

Townsend, Frank - 210721 0038

FRANK TOWNSEND: -- working on boats.

JENIFER DOLDE: So what I will do is say a few words of introduction. This is Jenifer Dolde. It is Wednesday, July 21, 2021. I'm here at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum in Saint Michaels with my colleague. Frank, would you give us your full name and your date of birth, please?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:00:18] Frank Anthony Townsend. October the 9th, 1956.

JENIFER DOLDE: Thank you. Thank you. Tell me about where you were born, where you grew up, and what your childhood was like.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:00:30] Well, born in Connecticut, but don't remember much of that. Moved to Maine when I was four, with my family, of course. And that's all I remember, living in down east Maine, growing up in the woods. I thought I'd be a timber cruiser, you know, because I loved camping and all this. I tried to get into the class, and they... There was no room.

JENIFER DOLDE: Timber cruiser, what's that? A lum...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:00] You look at trees, and, like, for a paper company, mark the ones that should be removed and, you know, it's an outdoor job. So I thought, oh,

this'll be great. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: But you just spent time playing in the woods,
exploring...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:14] That's what I... I always have.

JENIFER DOLDE: And the name of the town?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:17] Lubec.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:20] Yeah, the most eastern point
United States, continental.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, so way up there.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:25] Yeah. Yup, right up on the main
Fundy Bay, big tides.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, and also connected to the woods but also
connected to the water. Were you doing much?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:37] I didn't really get into the
water that much until I got into the... My high
school years where I dug clams in the summertime with
my brother-in-law. So, and I...

JENIFER DOLDE: For money?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:49] Yeah, so I got to operate the
boat, you know. And...

JENIFER DOLDE: Maybe I'm skipping ahead. Tell me more about,
you know, wanting to... Your time in the woods and...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:01:59] Well, that's what happened with

the boat school was I couldn't get into that class, so they said well, take another class in the same school, and you'll get right in next semester. So I took boat building.

JENIFER DOLDE: This is after high school?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:02:15] Mm-hmm.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:02:16] Yeah, so this 48 years ago.

JENIFER DOLDE: So I mean, but in high school and in your rest of your education, where there opportunities to explore, you know, working with your hands or with your family?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:02:32] Actually, through high school we went to the vocational school for some of the classes. So I got to know the people there before I went there.

JENIFER DOLDE: This is the same school?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:02:47] The same school.

JENIFER DOLDE: So what were they teaching you at the high school level?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:02:50] Oh, small engine repair, welding. I think I took a plumbing class.

JENIFER DOLDE: No woodworking?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:03:00] There wasn't much for woodworking. There just wasn't... The shop wasn't there, you know. So that's... I didn't really get

into much woodworking until I...

JENIFER DOLDE: And rest of school, did you... Was that something you enjoyed, or history? I don't know.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:03:18] It was good. I was very young because I graduated at seventeen, so I graduated from vocational school at 19. And I couldn't drink, you know. I already had a job. I was the top of my class, and they offered me the job at Southwest Boat Corporation, which, the fella who was their CEO was the leader of the school. I don't know what you're going to call that, but anyway, yeah, he's the head guy. And he said, "Well, we want to send a couple guys to this yard." And they did traditional...

JENIFER DOLDE: You took classes at the school in high school but not woodworking, but then when you enrolled in the vocational school... What's the name of it?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:04:10] It was Washington County Vocational Technical. It's changed names twice since.

JENIFER DOLDE: When you enrolled in it as... After high school, you actually... There were more programs available then, more opportunities. You were interested in the timber, but then you got into boat building instead.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:04:30] Boat building because it was in my hometown. They had a branch there. And it just

happened to be that that was where we did our
vocational work too, so...

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, tell me what the schooling was like, before
we talk about your first job.

FRANK TOWNSEND: About what now?

JENIFER DOLDE: Your schooling, the boat... Yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Oh, the boat building school?

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, I mean, how... What was it like?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:04:50] Well, you had your... You
started off with a lofting... Classes and eventually
got into... There's a drafting, drawing, and that
sort of thing, which I really like. I still do it.
I'm doing it for the *Dove* with a pencil and a piece of
paper. So when I sit down to build something, I draw
it out, and I build it with a pencil so I can tell you
what order it has to go together. So that's what I
do.

JENIFER DOLDE: And that was fundamental to what they taught you?
That was the process?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:05:23] Right, right.

JENIFER DOLDE: Were they teaching you about small craft, all
types? How... What was the...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:05:28] We started off pretty small. I
think that we... They were building a Whitehall, most

of the guys were, but I just happened to get...
Somebody had ordered a peapod, a big double-ender, 16-footer. And there was four of us in that group, and then two of them basically quit the school. But one of the guys is [Geno Skelzo?], who was one of the best corkers on the west... On the east coast. He was [in?] my class. So but anyway...

JENIFER DOLDE: Wow. And what... The instructors were people with, you know, experience in the industry?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:06:11] Little... Different types of woodworkers, anything from, there's a boat builder that was from Chicago. There was a lobster boat builder, Dodge. I can't think of his first name. And then [Clint Tuttle?], who just died this last year.

JENIFER DOLDE: And so, there was obviously some book learning, some --

FRANK TOWNSEND: Exactly.

JENIFER DOLDE: -- you know, lecture type things, but so... And with the hands-on, is it demonstration? Did you learn specific skill... Was it very... I guess I'm trying to understand if it was really structured or if it was just, let's build this boat, and you learn that in the process?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:06:51] Well, it's structured in that you

work on the drawings. Then you draw it full size.
You make patterns. That's just the order of boat
building. And we got to do all of those things from
the beginning. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, it sounds like they had a pretty organized
curriculum then.

FRANK TOWNSEND: It was. It was.

JENIFER DOLDE: It was not --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:07:14] It was. I had some great
teachers. [Ernie Brierly?] worked at some big...
Vosper's or something in England. And when he retired
he went to Southwest Boat, which is where I ended up.
But knowing that [Otto Miller?] knew him, because they
had worked together years before, so he invited him to
become an instructor. So that was a... It was a
small world then too. You know, everybody knew
everyone, you know.

JENIFER DOLDE: Even internationally, as you were saying, yeah.
Okay, so it was a two-year program, you said.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:07:52] It was, and then in the middle,
you did an apprenticeship, just a, I don't know, a few
months. So I went... I just happened to go to...
Was a summer camp that needed boats repaired. And I
got to know people there, and they accepted that as my

apprenticeship. So I mean, I worked on canoes the first year. I mean, it was boats were boats, you know. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, wow, so... And that was instructive? You know, something that simple and --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:08:30] Yeah. Yeah, I learned a lot about the Old Town canoes that they had there and little bit about fiberglass that I didn't really... Now that's... That was the clincher, anyway. I knew I didn't want to do fiberglass boat work.

JENIFER DOLDE: Was that part of your instruction, was fiberglass?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:08:51] Some, some, because you... They were training you to go to the boat yards or the boat builders. So we got a little bit of everything. But believe it or not, we didn't have epoxy.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:09:09] Yeah, we used resorcinol and hide glues and... When I started out. And eventually epoxies came into... So many whole career, I've seen the epoxy change.

JENIFER DOLDE: So those just weren't nearly as durable, right, those other types of --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:09:24] Right, now, they... Yeah. Well,

I... They're... Resorcinol was a totally different bird. You had to have perfect clamping. You know, epoxies, that's like a ship right in a can. That's what we call it.

JENIFER DOLDE: [laughs] So the older stuff was harder to work with?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:09:40] Harder to work with, yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: Less forgiving, just like oil-based paints.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Right.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, right. Okay, well, so, and then you ended up at Southwest Boat right out of school.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:09:52] Southwest Boat Corp in Mount Desert Island, you know, but in Southwest Harbor.

JENIFER DOLDE: What kind of work were they doing?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:10:01] They were... We did a lot of repairs, and there was a big... Well, a lobster boat fleet, but sardine carriers. And we... We're a larger business, so we did a lot of their big repairs. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: You said sardine?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:10:16] Sardines.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:10:16] Canned sardines.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: So there was a factory. Can't think of the name of the factory, but there was a series of those factories, and they would bring their boats to us, for repair and paint work, all that stuff.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh my goodness. So commercial fishery were also recreation boats, yachts?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:10:39] Yes, we did. We did some bigger yachts. We did some major repairs on a couple of different boats. So I mean, I got to work immediately with [Doc Peterson?], putting a stem in the *Muruffa*, which is a big Philip Rhodes yawl. And I just, I fell in love with backbone work, big wood. That's what we call big. So I've... I mean, I don't know how many I've done now.

JENIFER DOLDE: What was it about that that compelled you?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:11:11] Well, I'm not sure. We just... Doc was like, get that out, the stem out of there as soon as you can, hold the shape. Don't mess around and chip away at it. Just take it away. And then he showed me how to set up the center line patterns. So you put two pieces together, plywood together, and the pattern for this side is on that piece, and the pattern for that side is on this piece. And the center line is down the middle sheet. So when you get

done, you can take it apart and screw the pattern on the side of the wood or nail it, whatever. I mean, back then, there was... Plywood was... I mean, it was available but very expensive marine plywood. So we made patterns out of pine boards, which is strange because Mystic Seaport still does.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:11:59] They buy numbers, whatever low-grade pine boards for patterns. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: And that's primarily the kind of work you did, or you pretty much did everything?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:12:15] I did a little bit of everything. Well, I've been lucky my whole career. When I went to work at Southwest boat they took a contract with US Coast Guard to build a dozen of these 16-foot peapods, the old style that they used to row to the islands with. Well, they discovered they actually are the ideal boat for going to the islands. The Coast Guard would go out with their million-dollar inflatable, and the guy from Indiana, whoever was running it, you know, kids from all over the world... Over the country, joined the Coast Guard to go to sea or whatever, and they'd flip one over, and it would be ruined. But they saved the guys off the island,

Matinicus Island, with a peapod. You could stand up and row in with the tide and with the beach, you know, [inaudible] beach. And so they decided they wanted a dozen of these peapods that were heavy, really heavy. And so I got to plank, like you know, over and over, repetitive planking. So Doc would build the planks. He would cut them out, put them in the steam box, and we'd pull them out and put them on the boat. And they were built pretty quickly for what they were. But we ended up with the thirteenth one because they ran over one. The guys, they were teasing me. They said you got to go down and see that peapod you just finished. There was a metal strap with a stem on it and a line. That was it. They backed over it with a 150-footer.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh my God.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:14:01] You've seen those big ones that go [mimics boat engine]. You know, they just jump when you put them in gear? And the guy forgot it was there. So we had to build another one.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh my God.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:14:13] Unlucky, but we built the 13th one.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure, yeah. But in building that many of the same thing, you really, you master that repetitive,

you know, that skill.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:14:24] I can plank and frame. It was fun. I worked with Doc Peterson and George Mitchell. And they'd go, "Frank, come in on Saturday. We're going to frame it." And I'm like, "In one day?" "Yeah." Had everything all ready, and we bent the frames inside the form on Saturday. It was a...

JENIFER DOLDE: So almost, you know, I don't know, not assembly line, but in a sense...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:14:50] Sort of, yeah. Yeah, they had patterns for each plank, and just tacked the pattern on and drew around it. And Doc was making planks faster than we could put them on.

JENIFER DOLDE: And that's a very traditional process, but I'm sure you've met a wide variety of other builders in your career. That's not everybody's approach, correct?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:15:10] No, no, I went from there to Ralph Stanley's, you know, about four blocks up the street. I was renting a room from his son-in-law. And I guess he must have told Ralph I was down there freezing my tail off working on those old, frozen schooners. They'd bring the rotten ones. They'd bring them in in the winter because they were frozen.

Since then I have worked on that same boat and seen some of my work up against the rotten pieces that were left. But yeah, that's an old history in itself. But Ralph took me in. He said all I've got is this one job. One of the young fellas that was working on it went to boat school before I did, got killed in an automobile accident, and the boat just sat there. And the owner, of course, wanted it finished. So I got to work on this little catboat pretty much by myself all that winter. And they were like, oh, aren't you cold? And I said, "Man, I'm inside." [laughs] This is nice. Yeah, this is wonderful. So yeah, that was a...

JENIFER DOLDE: Do you know about what year that was?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [sighs]

JENIFER DOLDE: There you go. Refer to that [CV?].

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:16:34] I'll see if I'm right. Says I worked there from, the Southwest Boat, until '80. So I worked at Ralph's from '80 to '85.

JENIFER DOLDE: You were at Southwest Boat for quite a while then.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:16:52] From 1977 to '80.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, okay, all right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:17:00] Yeah. And at Ralph's, basically four years too. But it's one of those odd things.

Work dried up, you know. And I've been there several times. You got boats lined up to build, and then this one cancels, you know. And then the next guy wasn't really ready to build, you know, yet. So I had to look for work. And there was a Hinckley offshoot called Ocean Cruising Yachts. And they hired me in a cabinet shop, OCY. And they were building the old... It was Hank Hinckley, Henry Hinckley's son. So he was doing his own thing, but he had took... He had access to the old molds for, like, the Bermuda 40. I don't... Probably heard of it.

JENIFER DOLDE: Mm-hmm.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:17:53] Bermuda 40 and the 42. We built the OCY version of that using their mold, the hull, but I didn't really work on the boats themselves. I did...

JENIFER DOLDE: The interior.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:18:04] I built dovetail drawers and bunks and pieces and parts.

JENIFER DOLDE: And was that... I mean, you had already done some of that or just this...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:18:13] Yeah, yeah, I had basic woodworking skills, yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: From the vocational school or --?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:18:19] Yeah, boat school.

JENIFER DOLDE: I mean, the skills were certainly transferable.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:18:23] Sure, sure, and then, I mean, they threw us right in the fire, like at Southwest Boat, I sawed all the frames, the green oak frames that we put in the peapods. So but I got to... The neat thing about Southwest Boat, there were two, was the first day there I broke a tool. Somebody was messing with me because they pushed the button in on the sander. And then when I plugged it in, it took off. And I stepped on the cord as it went by, and it pulled right out of the machine, of course. So the first thing I did was learn... Meet the tool repair guy. So I got right... Got into tool repair too. And that's the same with the boat school. They said, well, Frank, you want to change some blades in the planer in the evening? You know, put it on your timecard. Because I worked on the library when I was at the boat school. So I got into books.

JENIFER DOLDE: And is that how you learned about tools and maintaining them and --?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:19:28] Somewhat. My father was a mechanic, so I was a second mechanic. We did Volkswagen engine replacements and, you know, kept our

cars running.

JENIFER DOLDE: You know, we've kind of skipped over that. So your dad was definitely person who worked with his hands. Did you have siblings?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:19:44] Sisters, yeah, yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay. And you did some hands-on work with your dad as well?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:19:51] Yeah, I mean, I could run a chainsaw, you know, basic stuff like that.

JENIFER DOLDE: It was a rural area, so were you --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:19:58] Very rural, yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: -- doing a, you know, not homesteading per se, but you were kind of, you know, living kind of a hands-on lifestyle and...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:20:08] Mm-hmm, yeah, we moved from Connecticut. We brought our little trailer, you know, the mobile home, and we bought the property across the street from the main house and put the trailer there. And then when Mrs. Mahone, who lived across the street, when she went in the nursing home, she offered the house to dad. So we bought that, and we moved into this little house. I was amazed. It was still standing, last I knew. But they had since dozed it down. But it was built with hewed timbers, you know,

chopped out of logs.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh goodness.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:20:46] And the flooring was all like out of the high school. You know, when they used recycled, you know. So it... And it wasn't insulated at all.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh gosh. And it needed a work a lot? Constant repair?

FRANK TOWNSEND: It's constant repair.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, like any old house.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Yeah, yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, we did. We kind of skipped over that. So yeah, so you grew up with, you know --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:21:11] Hands-on.

JENIFER DOLDE: -- hands-on kind of things as well.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Yup.

JENIFER DOLDE: So you're at OCY.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:21:19] OCY. Where did I [inaudible] next? From OCY... Oh, it's not even on here. I went to Vermont and built a Lyle Hess cutter, 32-footer, just like Lin and Larry Pardey. I don't know if you know the Pardeys. No? World cruisers, and they've built a couple different boats. And they happened to have gone to the same designer that this guy did. So

they jointly had that boat designed. But I built the first one, and Larry built the second one.

JENIFER DOLDE: So this was a private contract?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:22:05] Mm-hmm.

JENIFER DOLDE: By yourself?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:22:08] No, there was a couple of us.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay. All right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:22:09] You know, the owner was there some, but, you know, I lofted it and...

JENIFER DOLDE: I mean, did you run the project?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:22:16] Theoretically the owner ran the project, yeah, [James Calorie?]. He... Of all the things, he owns Indian River Citrus.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, okay. Yeah, I've heard. [laughter]

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:22:31] Yeah. He had plenty of money. And you know, everything he touched turned to gold. Yeah, he goes... You wouldn't believe how we did it. He said, we went... He and his buddies went in the service, and with their bonus when they got out or reupped, they bought a block of Houston, Texas when it was... The market was nothing. And he said within five years the Arabs came back and rented it from him. Oil companies came in and rented their buildings. And it was just... Money was just flowing in. You

started investing.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure, in other --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:23:07] Well, okay, let's... Well, he bought that... Yeah, pretty, pretty crazy.

JENIFER DOLDE: And so then he needed a big boat.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:23:14] Well, he wanted a sailboat. And it was a pretty nice cutter. Went from there... From there I went down... This, I shortened this to fit two pages.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, sure.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:23:30] That's what I was taught to do. So I went from there, I went to Pilots Point Marina, in Connecticut actually. Yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: What part of Connecticut was that?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:23:41] That's Westbrook. That's just... And I... We just did repairs. It just happened, I don't know if it was Sandy, one of the hurricanes came through, and there were boats everywhere. I mean, literally repair work was piled up everywhere. So same thing. I just worked in a wood shop.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, so a couple people talked to me about, you know, the value of doing repair work versus a fresh build. What's your feeling about it?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:24:14] You know, I like restorations,

but new builds are fun. Just fun to find one is the next... I've worked on some barebones restoration projects, like my own. I got a Catspaw Dinghy from the donation department. There's almost nothing left of it. I've replaced almost the whole thing.

JENIFER DOLDE: Right. So yeah, is it a new build? Is it restoration? [laughs]

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:24:40] Right. You look at it and go, gee whiz, the transom is still original. But...

JENIFER DOLDE: Did you have a... Did you connect with a particular region or style of boat building? I mean, I... Obviously you experienced more certain types in your early years than later on.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:25:01] I guess the style that would probably be... They're the builders that I've worked with. Every builder's got his own style. So I pick up however I, like, spiling planks I got from Doc Peterson, you know, and then Ralph Stanley did something else. I can't remember what it... And I do that his way. You know, and then I do this this way. And I cut scarfs like Doc Peterson, who bends the board and then planes it. And when you let that down, instead of having a curve, it's straight. And it's so quick. And I was just showing Joe. I said that you

would not believe, the little... What do you call them? The old Indian tricks, that what we call them.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, so different boat builders have different techniques. Somebody said, you know, none of them are necessarily wrong.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Right.

JENIFER DOLDE: But you developed a set of skills acquired from different people that you prefer, or are you flexible in the way you approach things as well?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:26:04] Oh, I'm somewhat flexible, but I'm opinionated.

JENIFER DOLDE: Fair enough.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:26:09] You know, I... Yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, you seem to definitely have preferences. That's why I asked you that. And they're not all from one person. You're not the, you know, the --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:26:18] No, just like here. They paint the seams before they caulk them. In 48 years I have never seen that. And I caulked some the last seminar we had, and it seemed to work fine. But...

JENIFER DOLDE: Is that... Now, where does that... I don't know the answer. Where is that derived from? Is that a Chesapeake thing?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:26:40] That's a Chesapeake thing. And I

think it's just so that the seams don't dry out. It's just the type of... They all probably planked with green pine, you know. And in order to keep them from drying out, they painted it. That would be my guess.

JENIFER DOLDE: Probably, yeah. So I'm trying to remember where we left off, but, you know, still... We still got at least a decade, I think, before you headed down this way.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:27:14] Right, so I worked at that Pilots Point Marina, and then I got an opportunity to go back to Maine and work on one of the schooners, *The Mercantile*. And from there, that was just over the long season, maybe a year at the most. From there I went to across the country, '87.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:27:47] So no one has my resume. People don't... They read it, and they go, how did you do that? You know, so I went across country and proceeded to dislocate my shoulder as soon as I got there. So I used to go visit the ship with all the boat builders in the yards. And you know, it's kind of hard to get a job with one arm.

JENIFER DOLDE: But you couldn't work, oh, no. So where did you go?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:28:10] So I went to this Port Townsend Boat Works. And several of the... So I know the people at the shipwrights co-op, which I eventually ended up at. And Port Townsend is now gone. They do just refrigeration work. And yeah, it was pretty interesting, pretty interesting move, that one was.

JENIFER DOLDE: Things were done different there?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:28:35] You know, it went from everything on the east coast being made with oak to going to the west coast and everything was made with fir. There was no big oak, you know. There's big, yellow cedar timbers and, you know, that kind of thing, but I had never worked with yellow cedar. But, so as I say, as my resume is... Covers the whole spectrum.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure. And do... I mean, what was it like to work with the fir?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:29:02] Was it... Yeah, it was so that you could use bigger pieces, and it's a little bit lighter, and oak just doesn't hold up in a damp environment. And that's, you know, we're right on the edge of a rain forest, a temperate rain forest, but so a lot of these boats would go to Alaska, fishing. And that's kind of how the whole... As the world turns, I went from there, I went from the shipwrights co-op to

I own Petersburg Shipwrights in Alaska for ten years.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh my goodness.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:29:40] Yeah. And that was same thing,
the old customers I had from down in Port Townsend
said we need somebody to take over for Fred. He's
retiring, and we don't have anything. He said... He
quit working a couple years ago. You know, he's
retired before he retired.

JENIFER DOLDE: Right, right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:29:59] He goes, "He didn't do anything
anymore," so and it's hard to get people. That was
one of the big --

JENIFER DOLDE: To go up there?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:06] People to come up there
[overlapping dialogue; inaudible]

JENIFER DOLDE: Was Fred a well-known person in --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:07] He was. Fred... Yeah, yeah --

JENIFER DOLDE: What was his last name?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:11] -- was good. Paulson.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: And what was the town in Alaska?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:18] Petersburg.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, you said Petersburg. Okay. Yeah. Wow, ten

years.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:24] Ten years.

JENIFER DOLDE: And what was the clientele there, primarily?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:27] Fishing village.

JENIFER DOLDE: Still fishing village? And the... I guess
naively, people are still using, you know, wooding
fishing vessels?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:35] Oh yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: They're not fiberglassing them?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:30:40] No. No. No, and actually, one
of the reasons I liked Petersburg is they had a
booming wooden boat fleet, trollers, gillnetters. You
know, we did work on glass boats, but I hired good
people, you know. I had 14 people working for me.
And I had a store that they wouldn't let me work in.
I would mess up something. Always like, "Don't touch
--

JENIFER DOLDE: Like a supply store?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:31:04] Yeah, it's a chandlery. Yeah,
don't let Frank near the computer. I would try to buy
something or charge somebody something. It's like...
Okay.

JENIFER DOLDE: So really, there was a huge need, and you filled
a niche.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:31:20] Yeah, I rode the wave. By the time I got ready to leave in '11, the economy had gone back down to where I was almost making the same money I did the first year I went there.

JENIFER DOLDE: So the market, the fishery, a decline in the fishery or just the economy overall?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:31:40] No, what happened is that a lot of these guys are older. The older gentlemen would go to Palm Springs in the winter, and their buddies in the investment industry said oh, man, you better save your money. Defer your maintenance, you know. We didn't have any... The economy never went down. It still, you know...

JENIFER DOLDE: But they just put off the needed work.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:32:05] They put off working on boats and buying, resupplying and doing the things that kept my store going. So in 2011, I was thumbing through an old magazine, and it wasn't that old I guess, one of the industry magazines, and I noticed, oh, look, they're building a boat, a wooden boat in San Diego. The picture was about an inch square, or the rendering. And I called down, and they hired me. The rest is history, yeah. And --

JENIFER DOLDE: And what was the build?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:32:45] The *San Salvador*, 92-foot
galleon.

JENIFER DOLDE: Wow.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:32:51] Pretty amazing. So we started
that project, and I was just the lead man. And the...
That's how I got to know Allen Rawl. He was the...
What does he call his business? Ships of Wood or
something like that. He's pretty much retired now,
but he lives in Baltimore. Just kind of crossed paths
with him. But yeah, that was a interesting... We
were like, he laid it all out for me, how many people
it was going to be, how many lead men, you know. I
got there, and there wasn't any lead men. And there
was way too many people for me to lead, so he
basically fired me for doing something that I didn't
do. Because I wasn't there. But anyway, so I went
right over to the museum, and the CEO said don't
leave. We got work for you. So they had a pilot boat
that needed a big repair job done on it. So I led
that. And then they fired Allen. And me and Peter
Wilson took over the... Running the whole thing.

JENIFER DOLDE: Now, was that, like our *Dove*, was that a huge
research project and historians and naval --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:34:11] There was a... [Doug Sharpe?]

and a team of people did a whole bunch of research.

And they used the same people as we used. Eric Speth

from Jamestown, he was on that board. So evidence --

JENIFER DOLDE: So that... Again, that community is very small.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:34:30] Right. And then [Fred Hocker?],
you know, from Sweden. So I'm finally going to get to
meet him. He's coming here in September --

JENIFER DOLDE: Ah, very good.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:34:38] -- for the... I guess it's
probably our last symposium.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yes, yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:34:43] At least for that.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, so you really have a direct correlation to
this project. We're skipping ahead, but yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:34:51] Well, but I mean, it still...
It's the same thing. Joe came up to... He said I
came purposely to Mystic to get somebody, to find
somebody. I said, "Well, we're downsizing. I'll be
available September 1."

JENIFER DOLDE: So you... Okay, so you were in San Diego, and
then you went to Mystic from there?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:10] Yup.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay. So when... About when did you go to
Mystic, 20--?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:14] Well, and I didn't... There was
two years there I worked at Koehler Kraft.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, you were just mentioning that before we
started.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:20] And we did restorations, big, big
restorations. And we just... We put another hull
underneath an old boat. So it looked like the old
boat. There's some great stuff.

JENIFER DOLDE: And where's Koehler Kraft?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:32] Koehler, yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: Cooler.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:34] Koehler, like the toilet but
spelled different.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, like the toilet. That's what I was
thinking.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:36] But spelled... The L and H is
reversed.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, okay. K-O-L-H-E-R.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:43] He reminded several times because
I --

JENIFER DOLDE: [laughs] You got to get that right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:35:49] Had nothing to do with the

toilets. Yup. So I had two years there and several, like five or six restorations.

JENIFER DOLDE: What type of boats were you restoring? Yacht?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:36:04] We did... Yeah, mostly all yachts. I built a spar for the *Aster*, 82-foot hollow spar. Just like I said, every time I turn the corner, something I either hadn't done before or had done. Somebody said we need somebody to build this mast. And we pumped it right out.

JENIFER DOLDE: Was that work you had done before?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:36:27] Yeah, I did.

JENIFER DOLDE: On that scale?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:36:29] Not quite as big as that one, but like I said, Doc Peterson showed me how to scarf. And these were four-inches thick, 14-inches wide, and they needed to be twice as long as they were. So I set them up, and I cut them all in one day. And when the owner showed up on Monday, the wood was all glued up. And we became good friends.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:36:54] He was like, "I've been watching these guy work on it." They worked on it on his boat because he got rammed by a drug smuggler. Went around the world, and he got to Mexico. He was headed for

San Diego. That's how close he made it. He made it to San Diego, but they towed him there.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:37:13] Yeah, they rammed him and knocked the mast down.

JENIFER DOLDE: They rammed him in order to board?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:37:19] Yeah, they were going to take over.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh wow.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:37:20] I think. He was very lucky.

They got tangled up in his rigging, and they cut it away and left and left them, abandoned them there in the wreckage.

JENIFER DOLDE: I mean, it could have been worse, though.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:37:33] They had some... One of the kids had a cell phone. It worked. And they called the Coast Guard, and the Coast Guard called the Mexican cost guard and saved them. Pretty cool. So we'll go back on schedule, yeah?

JENIFER DOLDE: [inaudible]

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:37:53] Well anyway, from there, same thing, work slowed down. Contract didn't get signed. We had the boat in the shop. He said can't work on it until we get money. So my friend Michael from up

north, California, he said, "I've got a project in Puerto Rico." He said come on down and help him work on the *Amazing Grace*. Course, that's not on my resume. So I went down there. So for two weeks, all paid, you know, great project. [inaudible] put the masts up. Two hurricanes.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh my goodness.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:38:32] Maria and [Alma?] both. He went back to California and left me there with... And we sat around in the dark reading books with flashlights, and I don't need any more hurricanes.

JENIFER DOLDE: No.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:38:45] But anyway, that was a good project. Now I've got a great connection. He's since bought the shop there and moved from California to Puerto Rico.

JENIFER DOLDE: So you did finish the project, but --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:38:54] I did.

JENIFER DOLDE: -- it just took --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:38:54] But it took us a couple little jogs in the middle of it, that's all.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh my gosh, wow.

FRANK TOWNSEND: But yeah. So that got me to getting ready to... I went back to Koehler, and still nothing. So

I donated my boat. I had a 30-foot boat. Donated my boat and all the... Everything to go with it to LA Maritime. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: And then you headed back east?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:39:24] Then I headed back east.

JENIFER DOLDE: Now, mostly for the work, or was there family or, you know, any other thing that drew you back?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:39:32] You know, I had eventually thought I would mov back. I just didn't know it was going to be on Thanksgiving, you know. And at... We laughed. I sent pictures to all my friends. I'm sitting in Indian territory, halfway over, on Thanksgiving Day, but I'm going to help the pilgrims work on the *Mayflower*.

JENIFER DOLDE: So that's what brought... Took you to --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:39:53] And they... Everybody got a good laugh that I would have to travel on... Yeah, that... Yeah, well, I guess before the... By the first of December I was working there. So I went from San Diego to snowstorms. But Mystic is a great place, and they paid us overtime to shovel off the boats. So I got to meet all bunches and bunches of people. And they've asked me to come back, but I don't know if I'm going to.

JENIFER DOLDE: Time to retire?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:40:26] These guys don't know that.

[laughter] They sort of know, but, oh, you could go back to Mystic. I said, "I know I could." But do I want to? They're doing big restoration jobs, *Shenandoah*, couple of other big things coming.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, my daughter just graduated from Connecticut College, so I was able, the last four years, I've been going up there pretty regularly, as opposed to the past. And yeah, it's extremely active. And so, I mean, in going to Mystic, maybe it really wasn't a change, I mean, but it is a museum setting versus... Or I mean, you were at a museum in San Diego too.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:41:00] San Diego Maritime, yeah, was a museum.

JENIFER DOLDE: So what kind of culture change was that, or were you a part of it, or did you feel separate from it? So now I'm interested in your... You know, your sort of feelings about preservation and, you know, doing things to maybe a different standard and how that was different maybe at San Diego, Mystic, and then coming here.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:41:22] Oh yeah, once you... Once I started working for the museums, you realize that

getting it done correctly is more important than how long it takes, usually. But I mean, the *Mayflower*, of course, had a schedule, but when you're working on the *Morgan*... That's the other... The list of boats I've worked on is just increased by, you know, *Charles W. Morgan* and then *Joseph Conrad*. I got the caulk on her. And now, of course the *Mayflower* too. I was one of the decking bosses. It's... You got to have more than one when you've got a big boat with different levels. So I was a on-deck guy.

JENIFER DOLDE: So the work takes longer because you're doing it to different standards. Does that... How did you feel about that?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:42:11] Well, it's always a discussion. When someone says we're going to do this this way because we've always done it that way, and but we're going to put rubber in the seams, you know, on the deck seams. I got, that's kind of... You're saying no to one thing and then doing something else for durability, so there's a fine line. Like they're going to use pitch in this one.

JENIFER DOLDE: Ooh, I was going to say, we're doing the same kind of thing.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:42:42] Yeah, they're going to use pitch,

and it will be sticky and messy, just like it would have been originally. A boat like that in this region, the pitch is going to be alive in the summertime.

JENIFER DOLDE: So thinking, you know... So making compromises and decisions that sometimes are inconsistent with what was done historically, typically for a reason or maybe not always in your perception?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:43:11] Well, and this... Like I say, this... Usually it's for a reason, and that's one of the reasons they bumped me up in the standings. Because I was finishing the drafting for the designer, and it's been a real challenge.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, so I mean, I don't want to skip over Mystic, but do you want to talk? Do you want to get moving to how you got started on this project and maybe how you started contributing in the beginning and how it's evolved?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:43:41] Well, first I just figured I'd be one of the leaders, you know. They paid me fairly well. And then I got looking at the drawings. I said, "Joe, it's not finished. You can't build it until we... Got to finish the thing."

JENIFER DOLDE: There's some steps missing here on the --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:43:56] Right, right, there's some steps missing. And then Spencer started the lofting. And then I pretty much took over when I started. And there's horrible mistakes. I mean, just basic stuff like frame spacing, you know. That's pretty simple. But I found errors in his drawings that just are scary.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, I mean, I've certainly heard over and over again, you know, it's like maybe architects versus, you know, building architects versus builders, same kind of thing. Where's the disconnect? Where do you think?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:44:38] I think --

JENIFER DOLDE: Because a lot of research went into it, of course. And --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:44:41] No, but I think that [Ivers?] worked for a lot of stability, boats, you know, Coast Guard boats. And that's his baby, but he signed up for this, you know. And I think he could have used a draftsman because he's not very good with a computer. But that's just --

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure. So, okay, no, fair enough. I think that -
-

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:45:06] So I mean, the two lines come

together, and they don't... How do you... You know, someone's got to figure out how to finish the... Oh, that's the top of the rail, and this is the bottom. You know, that was the sort of things that we ran into.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure. Now, he's here fairly regularly, or was?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:45:21] Tuesdays.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay. And so, I know, I see the meetings happening across the hall in there. So you're very much a part of that?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:45:28] I don't sit on the meetings anymore. I've had a little discussion with him, and I don't think he cares for me anymore.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, all right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:45:41] But I finished his drawings, and he should be thanking me.

JENIFER DOLDE: So but you were expressing, okay, here's where we're having... Here's where something's missing?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:45:48] Well, what happened was that... The pandemic. So I have a studio at McMartin & Beggins. And I laid all the plans out in my... On my benches, and I was involved in the meetings. And then I told Joe. I said, "Joe, I've got three-dimensional vision. I thought everybody did. I can look at a

flat drawing and see a shape of a drawing. And I look at a set of plans, and if there's something that's wrong, it glares." Said, "Well, that hatch can't be there because he's got the sprit going right through it." Go, "I'll be darned. It is." I said, "Well, and the boomkin is a foot short of landing on the step." He was like... He said, "Well, why don't you make a list of all the things?" So that became the list.

JENIFER DOLDE: So you spent a lot of time doing that?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:46:53] I know the drawings better than he does.

JENIFER DOLDE: And then working toward getting... You said you did a lot of that drawing then, the drafting to fill... Flesh that out, as it were?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:47:01] Change the... Right, flesh it out like the deck layout. All the deck beams were not where they needed to be. So I changed it. I drew it. I drew wood grain so for to see depth. Because what we discovered... You can't type this is in anything... Is that Iver can't see three dimensions. He works in two. People have it. Some don't.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, I was going to say, I would imagine a lot of people don't have that gift. But you've always had

it?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:47:36] I... Yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: And you kind of took it for granted and assumed -

-

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:47:39] I just look at it and go, "Of course that strut's that way." I looked at his drawing and go, "That strut belongs on a box." This doesn't have the third dimension. And come to find out it didn't.

JENIFER DOLDE: Do you... What... Do you know anything about the William Baker drawings and the design of the '70s *Dove*?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:48:00] Mm-hmm.

JENIFER DOLDE: Do you... You know --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:48:03] *Mayflower* was drawn by him too.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, okay. Well, so, my impression is, you know, there were drawings. They may... I don't know how similar they were to what you... We started with. But then, you know, Mr. Jim, you know, then took that, and that was a guideline, as it were. I mean, it's not that he didn't follow them, but he... You know, he --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:48:21] He didn't follow them.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:48:23] And we have the same thing. When

I did the lofting, this boat has flats and radiuses, I mean corners, designed into it. And he didn't do a very good job of combining those two types of building where you just build a frame and then... And lofting on a level line is really strange because, at some point, you have two very straight lines, but they come around, and if you draw them straight, they will look hollow. It's just the way it is. So everything we've changed, the bullworks, to a positive curve. It looks straight, but it is not. But it is slightly sprung outward two inches. We just checked to see if it would work. So the boat is at the rail. It's now four-inches wider than the original design because of that flatness. But see, I built the half model. I built one, you know, one-inch to the scale.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, did you build a half model?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:49:39] Yeah. It's in... So --

JENIFER DOLDE: So we can use that in the exhibit?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:49:42] I would think so.

JENIFER DOLDE: Good, wonderful.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:49:44] I mean, probably belongs to St. Mary's.

JENIFER DOLDE: Ah, well, hopefully --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:49:49] But I don't know.

JENIFER DOLDE: No, maybe, but the... I would hope they would let us use it.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:49:52] I mean, right now we... It's still got the tape on it where I measured off the original plank lines. Course, we've changed them a couple times since, and that always happens. But you have to have a starting point. This is the shutter plank. You take a piece of wood and bend it around the model. And where it laid flat, I taped it on, and that's our starting point. It's your ending point. Because you can't... They have a real twisty plank, you put it in last. You want something that will just go straight in. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: So obviously, a lot... And that was maybe an anticipated job that you had to take on, was all of this adjusting and drafting?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:50:39] Well, this... Because I had... I did that on the *San Salvador*. And I kept saying that I just... Well, I've done this before. I've done this before. Done this before. I've laid out work for ten guys before. You know.

JENIFER DOLDE: It's... Well, this is the basic of your training. You started out doing that in the technical school. But you weren't necessarily hired to do that,

but obviously the... You're still became apparent.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:51:03] I just stepped into it, and then Joe went directly to Steve and said, "We got to pay this guy. We can't lose him." So they gave me \$3 an hour and extra three grand in my bonus. I wish they'd have just gave me all in bonus because \$3 an hour, I get \$25 a week more, \$25. Because they went over the edge to the next tax bracket. I was like, "Hey, I can afford to buy coffee for the guys now."

JENIFER DOLDE: [laughs] Right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:51:38] So I took on a lot of responsibility for a hundred bucks a month.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, well, but also a very valuable contribution.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:51:45] Right.

JENIFER DOLDE: An essential contribution.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:51:47] Well, and I could step back, and Joe comes to me all the time. You know, he just... What are we going to do here? What's this going to be next? I said, "Well, I wouldn't build it that way." And so he said, "Well, let's get you out that engine room. Show me what you would do." So I did. I moved the batteries down low where they should be, you know, and I sketched up the tanks. The tanks were drawn

into the framing. Because you picked the wrong frame to put the tank drawing in. He picked the one behind it... Or the one in front of it, so the one behind it. So it's coming in, getting smaller, you know. So 22 inches away the corner of the tank is not cutting into the frame. Yeah, yeah. Well, so we cut the bottom of the tank off. I mean in the drawing. And now we've fixed those things. And I just figure that's my job now.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, so you're doing a lot of the design and drafting, but you're working. You know, you're doing some craftsmanship as well. So what --

JENIFER DOLDE: [00:52:55] That's the... The jobs that I get... And I can see it coming, I know it ahead of time, when it's going to be. I know I'm going to get the rudder next because the drawing's not complete. Joe gives me the [windlass?] because the drawings didn't work. I redrew it so that it operates.

JENIFER DOLDE: So you told me you had taken quite a few, hundreds of pictures of working on the windlass. Tell me about working on that.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:53:23] Oh, it's a 10-foot piece of white oak that's 16... Started 16-inches square. We figured it weighed 760 pounds when it started. And I

cut the ends off, so now it weighed... Now it's down to maybe 650. And I kept carving on it. I think it's still over 600 pounds. It's a big octagon. It's round in three places. It has a pawl in the center. And by mistake I discovered that wax is the best lubricant. I just happened to --

JENIFER DOLDE: Between the pieces of wood?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:54:11] Yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, the Amish know that. Whenever they sell you furniture they give you that, the wax to --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:54:18] Yeah. Well, that's... I was shocked. I had chalk on the bearing surfaces, and it might as well have been gavel. You could not turn it. It would shatter. So I remember when I put the... I got some of that emulsified wax, keep [checks?] from checking, anchor seal. So it's just, it's wax in a water base somehow. So I painted it on there, and I put it back together, and it spun. I put the handle in it, and it... Handle fell down. It was like, all by itself, just the weight of the handle.

JENIFER DOLDE: Wow.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:54:51] So I wasn't out of out of alignment. I was just dry. It was just super dry.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure. So you're still learning? Had you built -

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FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:54:59] Someone said... I said finally,
I'm building something I have never built before.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, that was my next question. Never, you've
never done... Built a [overlapping dialogue;
inaudible]

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:55:06] Now I'm building another one. I
will have built two. [laughter]

JENIFER DOLDE: Right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:55:11] The little one is cute. It is
the cutest thing. But it still weighs more than I can
lift.

JENIFER DOLDE: So I mean, are those two wrapping up, or you
still have quite a bit to do on that?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:55:21] The first one's in the boat,
pretty much, except for the barrel. And then the
second one, I'm at the pawl post, where they're making
the third post right now. I started that this
morning. So that'll be finishing up. Those have to
go through the deck and be bolted in before we do the
decking because that last deck beam snugs from behind
each one. That's the other thing. I look at the
drawing, and I drew it... As I drew the deck plan, I
numbered them, deck beams. And those two deck beams

are the last time, but just because I looked at it and said, well, I can't go that way, you know. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: The other of placement, yeah, and of operations.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:56:04] Right, yeah, don't bolt this one [laughs] you know. In a sense, they actually did bolt one of them, but it can be taken apart.

JENIFER DOLDE: Right. Well, that saves time. It saves wasted materials. It saves --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:56:16] Well, that's what I was always taught. John Harkins said we got time to do it right. But the other part of it is that we don't have time to do it right. We have time to do it over. You know, do it again. That's the original saying. But Sweden... He said, "I don't... Don't worry about being slow, if it's done right the first time."

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, and so, this is new territory for CBMM. Its new territory for, I believe, most of the people on this crew. So is this, I mean, that's the way things go? You know, you just slow it down. You need somebody to help, you know, strategize and all of that. Is this what you're used to in working on a project like this or --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:57:07] This is a little more than I'm used to.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, what makes this more complex or different?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:57:13] Well, I guess I could be honest, just the lack of experience and the failure of the designer. He didn't finish it. I was shocked when they paid him his final payment. He... After a certain point in the drawings, you get your money. And I'm like... And I'm... Then they had to pay me more to finish his. And I just was like, wow. They said, we want to build a boat. Want to do it. We don't want to lose him. He's our stability man. You know, he's... We got to keep him. So we just confronted him, basically. Said Frank's going to do the construction [inaudible]. "Okay."

JENIFER DOLDE: So you're definitely filling the void here.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:58:00] Right. But what bothers me is that he doesn't change. Say we change something in the drawings. So there's another drawing, right, all change. Doesn't change it in the other drawings. So what finally, Joe and I, had to say, do not go to the old drawings and measure something. Because they haven't been correct. And he, you know, just a few days ago, you got a few more drawings, and send us original construction drawings. There's almost nothing on there you can use.

JENIFER DOLDE: So they were... Construction drawings were produced, but they are... Now they're obsolete?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:58:41] Well, and he's... He's an updated number on it. But the only thing, whatever he wrote on that line is what he changed on the drawing. Everything else is the old, you know, drawing.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure. You were... You're producing... So you're producing new drawings.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:58:58] Not completely.

JENIFER DOLDE: Not... I was just wondering if we were going to passing on a as-built set of drawings.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:59:05] Well, he's supposed to be. That's the reason he's here on Tuesdays. He's supposed to be correcting these. And --

JENIFER DOLDE: Is there something that you will be able to supply also, or but you said they're not necessarily complete drawings.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:59:17] I purposely don't use a scale sometimes because I don't want my drawings to go into the Coast guard.

JENIFER DOLDE: I'm just... I'm... Now I'm thinking like an archivist, so...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:59:26] They're going to be in the files. You're welcome to some --

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, I mean, for even, whether they get... Need to go to St. Mary's or whether we keep a record of it, I just think that it would probably be valuable to have.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [00:59:37] Well, some time when you're up, go up in the office and look. I try to figure out, what am I going to do with these plastic... I'll use mylar. What am I going to do with it? And I hung one on the wall with a tack, and it worked so well that they're hanging on the wall. Make it translucent so you can see the different layers of the boat, you know. Most of those are right there.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay. So you have them. They're not [inaudible]. You're not calling them official construction drawings because you don't want somebody to try to submit them or [overlapping dialogue; inaudible] responsible yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:00:06] They shouldn't be submitted. Yeah.

JENIFER DOLDE: I understand.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:00:10] Noted.

JENIFER DOLDE: But I think for the record of the... In understanding the process and if someone's doing what I... What we're trying to do with the '70s Dove later

on, it would probably valuable to have them.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:00:20] Well, you'll have a set of plans
and my mylars, if you want, as far as I'm concerned.

JENIFER DOLDE: I think that together, that that would be, for
whoever's keeping those records --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:00:28] I used to... When I was young
and poor, I used to take the eraser machine, you know,
little buzzy thing, and take... Erase my drawings
after I printed them and use them again.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh gosh. [laughter]

FRANK TOWNSEND: I mean, I was... That was expensive. I
mean, mylar is --

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah, it is.

FRANK TOWNSEND: But the thing is, I'm using the same role of
mylar that I bought when I was in naval architecture,
when I took that class.

JENIFER DOLDE: Really?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:00:53] Yeah. I took three-quarters of
[WES 1?]. I didn't do the final one. I call me
instructor, and I said, "I'm too busy to finish." He
says, "Sounds like you succeeded." You know, you're
working so hard that I can't get through the end of
it. But and now we're obsolete. Everything's in CAD.
We drew everything with pencil.

JENIFER DOLDE: And you don't do any of that, CAD?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:01:21] I don't do any CAD. No, I couldn't do CAD. I actually took a class. It was so boring and monotonous. I could fall asleep trying to make a basic drawing. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah. It's not hands-on.

FRANK TOWNSEND: No.

JENIFER DOLDE: So taking a step back, now, and moving beyond the drawing to talk about just the build in general, what do you see as the primary differences between the boat we'll be producing here and the boat that... From the '70s that exists now? You can start anywhere you want. I know there's lots of them.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:02:02] Well, choice of materials were superior.

JENIFER DOLDE: And you agree with those compromises?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:02:11] Oh, if they... If the fellas in England had had Angelique, they probably would have planked with it instead of oak. Yeah, I wish we had more. I would have planked the whole thing with Angelique if I... The white oak was available. And it'll be durable. It'll be fine. I do have worries that they're just going to oil finish it. Boats were never just... We need to dip it in oil. [laughs] You

know, it needs a real finish of some sort. Seeing the *San Salvador* after, was it four years? It looks like an old boat.

JENIFER DOLDE: And they just --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:02:56] They put an oil... Hardening oil finish on it. Everything is all checked and just... I mean, it looks like an old... Like we meant to, you know. But true to life, they're cooking it. They're in San Diego, you know. The heat there is just phenomenal. So...

JENIFER DOLDE: So the material choice is obviously a big difference.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:03:20] And I... Obviously there was some experience levels. And I... You know, I got nothing against Jim. Brother Bill's a mean bug-eye, you know.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, so as a, you know, a non-Chesapeake person, you know, and somebody trained in a more recent past and different techniques, you know, what is your impression of how... Because it was. It was a Chesapeake, built from the Chesapeake type style and technique. Tell me the differences, or the... And the weaknesses, perhaps.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:03:57] Well, I think, like I said, I

think they probably used some steal in it, which probably was its downfall.

JENIFER DOLDE: The fasteners?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:04:07] Right. Yeah, and then the oak, we got better quality with the live oak. And that's... I'm proud to say I was one of the first people to work with Steve Cross, cutting live oak for --

JENIFER DOLDE: This is the Georgia guy, is whose reputation precedes him.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:04:31] It'll do you good to go online and look up the Cross sawmill. His videos are just hilarious. In one of them, he's talking with me on the phone. [laughter]

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay, that's funny.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:04:44] I thought, "Really? He recorded that?"

JENIFER DOLDE: So superior material choices and also just the, you know, overall quality, so two different types of white oak versus live oak.

FRANK TOWNSEND: The live oak. The live oak is ten pounds heavier per cubic foot. But it's also a more interlocking grain. Once it's dry, you can't work with it. That's why Steve was telling me that, if you

send a piece of live oak to the pallet mill, they fine you. They basically... Because that piece of... One piece of live oak will stop the whole machine. So it's like... Yeah --

JENIFER DOLDE: Do they... Yeah, amazing.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:05:27] You have to pay. If they're know that's your log, they make you pay to take that machine apart and put it back together. You sign a little... When you drop your wood off, that you're... Yeah. Because it's brutal. Those air nailers won't nail into it. So it's... I mean it's super crisp.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah. One of the stories I was told is how green the wood was that they planked with on the '70s *Dove* because that's what was available, and there was a timeline, and, you know.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:06:00] Well, I mean, yeah, like, they just... They did the same thing on the *Morgan*. They did a hard pine, but it wasn't seasoned. And those things are enormous on that. And it's brand new. I mean, it's only been 2012 or something they rebuilt that.

JENIFER DOLDE: That was not something you worked on, or you --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:06:22] No, that was before my time.

JENIFER DOLDE: Before you, okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:06:25] Yeah, they were working on that when I was working on... They were finishing that when we were just starting the *San Salvador*. Because I was looking. They had some oak, and we looked at that. It was from the Charleston dockyard. They found a whole pond full of wood at the old shipyard that they had filled with dirt. The pond would keep it from checking by keeping it in the water. But when the shipyard closed, they just filled it full of dirt. So they were building something or doing something, and they discovered wood. And then, I don't know if they looked at the old photographs or what, but they found thousands of oak timbers in that. In the ground. And a lot of it went into the *Morgan*. When I went up and looked at some of it, but just happened to be perfectly too small for what we needed, or we probably would have used some too. It was just undersized, and I'm... Of course, you can't... That boat was built to Lloyd's standards too. So you can't go undersize. And we... If anything, we've gone oversize, which is both sides of the coin. It's going to weigh more than originally designed. But that is one of my... The scariest things that I think I've found on this boat was the weight schedule. The same thing, you can't

print this.

JENIFER DOLDE: [laughs] We'll have to figure that out here after the fact.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:08:03] But no, the ballasting, I'm positive, we haven't started betting yet, but he says there's 20,000 pounds of internal ballast. I said seven. Because on that chart, what you do is you basically weigh everything. And as if you had a chart that represented the boat, and you put the weights on the chart, a distance from your center so that your arm. You just got your naval architecture lecture there. So if you leave out things, it's going to... Trimming is going to be different. Like, I discovered he had left out all the floor timbers. The center frames go all the way across. The aft frames go partway, and there's a big timber that goes in between each one. Wasn't in the drawing.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:09:01] And that original drawing is the one that the weight schedule was made from.

JENIFER DOLDE: So there's some --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:09:08] So hopefully he's got some sort of... I always did it, you know, not on a computer but in a graph, you know, and just put the actual

number here and a number there. And then you can actually... There's a formula that you can use, and it'll tell you if the distance times the weight, you know, and if you add them all up and the number goes from zero back and forth to minus and plus, minus, plus, minus, plus, until you finally come to a trim weight.

JENIFER DOLDE: So that remains to be seen, is what you're saying?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:09:45] It remains to be seen, but it... Luckily, there's enough ballast. I'm sure we'll be able to trim it. I'm positive. Anyway, we're just building a boat now. We're not picking the drawings apart anymore. We're just... Whatever gets in the way we finish, we change the --

JENIFER DOLDE: You're adapt... You're doing maybe a little more like Jim Richardson did. You're adapting to get the bone --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:10:12] Done.

JENIFER DOLDE: -- constructed and done and making it all work and fit together and yeah. So you know, you talked a lot about how you acquired knowledge, what you're, you know, formally, through experience, to what extent are you teaching, showing, working with other, you know,

junior, less experienced members of the crew as a teacher, and how do you do that?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:10:41] Everybody comes to me.

JENIFER DOLDE: What's your style?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:10:44] Even Joe. Well, Joe and I are equals. That's what we say. You know, he'll say, "I need a peer review," or whatever. He's figured out something. And I went up and looked at it. And I said, "Well, you know, really got to have a little more. It looks pretty flat." So instead of saying, "No, I want it might way," he said, "Well, let's let the batten out and take a look." You know, that's --

JENIFER DOLDE: So a dialogue, you know.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:11:15] You know, and I've nixed a couple of pieces of wood that he had okayed. And he'd look at it and said, "Oh, you know, I didn't really look at the other side." I said, "Well, before they put the plank in they have to cut a whole in it. You'll probably see it out there," the big diamond-shaped hole cut in a piece of plank. Well, it started out, you know, this big, and with the time that the young men get done, it had exceeded half the width of the plank, which is against the rules, basic rules. So we wasted a little time, but not too bad.

JENIFER DOLDE: With the lofting, did it... Were you able to then, you know, show some of the others, you know, have --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:11:56] Spencer was pretty good. He built a really nice grid, which is a very important thing, to have that grid perfect. And that's most of what he did. He plotted some of the body plan, the frame shapes, but as it turned out, we changed the... We moved the spacing from 24-inch spacing to 22-inch spacing. And then after that, I said, well, you can't cut your frames from the back side of the spacing. They got to be from the middle. So frame lines have moved all over the place.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure, sure.

FRANK TOWNSEND: And then, while doing that... And actually, while I was laying out the galley, I discovered a large frame spacing on the drawing, two inches bigger than the rest. And I checked out the whole drawing, and we go back about ten frames, there's a small one. This is on the drawing, but we had already set the boat up and lofted it to the 22-inch centers. But all the stuff that was in the drawing wouldn't fit in the room. So they had to move the bulkhead two inches. So anyway, that was... And then Iver's always saying,

"Good catch." Now we use it all the time.

JENIFER DOLDE: But so when you're, you know, working with Spencer, is your way to, like, do you talk it out? Do you show him? I mean, how do prefer to share, you know, how to do something?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:13:30] Yeah, we... I mean, usually it's hands-on. I mean, I try to explain things, but I find myself leaving out the things that I would do anyway. You know, you don't tell them this is the common thing that happens, you know. And I was right there through all the framing and helping him lay out. I didn't build as many of the frames, but I was right there helping him do the layout.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, I'm just curious because it's pretty clear that not... Everybody teaches or instructs or manages in a different way. It comes more naturally to some people, and different people have different approaches, so I just was wondering if, honestly, you know, that's a challenge for you? Have you worked a lot with, I assume, you know --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:14:14] I pride myself with being able to work with just about anybody. I mean, there's... Iver's probably the biggest push I've had in a while where I just said, "Joe, I can't go in the meeting

anymore." Can't. I'll work with him, but I can't be involved in that meeting because it takes me out of my comfortable... You know.

JENIFER DOLDE: Right. Well, maybe it's not productive after a while.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:14:38] But, you know, this Will Gates thanks me every time he sees me, unlike... Why couldn't people just appreciate what you do? Now, Will had... No, he looked and said, "The mistakes on these drawings are horrible. Frank has found all of them." I said, "I hope I have." I hope so. As you build it, you have to figure out, you know, what's missing. What little quirk is in there that, you know?

JENIFER DOLDE: So what is your hope for the finished *Dove*? What, you know... Once you go... Is it the process? But once you have a finished product, and you've done this many times, you know, what are your feelings as you send it out into the world, and what do you hope for it?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:15:27] Well, I just... Yeah, I know it's going to be a teaching tool, you know. So I just think of all the kids that are going to be able to learn stuff off of that. And who knows how many boat

builders will come out of the group? That's always my first question when the kids come through: how many built a boat? And actually, a couple had built --

JENIFER DOLDE: Coming through here?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:15:49] Yeah, through the little program there.

JENIFER DOLDE: That's funny, yeah, yeah, right.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:15:54] Yeah, it was interesting. Then I just... I take it down to the simplest one. That's what I always do. Even whenever you're doing it. You just make it as simple and straightforward. Don't complicate it. You know, you putting in a Dutchman, cut it nice and square. Don't try to fit some fancy shape. Better to have a good fit than a pretty fit, you know, so...

JENIFER DOLDE: What's... What would you like... What's on your bucket list next? What would you like to do? What other skill or what other kind of project would you like to work on, or do you have ambitions in that area?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:16:41] You know, first I thought I'm going to go back to Mystic and work on the *Dunton*. Well, the funding isn't there yet, so I'm going to have to do something else. But I've been taking up a

little bit of guitar repair, building stuff. Because I just thought to myself, I said you know, it's still woodworking. And I can pick it up myself. It's a lot of the times you just can't. You know, what I'm doing out here, you need a forklift. I think I might be done with the forklift work. I don't know. We'll see what they offer me too. That... They're talking about bringing the Jamestown ships here.

JENIFER DOLDE: Sure, yeah.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:17:23] You know, who knows?

JENIFER DOLDE: Do you like the Chesapeake region?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:17:29] Yeah, I mean, I like the whole museum set up, and I like Mystic, but this is like a small Mystic, much more intimate, without the... You know, it's got some of the same problems, a little heavy on the top, you know, and maybe not as experienced on the top. You're trying to get into the shipyard business, but you have no idea. You can't say, well, we're going to compete with Mystic. I said, "You're in a... You're talking about competing with a multimillion-dollar operation that has a synchrolift that will lift 10 times what we can lift.

JENIFER DOLDE: Right, well, we're really just getting our feet wet in this, in this type of thing, for sure.

FRANK TOWNSEND: Right, right.

JENIFER DOLDE: When you think about the... Now, so you've already worked on this project. A lot of what we do here is restoration, repair of our own floating fleet. I'm sure you've at least observed that. Do you have an impression of Chesapeake Bay boat types and compared to other things you've worked on and...

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:18:35] Yeah, I mean, I'm not really impressed with the log construction, but they came that for a reason. The Delaware's cool. I mean, they... Michael Allen comes to me every now and then and said, "How would you do this?" And I told him. I said well, I'd build a cradle for it. I'd get the damn keel out of there. That's what I was taught, to just get rid of it. Go in there with a chainsaw and cut it into little pieces, whatever. Drop it out of there. Get it out of the way, and get your pattern up there soon as possible. You don't want that thing hanging there forever. You want to get a keel under it and get it tied back to the [inaudible]. So that's what they did.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah. Well, some hard decisions made when you've got that much of a... To replace and to repair, like you said. How much is left?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:19:26] I mean, I know the chippity-choppy kind of things where they chop a little piece out: "Oh, this is fine," you know. Just start over. And we had a piece of the [Cortez?], which is much better than the oak that they been... Bought. We still have the oak. It's out at [Peaneck?], but really poor quality. That's one of the things here is that there is a swamp oak in this area that's a black oak or swamp oak. It grows fast. It's not very durable. But it works. They use it.

JENIFER DOLDE: Wow.

FRANK TOWNSEND: But --

JENIFER DOLDE: If that's what you can get, I guess.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:20:06] Right, right. Well, they said, well, why do you keep, you know, doing purple heart stems? I said, you know, in 2045 when they find this thing on the beach, it's going to be sitting right there. The keel is going to be unblemished.

JENIFER DOLDE: What kind of stem are you calling it?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:20:25] Purple heart?

JENIFER DOLDE: Purple heart?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:20:26] Was a... It's like Cortez.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:20:28] It was a wood that was available.

It's not as available now as it was. It was a beautiful lavender color.

JENIFER DOLDE: It's from South America?

FRANK TOWNSEND: Some jungle, yeah, Guyana, I think. I had a stamp on one at one time. But when I was doing it all the time, building stems and sterns and stuff, purple heart was the interlocking grain, hard as hard. You could actually use a smaller piece of wood because it was so much harder.

JENIFER DOLDE: Oh, wow.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:20:58] And heavier.

JENIFER DOLDE: Well, and I guess the lesson is that the builders use what's available, hopefully what's best quality, but... And what's --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:21:07] Oh yeah, I mean, like Ralph used to use the Maine cedar with all the knots, and he used it for years. He built lobster boats and friendship sloops, and they're still ticking. That's another one of the blast from the past I'm getting in Mystic. And I'm helping a friend with a boat, and we walk into the back shed, and there's the Rose that I built at Ralph Stanley's in the '80s. It's a one of a kind. It's teak deck, teak cabins, and yeah, pretty amazing. It still looked gorgeous. But to have it just show up,

you know, it was like, you got to be kidding. No, that was the joke when I first moved to Mystic. Sitting in a meeting, and they go well, "We had this boat called the such-and-such." I said, "Well, I built that." They said, "Well, Ralph built this beautiful Rose [inaudible]." I said, "I built that too." [laughter] And he goes, "What didn't you build?" [laughter] Well, you just happened to pick the two that I built.

JENIFER DOLDE: Right, right. Well, I mean, I think that's what --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:22:18] I mean, Ralph built two, but you said I was part of the crew.

JENIFER DOLDE: I understand, no, but I, in speaking to [John Twain?], you know, about having his... Almost like his children coming back to him, "Oh, you know, we have this boat, and we think you built it. Can you, you know, get it back into shape?" And there's a lot of, obviously, satisfaction and joy that comes from seeing it, first of all, still existing, and second of all, hopefully floating in --

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:22:43] Yeah. The boat I built in boat school, fella called me last winter. He said, "You Frank Townsend?" I said, "Yeah." "You the one that

went to boat school?" "Yeah." Said, "Well, I've got your boat." It moved three miles from where I sold it.

JENIFER DOLDE: Still in use?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:23:03] Still in use. Ted Wells bought it. He had it in his family until he died. He said, "Do you want your old boat back?" I said, "Not really. I got some pictures of it." It's still the same color, same name, same... You know.

JENIFER DOLDE: Right. So you have a photo documentation of a lot of the boats that you worked on or no?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:23:24] [inaudible]

JENIFER DOLDE: Good.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:23:25] Five thousand pictures in there.

JENIFER DOLDE: Okay. But even some of the older projects?

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:23:31] Not too much of the really old.

I've got a few pictures. I was married to a photographer for a while in Port Townsend. And so we got some pretty nice stuff.

JENIFER DOLDE: Yeah. I think it's important to keep that record. Anything else you want to add before we wrap up today? I'm sure... I appreciate your time.

FRANK TOWNSEND: [01:23:54] Oh, anything you can think of.

I'm... You know, something comes up that's missing --

JENIFER DOLDE: [inaudible] the time's up.

END OF AUDIO FILE