. Others were pushing...

HILGARTNER: [00:56:40] Will and Iver were pushing for the gaff because we've all sailed gaff rigged boats. Most schooners are gaff rigged. Everyone's familiar with it. The sprit, people have sailed little sprit rigged dinghies and things and they haven't sailed big sprit rigs, but they're still out there. The Thames barges are modern. There are Thames barges built in the 19 teens and '20s. They have huge steel poled sprit rigs and we're building ours that way, brails. They sail brails up. In the early 17th century it doesn't seem they were using brails. They were setting and striking the entire yard which is proper to the time period and if we wanted to ever do a real kind of reenactment that's how we should sail the boat, but that's like definitely less safe. It takes a lot of work. It would be a real thorn in the process and procedures of sailing so we're having a standing sprit and the sail brails which is more of a later 17th century thing and is also how the early gaff rigs were. The sail brails up to the mast and to the head of the sail gun going around the gaff. So we're doing that just because it's definitely... you still have the sprit which is the main esthetic point. You still have all the functionality of the early 17th

century's method of sailing if you want to try it, but then also it's safer and faster to have the brailing sail.

Definitely makes sense from like the perspective of sailing with kids or students or...

DOLDE: Right. I do remember Will talking about doing some experience... mental archeology and under... seeing how it sails and the options. He seems to have really bought into that idea of exploring both, but I think getting into the weeds of how you guys came to that compromise is pretty important. Talking about what you know and what you don't know is key and a lot of that's documented again in the symposium, but someday somebody, I think, will want to understand why DBMM made the decisions and with everyone else that were made. And time will tell what we learn and how it works with boats.

HILGARTNER: [00:59:01] Time will tell. Can't wait.

DOLDE: It will. It will be exciting. So I presume you've acquired some new skills so far in doing this project. Can you pinpoint any... some things in particular that... either learning how to do it or the design itself?

HILGARTNER: [00:59:23] The biggest skill has been building these blocks which originally when I came out here and I knew I was going to be... I was working on the *Edna*, but I always knew like okay, I'm out here to do the *Dove*. I

always thought of me... thought that I'd be building the standing rigging and working on the ship, earning some more shipwright skills, but I mean I've learned a lot in the shipwright department since I've been here, but as far as rigging I didn't anticipate building the blocks. I never thought about it. It's not normal really to be a rigger building blocks for a new build like this. I wouldn't say it's like very unusual, but it's not something one would like anticipate and I've learned a lot that has been great process, really happy with how everything turned out, but also it's just been... getting in that process because you're making so many of them. I mean like 180 blocks. So you're really not just... obviously you don't build one at a time so it's really thinking through the efficiencies like how do we do this as efficiently as possible? And if we're building 300 of them it would be probably even more different. It's almost right at the limit of do you really start setting up jigs and going in the direction of like a factory style process or do you make do with some of the stationary tools we have and still build them in a way that is more procedural and... we were building one size at a time and going through one step for 20 or 30 blanks or billets and then step two and then step three, but carrying them all through at the same time. More assembly line

style. So that's kind of the... that's sort of the middle path between that and really jiggling out the whole shop, putting a lot of work on the front end so for faster execution, but I think the tooling wouldn't have been worth it just economically.

DOLDE: How many did you say you ended up making?

HILGARTNER: [01:01:42] I think we built like 180 and then there's also other little wooden rigging bits. There's so many little things like the [perler?] beads, the perler trucks, [shroud?] fairleads, other little fairleads for things that are like very specific. And then we have, I think, about 50 deadeyes which were kind of all started by Bob Downs's father who is a boatwright rigger and then we kind of finished them. They were given to us, they looked great, but there were tool marks and kind of roughed out and we did all the finishing. It's a lot of little wooden bits so that was a big learning experience and then the spars. Just having a lot of repetition in spar building. And that's the key, I think. I'm just so grateful I've had time in my life to have a lot of repetition with things. Like build one spar every couple of years, that's one thing, but to be able to build nine spars just one after another for two months, that's like a good way to learn something, I think.

DOLDE: So number nine is perfect and number one had to have some adjustment.

HILGARTNER: [01:03:02] I think number one is sometimes really good because you're so careful and slow, you know? And then number two and three are the worst because you're like oh, I can do this and then you really learn your mistakes and then you're like okay.

DOLDE: So as far as the construction or the way the rigging... of course I'm sure the rigging of the *Dove*, the current *Dove*, has been replaced on multiple occasions, but other than the design and the choices what will be the main differences between this...

HILGARTNER: [01:03:43] There's some big construction things that are interesting. A lot of them are things that we picked up from working with Fred Hocker at the Vasa Museum, but he's more known for his archeology surveying and excavating, working with Texas A&M. He's the chief of research at Vasa, but that's kind of secondary to his career. He... there are some common practices in these 17th century sort of replicas or reproductions that aren't really historically or archeologically grounded and that's been interesting. They're minutiae. They're weird little things like the amount of cables which is usually when you take right hand laid rope and you lay it up into the larger

rope it's called a cable so it's left hand laid. You see a lot of these replicas and reproductions and they have cables everywhere, shrouds, everything. And working with Fred he said really that would be pretty rare. They had rope [walks/blocks?] that built pretty cheaply and frequently built really huge ropes. They weren't using cables for things like shrouds and stuff very often. That might be something that people see and they're excited to replicate because they did have cables in certain places and then there was sort of an interest in representing that. That sort of is... ends up being overrepresented and... in the finished examples of these... in the finished attempts to build these replicas and things where you latch onto something that's kind of idiomatic to the time period and you're excited to show that and then you overdo it. So there are things like that all over, things where the boat... some of the replicas and reproductions do certain things that you see often but really would be kind of rare. But the other thing is the... this is really technical and maybe one day someone will be interested in hearing about it, but the what are called pennants that go down to running portions of standing rigging, like running back stays and swiftnets, they usually... definitely running back, stays, and [bangs?], they wouldn't have blocks

spliced or seized into them. They would have a block with a long... with a [strop?] and the pennant would turn through the eye of the strop and get seized. And that way you could just cut the seizings and take the whole... not just the block out of like a baggy-eye with a seizing, but you can take the entire strop block off. And I can see benefits for wanting to do this, but we might learn more as we use the vessel, but that does seem to be very common and you see this in models, you see it all over northern Europe where they have this style where there's a strop block and then a pennant not seized around the block but just through the eye of the strop. Which is... I've never seen that in later rigging very much. So yeah, things like that are pretty cool. There's little weird details like the English style of doing these fiddle blocks versus the Dutch style. There's a lot of regional differences.

DOLDE: Are we kind of documenting these choices? Is there... are there drawings and renderings? Are we documenting it in kind of text form? And if not, maybe we should?

HILGARTNER: [01:07:38] So the reasons and the kind of the discussion...

DOLDE: What's been chosen and why and... I mean because I actually think that, you know, it's always a judgment call

in balancing that [overlapping dialogue; inaudible] the gaff versus the sprit.

HILGARTNER: [01:07:55] I mean I guess the good answer is really no. Obviously, we have the emails that are a nest of emails, you know.

DOLDE: Thinking about future me who's trying to understand choices that were made and I think that a lot of thought is going into them and a lot of skill and I don't know, I'm just thinking that I don't know how hard it would be to sort of summarize some of that, but I think there would be value in it.

HILGARTNER: [01:08:19] Yeah, I do too. I mean I have kind of inventory of pieces and components so at least there will always be documentation as to how... what the vessel had on it when it started. Because the rigging has to be so organized so there's lists of everything, but the reasoning behind why did they use this block instead of this block... one of the things, as an example, is there's these topsail sheet and lower yard lift blocks and they are kind of more of a continental style and less of a British style and it seems that the British probably had them, but they're really unique and special to the 17th century and that was the kind of thing where we went with it and it was sort of like a... we could kind of go either way. We could

have done it a British style very specific to the British style or we could have done it in this continental style. And usually, we'd go with the British style, but in some places we want the continental style because it represents norms of the 17th century that influenced the British and that the British did use occasionally, or even often. So it's always this thing, there was so much cultural exchange. The bigger differences exist when you go further south. So the differences in northern Europe are there, the varied rigging, but they're not as extreme as if you get to like French. The French stuff is really different. Block types, rigging styles, rig styles. And you go further south you go even crazier. Greek, you know. But northern Europe, Scandinavia, North Sea, Baltic, the boats are pretty similar and not wildly different. The minutiae, but kind of otherwise not huge differences.

DOLDE: I do... so putting my plug in for maybe... I think actually alongside the inventory is like an annotated inventory, you know? Take the inventory as the basis of it and kind of explain some of those.

HILGARTNER: [01:10:30] In my very first... I need to go over this again. I have a rigging inventory and this is when I was first going through piece by piece and wrapping my head around every little piece. I have a notes column on a

spreadsheet and it will say like, "See Mark Hart" who's an author, page 120. Because I want to remember like what is this thing. But if I did something like that further and fleshed it out you could see these authors and then on that page they probably make the case for this thing. Like that's why I'm doing it, it's because of this author suggests it this way or that way, but.

DOLDE: Yeah. I think a lot of the focus is on the hull and the overall design and things like that and, like you said, that's not Iver's specialty and so I think it's in your head.

HILGARTNER: [01:11:22] It's true.

DOLDE: There's probably a lot more we could talk about. Is there anything major that we're leaving out or should we pick this up later on? It's already almost 2:30.

HILGARTNER: [01:11:38] Yeah, whatever you want. I mean I can't right off the bat... I mean I...

DOLDE: I think we've covered a lot. I did decide to focus primarily on rigging with you. I know you're privy to a lot of the other aspects of the project, but I kind of want to let you go on this and we'll talk to the others about that. Why don't we... we'll stop for now...

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