

Brighton, Jim 22March2022

JENIFER DOLDE: So I'll just start by saying this is Jenifer Dolde, it is Tuesday, March 22, 2022. I'm here at Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum with Jim Brighton. Jim, do you go by Jim? What's your full name?

JIM BRIGHTON: [00:00:17] No, I don't go...James D. Brighton II is my full name but I go by Jim.

JD: Very good, very good. And would you mind giving me your date of birth just so...for the record?

JB: [00:00:25] 31st of December 1944.

JD: Very good. Well, and I do want to start at the beginning and talk about your life before and after, this is not just about *Dove*. So talk to me a little bit about some...where you were born, your growing up years, and your family.

JB: [00:00:42] My dad was in the military, he was a Marine Corp fighter pilot, and he went in when he was seventeen. So up until I went to college, we were never in one place more than two years, and sometimes just a matter of weeks, so I grew up all over including Japan.

JD: How did the family end up in...or did the family end up in Cambridge? How did you end up in Cambridge?

JB: [00:01:13] I married a girl from Cambridge, I married Jim Richardson's oldest daughter. And I was working for

Boeing, and we lived in South Jersey, her mother got sick, we didn't have any kids, I took a leave of absence, saying, well. let's go down, which we did, and then we decided to stay. And just about the time we had to make up our mind, we were...Jane and I had applied for homesteading in Philadelphia. I don't know if you're familiar? They have a pretty rough section of Philly that for a dollar and they re-warded these homes. So we were approved for that, but we decided to stay and raise the kids on the Shore.

JD: Was that something she...did you know the area just from visiting family?

JB: [00:02:04] Well, I mean, she was raised here.

JD: Sure. But you personally, did you...

JB: [00:02:09] I knew the area from visiting her family. I had to have a job when we came down, when she came down to take care of her mother, so I worked for her father, which was something obviously jobs in the summertime and everything, worked on a dairy and stuff like that, but never had done anything with boats.

JD: Yeah, I was going to ask a little bit about you said you were working at Boeing, and you can tell me what you were doing, but as far as hands on skill, even if they weren't boat building, was that something that was part of your growing up? Your background?

JB: [00:02:44] No.

JD: What did you do at Boeing?

JB: [00:02:48] I worked in the industrial engineering department.

JD: Which is what you went to school for?

JB: [00:02:53] No, I went to school for biology.

JD: [laughs] Okay.

JB: [00:03:01] And that working for industrial engineering, that sounds a lot more important than it was. I had a job in research and development, and I was pretty much bottom of the ladder so I was used everywhere. But it was interesting.

JD: Sounds like it. And any connection or association with boats or the water growing up?

JB: [00:03:27] We were always around boats, dad being in the Marine Corps, all our duty stations were at Naval stations, so yeah, we were used to the water, and the water and watermen, and everything like that.

JD: Were you sailing or powerboating?

JB: [00:03:41] No.

JD: Just being near the water. So you up-end your life and move to Lloyds. I assume you had a lot of on the job learning to do?

JB: [00:03:56] I had to...when we decided to stay, then I wound up serving an apprenticeship, which was pretty interesting.

JD: I mean, you're...apprenticeship with him?

JB: [00:04:08] Mm-hmm.

JD: So did you kind of formalize it? What was that structure?

JB: [00:04:11] I actually spent more time with his...with Bobby Ruark, his primary foreman, and Otie Wilcox. I mean, they would give me a job to do and then watch me for a day as I struggled to get it done, and then the next morning they would tell me how to do it. [laughs] And every once in a while...just little things when I first went to work, they were building a 36-foot work boat, it was cedar, and they wanted me to sand the hull. Back then we didn't have any mechanical sanders, they did all the sanding by hand. They gave me a block and sandpaper at seven o'clock in the morning said, "Okay, sand the hull." So I made the mistake of asking how hard to sand it. It seemed like a legitimate question at the time. Bobby Ruark took a carpenter's pencil, and I know you're...the big wide lead, cedar is soft, and he started the transom, shoved that pencil into the cedar, went up and down the hull all the way to the bow and said, "Sand that out." So yeah I didn't ask that question again. [laughs] But it sounds harsh, but they had a good time with the process also, you know?

JD: Meaning they genuinely...they weren't just teasing you, they enjoyed...

JB: [00:05:41] Yeah, I mean, you know, and then there's always once somebody shows you, you think to yourself, how did I not see that, but that's part of the process. And they showed me I don't know how many times, they helped me out. But they would let me struggle with it at first setting deck beams and things like that.

JD: Was that method of teaching something...a way that you also thought...did you call him Mr. Jim? What did you call him? Just Jim?

JB: [00:06:12] No, I generally called him Mr. Jim.

JD: Okay, it seemed like a lot of people...

JB: [00:06:17] Everybody, you know...

JD: Sure. Was that his manner of teaching as well? And was he kind of...well, he wasn't retired at that point, but was he...

JB: [00:06:28] No. No, and it...they would sit down and explain things. I mean, if we were in something that was critical, they didn't let me fool around with it. And I wasn't the only person there that wasn't skilled at the time. But if they had some time and we had the material, they let you struggle with it for a while.

JD: I'm sorry, do you know about what year it was that you came down and started?

JB: [00:06:57] January 1, 1968.

JD: Okay, so quite a bit before work on *Dove* started.

JB: [00:07:02] Right, right.

JD: And so, I know by the time *Dove* happened there were lots of projects happening in different spaces, but at that point in time was it one at a time and then boats on the railway? What was the business structure?

JB: [00:07:16] The boats we built in the winter, Jim always said that's just to keep the crew together, and the money was made in the repair work in the spring through fall. And actually when the *Dove* started I had a project going down in Crisfield that I was working on when the *Dove* started.

JD: And what was that?

JB: [00:07:38] So that was the largest skipjack on the Bay, it was called the *Webster*, and we were working on the *Webster*. I actually had Joe Balderson with me down there. And then his wife [Jim Richardson's wife Generva] always did the books, and the payroll, and everything like that, and then she had an automobile accident and that changed things up considerably.

JD: And I'm trying to remember what year that...that was in about '68? That was in '68?

JB: [00:08:09] No, we were...I was talking to my wife last night, I do not remember what year that was.

JD: Well it was prior to '68, right? Because you came January 1st you said.

JB: [00:08:18] No, no, this happened about the time we were building the *Dove* when she had the...they don't know if she had a stroke and then the accident, or a stroke after the accident, but anyway. But that changed the dynamic at the yard considerably. So I wrapped up that work down in Crisfield, came back, and worked with Jim on the *Dove* to cover the books, and the payroll, and tried to move on from there along with, we had the care of his wife, cause she was an invalid after that.

JD: Yeah. He was still pretty active physically?

JB: [00:08:56] Oh, very much so, yeah, when the *Dove*...when we built the *Dove*, yeah, very much so.

JD: So then you were around at least, certainly part of the family, as these discussions began with *Dove*. What do you remember, the story is always that he was coaxed out of retirement to do it, was this something that he had to be convinced to do or was he really excited about working on the project?

JB: [00:09:23] He, you know, initially it's not unusual for people to bring projects to Jim. And we had been...we went through one with the state of Pennsylvania where we did an awful lot of work estimating everything like that. And when we got done and sent them everything, they actually used the work that we did to send out for a bid, and told us we could bid on the project. So we were always a little bit...everybody has grand ideas. About the same time we had some people talking to us in California about building a skipjack and you always took a little bit of time to see where they went. Initially he wasn't that sure about the *Dove* either.

JD: Right, right. But he knew William Baker previously?

JB: [00:10:24] Yeah, we built the *Adventure* that went to South Carolina.

JD: So you were part of that project as well?

JB: [00:10:28] Right. Yeah.

JD: Certainly seemed like a reputable project, right? Good possibilities.

JB: [00:10:35] Yeah.

JD: And so what was the relationship like, while we're talking about Baker, between Mr. Jim and...what were your impressions of Mr. Baker?

JB: [00:10:48] Bill was very easy to work for. And on the *Dove* we got ahead of him, we got ahead of the prints a little bit, and he would come down and discuss historic aspect. You build a boat from a certain time period it's like building a Victorian house. There are certain aspects of the house that are Victorian, the dimensions all change, same way with the *Dove*. And he was very easy to work with. A couple times marine architects would design something that isn't really possible, or wouldn't have been done like that, and you'd have a discussion with him, "Hey Jim, let's sit down and go over it," and he was very agreeable. He's the man to work with. And of course he had a deep knowledge. I mean, you look at his resume, it's pretty profound.

JD: Mr. Jim was used to working with plans of that nature? Is that how he typically worked? I know with his own designs...

JB: [00:11:49] No. We charged about 15% more if you wanted a boat built from plans. As he always said it was a hassle working with the architect.

JD: So he'd done it.

JB: [00:12:04] Yeah, we did a number of boats from plans for naval architects.

JD: But he would always sort of maybe offer suggestions on maybe we should do it this way or corrections?

JB: [00:12:17] Depending on what the client wanted, yeah.

JD: That was always part of the process.

JB: [00:12:22] And for the most part we always had a good working relationship with the architects.

JD: Do you recall any of the folks from St. Mary's City and their involvement in the discussions? Or was that something you were around for?

JB: [00:12:37] I was, but that also, I mean, other than the money involved they didn't have much input as far as the build was concerned. They would just come down and review the process, and we'd explain where we were, and where we were headed, and timelines, and things like that.

JD: Sure. I think some of that had been hashed out ahead of time between Baker and them.

JB: [00:13:05] Right.

JD: Yeah. Regarding the project and something that's come through is Mr. Jim maybe didn't always charge what he could have, should have charged, needed to charge. We have an interview with Lila Line, you know who I'm talking about?

JB: [00:13:25] Yeah, yeah.

JD: Where he talked about using a lot of his stash of supplies and that perhaps the budget for it was not quite what it needed to be. Can you offer any insight?

JB: [00:13:38] I was there for some of those negotiations. She was built for a price and before the process started, he knew that going in. I can't remember what the figures were, you probably have it, what she was built for.

JD: I think it was something like \$200,000.

JB: [00:14:04] I was thinking \$200,000, \$225,000, or something like that.

JD: Yeah, I don't know if that's what he ended up receiving, if any of that got adjusted.

JB: [00:14:10] No, it didn't get adjusted. I mean, that's all they had. And once he got into it, he wanted to give them a good project and a good boat. Like you said, we used...and a certain thing, we hired...you see the iron work that's involved in a boat like this, you have blacksmiths, we hired a blacksmith out of Atlanta. The work was too heavy for him so Jim and I wound up doing the blacksmith work.

JD: There was no one locally who could do that kind of work?

JB: [00:14:42] Yeah, we had a local blacksmith but he was extremely busy. And we've used him...

JD: Was that Brocato?

JB: [00:14:48] Yeah, Joe Brocato. And there was a blacksmith down in Deal Island, I can't remember his name, but when we ran into a problem or something we went and talked to him. But they...Joe was extremely busy with his own output and everything. And it's not rocket science, I mean, it's just like anything else, once you understand the basics. What we did wasn't the prettiest but it was substantial, did the job.

JD: Well that certainly added a lot of work and time as well. I know...so the timeline actually for me is a little bit challenging because I know...well, there was mast work being done on the *Constellation* previous to that. There were discussions...there was the keel laying ceremony, the work started long before that I presume.

JB: [00:15:37] Right.

JD: What's your sense of the timeline when physical work...do you have a sense of that? I know it was a long time ago.

JB: [00:15:45] It was and like I said, I wasn't there physically because I was finishing up the job down in Crisfield. But it seems like to me things started, really started in earnest sometime in October, November, sometime in that timeframe.

JD: Of '76? Because the keel laying was in June or something of '77? So October, November?

JB: [00:16:17] Basically she was pretty much built in a year. And we went out, like the keel, some of the heavy timbers we went to the yards, and specified what we needed, and what have you. But I'm not...I don't remember when we did that.

JD: Sure. And where were you sourcing most of your wood from?

JB: [00:16:41] Local mills, Spicer Bros. and Dickerson. At that time Dickerson was dealing out on Route 50, they were dealing almost primarily in White Oak.

JD: Is Dickerson near Wye?

JB: [00:16:54] Dickerson is right at Linkwood, when you go to Salisbury. It's closed now, they just closed it in the past year, but there's a lumber mill right there at the railroad tracks. I know you've seen it.

JD: Yeah, sure. Someone also mentioned sourcing wood and it could have been for other projects more toward the Chesapeake College, Wye Mills area.

JB: [00:17:16] There's a mill up there ... Longwood, I can't think of the name of it, it's still there. We did get some lumber from them, but primarily the White Oak came from Dickerson.

JD: Okay, that's not a name that's been mentioned before, so I'm glad to add that as well. So I understand in

particular you had a lot to do with the framing? Tell me about how the work got started.

JB: [00:17:44] Well you of course had the table of offsets, and I'm sure you saw the process here, you lay that down, but because of the timeframe we had we didn't lay down every frame, we did every fourth or fifth one. Then we laid those down, built those, put them up on the keelson, then we put battens around them, and then we took measurements, and just built the other frames. It was a faster process.

JD: Who was working in that process, I have some photos that give me clues, on that process with you that you remember?

JB: [00:18:26] Bill was part of that and I don't remember...Bill was one of the primary individuals.

JD: Slacum.

JB: [00:18:32] Bill Slacum, yes.

JD: My understanding.

JB: [00:18:37] And you know in any yard things are really fluid. As you need people you just call people over. And we had...if you think about the crew, there weren't that many people on the crew that were skilled initially.

JD: Well, I try not to lead with that, but that's part of the story here, and part of the legend about the hippies, which I know is not meant unkindly. But starting with people like Fred Asplen and June Wingo, there were some others I

think who didn't...tell me about some of those, that cast of characters?

JB: [00:19:15] Well...and I can't remember their names but when we needed...we made all the blocks, we made everything, they had to be turned, and Jim just took one of the women up to where the lathe was, set them up, showed them how to do it, and they did tremendous work once they were shown what to do, and they made all the blocks and everything. Well, the cheeks for the blocks and what have you, brought them back. And I mean that process went on and on, even with the spar making, once you showed them the basics. I mean, to build a boat's not hard.

JD: It seems hard. [laughter]

JB: [00:20:02] It's very straight forward. And one of the things is...and when you employ people, you learn this over time the hard way, but you'd much rather have somebody with enthusiasm than you would somebody with knowledge that didn't have the enthusiasm.

JD: Well they certainly seemed to have a lot of enthusiasm.
[laughs]

JB: [00:20:25] They were. And mistakes were made, mistakes are going to be made. And that's the difference between the professionals and the amateurs, the pros know how to take care of the mistakes.

JD: Was it a conscious choice because of the budget for the project? Was it...

JB: [00:20:45] Yeah, I remember in particular the discussion of how many skilled people we were going to need and in what areas in order to oversee everything. But we had...Jim had always employed in the summertime individuals that come by, and high school students and stuff want to work in a boatyard. Well, a lot of...especially on a railway, a lot of that work's miserable. But they would come and work and when we had a...when we did the *Boston Pilot* we had spars to chop and everything like that, he put anybody to work that was willing to work.

JD: And for the most part that was a successful...

JB: [00:21:26] Absolutely, absolutely. And look, occasionally you have somebody that just can't quite do it, you find something else for them to do. We're all skilled in different ways.

JD: So none of the other experienced boat builders on the project, Bill, or somebody like Bobby Ruark, nobody had concerned about that? That was just the way it was.

JB: [00:21:46] Yeah, Jim always operated like that.

JD: Did other...was that true in other boatyards as well?

JB: [00:21:53] Not as much. I think it's true, I mean, even right now my son works, [coughs] excuse me, for Tommy

Campbell, and once again, you hire people that are enthusiastic. And they've got...bring people in without any skill at all, you learn.

JD: Or you move on.

JB: [00:22:16] Well, yeah.

JD: Right. So speaking of some of those folks working on the project, part of the story that we're telling is about the fact that they worked together and many of them also lived together there over at Fred Davis's. First of all, the Fred Davis story is kind of interesting as well. He was working on the *Charlotte E. Foster*.

JB: [00:22:42] Right, right.

JD: Tell me what you know about those living arrangements and the work on that, or Fred as a character, because of course he's passed and not somebody I was able to speak to. Although I did email with his widow.

JB: [00:23:00] Yeah, they lived at the house and my wife and I also lived there when our son was born. [coughs] Excuse me. But it's a beautiful house. I don't know if you're familiar with it or not.

JD: From the historical record mostly, just that book that came out about Dorchester County, but I've never seen it in person.

JB: [00:23:20] Yeah, I've got to get something to drink.

JD: Absolutely. Let's pause. [break in audio] What I like.
[laughs]

JB: [00:23:26] Yeah, actually Jane and I were living in the house that Fred bought. We were caretakers there for the...

JD: Before he bought it?

JB: [00:23:33] Yeah, before he bought it. Then he bought it, he asked us to stay on, and then as more and more people moved in, and we finally moved out. And at the time we were also...Jane was primary caretaker for her mother, so Jim asked us, and we moved in with him, so somebody would be there to take care of her and what have you. But we lived...yeah, we lived with Fred and that crew for a while.

JD: Right. How many...so, you know, it seems like there was some coming and going...

JB: [00:24:11] There was.

JD: ...but how many people at most were there at one time?

JB: [00:24:15] There must have been...there could have been as many as ten or twelve people at any given time, but it's a big house. On one side you had these twin chimneys that come up like this, and you had a number of bedrooms, and everything, and the oldest part of the house was built in the late 1700s.

JD: It was not in the best shape at that point in time?

JB: [00:24:40] It was in pretty good shape.

JD: Oh, it was.

JB: [00:24:42] It was, it was. It had some problems with the flooring and what have you, but it was weather-tight, and pretty sound.

JD: Okay. Ramshackle can mean lots of things, so maybe it had an uneven floor or had character. [laughs]

JB: [00:24:57] Yeah, it had character. I mean, the exterior in places was rough, but no real structural problems.

JD: Everybody kind of pitched in for food, and cleaning, and...

JB: [00:25:15] Well it had a huge kitchen and everybody kind of had their own area. It was just somebody was in the kitchen all the time, but there was just things going on. They had a big, a big communal garden, which was really nice, and they kept that all the way through the project.

JD: [00:25:32] It seems to have been...do you remember June Wingo? That seems to be something she and Fred in particular were...

JB: [00:25:38] Yeah.

JD: She still does that, by the way, up in Maine. I talked to her, she's a wonderful person. Making...somebody else mentioned making yogurt and getting milk and stuff from the dairy.

JB: [00:25:50] Mm-hmm, yeah, we had a...Gunther was the name of the family that owned the dairy and they would go over there and get raw milk from them.

JD: Yeah, so it's really quite unique. Her characterization was not a commune, communal lifestyle.

JB: [00:26:06] Right, no...right.

JD: Which...yeah, cause everybody had other jobs and...

JB: [00:26:12] Exactly. And they helped Fred out with certain things and it was just...but I wouldn't call it a commune. It's been...that label has been put on it, but it wasn't functioning like that.

JD: Doesn't sound like it at all. And also the terms hippy is thrown around, but did Mr. Jim truly call the folks, my hippies?

JB: [00:26:36] Yeah, he did. I mean, just loose terminology.

JD: Yeah. And it seems like a variety of ages too though. Some quite young.

JB: [00:26:44] Yeah, right.

JD: So the people I know that lived there, I spoke to Catherine Moore, she was the one who I think did a lot of the block making, and treenails, and caulking.

JB: [00:26:55] She did.

JD: With June. June and Fred, you mentioned yourself and your wife Jane were there for a while, do you know who else from Dove may have been living there?

JB: [00:27:07] Yeah, and I can't recall his name. There were a couple other individuals. And the crew on the *Dove*, we had a core crew, but there were others that would come and go.

JD: That was one of the most challenging parts I had was trying to figure out who to interview. I know Bill Slacum, obviously, I have Jay Dayton, who's now still in the area, but Catherine who I guess dated Jack Krolak, she didn't think Jack Krolak was particularly involved in *Dove*.

JB: [00:27:39] He wasn't. I mean, there was a couple times when we were doing things, heavy objects, or milling heavy things, and Jack might have been involved like that, but Jack wasn't that involved in the day-to-day operations.

JD: A guy named Long John? John Scrivens I think?

JB: [00:27:59] Long John, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

JD: Rad Wheatley did some work maybe on the spars?

JB: [00:28:08] He worked on the spars with Tom Howell, right.

JD: Now this is not *Dove*, but this is actually beforehand, one of the other people I spoke to because he worked with Mr. Jim prior to that was Ernest Haynes, do you know...

JB: [00:28:23] Yeah, I know Ernie.

JD: You know him? Okay. But he was gone by that time, right?

JB: [00:28:28] Ernie was in and out over the years, he and his brother Charles.

JD: Were they the only Black workers who were there or at other yards? Because that's one of the things I was interested in. Seemed unique.

JB: [00:28:43] Ernie, you know, they worked for Jim off and on. Ernie more so than his brother. But we had a...and I can't, I've tried to remember her name, we had a young woman who worked with keeping the books and I don't know if I...I'm sure I could dig something up in time as I go through the records. But yeah, she was a young Black woman, and she was very good. I don't remember how long she was with us.

JD: Sure, no, that's interesting. But that was not something you commonly saw in a Dorchester or regional boatyard.

JB: [00:29:30] I suppose not. But I mean, I had a schooner up one time, Frazier Brown taught me how to caulk, and Frazier was a caulker, but he was also a descendant of the free Blacks who were caulkers. They lived in San Domingo, which is up past Sharptown, and they went up and down the East Coast caulking vessels when he was a young boy. Frazier was in his 80s when he came and worked with me.

JD: And was that at Richardson's? Or was that somewhere else?

JB: [00:30:13] No, that was at Richardson's, yeah. I had a schooner up on the ways, I think she was...doesn't matter, it was the *Elizabeth*, but anyway, yeah.

JD: So brought him in for that reason?

JB: [00:30:27] Yeah, she was...we knew there were problems and I told him I'd haul it and look at it, but she needed to be totally re-caulked and we didn't have the resources. And Jim and Frazier had worked together on other projects. We actually on the *Dove*, and on the *Adventure*, we used some of Frazier's tools and what have you.

JD: At that point in time he was the only one in the family still doing that?

JB: [00:30:59] He came a couple times with another gentleman. I don't remember their names.

JD: All from that community?

JB: [00:31:05] From that community.

JD: Well there's Dave Harp, if you know Dave, they did that *Saving San Domingo* short film recently. Part of it was about scrapple-making, but he did look at that community.

JB: [00:31:20] Yeah, they were...they went back generations as caulkers.

JD: That's fascinating. I know Ernie Haynes really appreciated how he was treated by Mr. Richardson versus maybe how some

others were to him. You talked a bit about Bobby Ruark.

He's related to Harold?

JB: [00:31:48] Probably distantly.

JD: Distantly, okay. Not a close...

JB: [00:31:50] [crosstalk] ...common name.

JD: It's like Smith, right?

JB: [00:31:57] But Bobby descended from an indentured servant who was indentured on Hooper's Island and rode his way out of there one day.

JD: And later Bobby worked...he's led the group with *Nathan of Dorchester*?

JB: [00:32:13] With the Nathan, that's correct, yes.

JD: That's a great...there's a lot of really great connections. There's also, of course, the number of people who left Richardson's and came here for a time.

JB: [00:32:22] Right.

JD: And then going back. I also found it fascinating however that Bill Slacum worked with John Swain before he worked at Richardson's.

JB: [00:32:33] Yeah, I think probably when John was over at the marina by the bridge, Gateway. John rented that shop for a while, might have been when he was there.

JD: So you've known John for years.

JB: [00:32:45] Since he started, yeah, we started about the same time.

JD: Sure, sure. The connections, I mean, it's a small world, of course I shouldn't be surprised.

JB: [00:32:56] It's a small community really.

JD: We find the same thing here with the younger generation, but it's now national and even global where people work on the same projects but they've moving all over the country because the pool of people doing this work is smaller. So we had left off talking about framing of *Dove* and how you did that to save some time. Did you continue to work on all aspects of the project?

JB: [00:33:28] I did, I did, yeah. Yeah, from there on I stayed with it.

JD: So what kind of challenges do you remember or problems that had to be addressed, unique approaches, or maybe they were only unique to Richardson's, but things that would be maybe unusual by today's standards on how issues were...how the build went and how issues were addressed?

JB: [00:33:51] The primary thing, Jim didn't use a lot of power tools, so an awful lot was done by hand with adze and ax and what have you. And of course you had the, not that it was a problem, most yards weren't geared up for it, the heavy timbers like the waist planks on the *Dove*, to bend

those. We steamed them twenty-four hours, you take them up, I mean, they were heavy, and you see how bluffed the bow is, it's like a watermelon, you get those to bend around. And we also, you know, I was looking out here [referring to CBMM's *Dove* project, and of course you can't get the materials like on your keel, you've got a lot joints in down there, you've got heavy timbers but they're short, we were dealing with full length timbers. We would get an entire tree, put it on a mill, the keelson was full length inside the frames, there weren't any joints in it. So I mean, we were dealing with a little heavier components than what you have here and no forklift or anything like that, it was all done with block and falls, and everything like that.

JD: Yeah, there was one story, I think from Paul Hawkinson about a wale...bending it around a persimmon tree or something like that. Do you remember? Does that sound right? [laughter] No?

JB: [00:35:26] No, I mean, I know things like that were done.

JD: And pinned in place and left for the weekend, so I guess steaming it up good.

JB: [00:35:33] We steamed them for twenty-four hours, get it out, bend it, you know, and occasionally, not on this project, but Bobby and I were bending a plank around on a

boat we were building, and there were four or five of us, we were up on staging, bending around, clamping in place, when it broke and just swept all of us right off the staging.

JD: But Bill would talk about they would explode and just...

JB: [00:35:59] Yeah. You pick the grain as best you can but sometimes there's internal problems obviously and you can't see that. So made it interesting.

JD: Yeah. Any...I've not heard any reports of injuries other than something minor.

JB: [00:36:19] No, everything...any problems we had were minor. We were very fortunate.

JD: Yeah, sounds like it. One of the...another hairy story that I heard was about the process of getting *Dove* out of the shed because it was at the ceiling, the roof height, or maybe a little bit above it? [laughs]

JB: [00:36:41] It was actually built in my shop and we only had sixteen feet and she was right there, so they had to dig trenches outside of it to keep her down. What's his name, up in Sharptown moved it, Expert House Movers.

JD: Yeah. Yeah, but to get it out of the shed, what was involved in doing that?

JB: [00:37:02] All they did, they came in, put steel frames down, and just moved her out on small rollers. But they

had to dig in the front of the shop to keep her low as she went out and then they moved her over and set her on the ways.

JD: Yeah, wow. So what about the public events? And then there was a lot of...there was press coming through, school groups coming through, what do you remember about the public and the press? What were your feelings about their...

JB: [00:37:39] I wasn't involved in that much, but Jim always enjoyed that aspect of it. He complained about it, but he still enjoyed it. We had school kids coming through all the time. The press depending, you had some people, I remember one reporter in particular from the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, and they were coming down expecting to find an uneducated man out in the sticks doing this process, and if Jim picked up on it, he gave them what he wanted, which was amusing at times.

JD: Did he? Cause he was not...he was a very articulate person and quite intelligent.

JB: [00:38:25] But yeah, occasionally yeah, if that's what they were looking for he let them have it.

JD: But patient with them nonetheless.

JB: [00:38:35] Oh yeah, never rude.

JD: Well that's another aspect I was wondering about his teaching. So you had not as much direct teaching with him but when someone did something wrong, how did he respond? What was his...?

JB: [00:38:54] There was never any shouting or anything like that. In the whole yard that just wasn't part of the process. And even the best carpenter makes mistakes, and if something like that happens, and if it was a major piece, and expensive piece, then we utilized it someplace else, or on the next build, or whatever. The primary problem was time.

JD: It was.

JB: [00:39:26] So occasionally Jim would go down or have me go down with him and we would work at night in the summers or on a Sunday to get things back to where they needed to be. And that was on every project.

JD: Now I never asked this, did the crew just work Monday through Friday? Did they work Saturdays? What was the work schedule like?

JB: [00:39:50] No Saturday work because Jim was Seventh Day Adventist. But occasionally on Sunday, occasionally on a holiday, we were trying to...if they...he wouldn't ask, but if they knew we were getting ready to do something, they would come. It was very congenial.

JD: Do you remember what the pay was for the lowest skilled worker?

JB: [00:40:18] No, I don't. I'd be guessing. But I think \$5 an hour was pretty good wages at that time. So you were probably looking at some place in the \$2.75, \$3 an hour range.

JD: That sounds about right. I spoke to Jim Elk, if you remember Jim.

JB: [00:40:35] Yeah, yeah.

JD: And I think that's...I think he said \$3. And nobody...none of them complained about that? But I guess too they were sharing the living expenses so that helped.

JB: [00:40:46] They were, but that...you know, you have to remember, I mean, Jim showed up on his motorcycle from Storm Lake, Iowa, right, and no skill. You still have to pay a living wage at the time, but you weren't hiring skilled labor. I think Bill was probably making \$5 or \$6, \$5.50 an hour.

JD: Yeah, he said that he was made well aware that he was being paid more than everybody else and he has more responsibility as a result. [laughs] And the same would go for you mentioned Bobby Ruark, Otie Wilcox is not a name, did he work on *Dove*?

JB: [00:41:26] I don't think so.

JD: Okay, but he was a more experienced...

JB: [00:41:31] Otie was a good boat carpenter, absolutely, yeah, like Bobby.

JD: Sure, but not on the specific project.

JB: [00:41:38] Yeah, he was the lead carpenter for Jim on most of our builds for years.

JD: And where was he from?

JB: [00:41:45] He was local.

JD: Okay. You mentioned a little bit about this, but as far as there being women on the project, was that unusual as well? There were at least two, so we have June, there's the Catherine Moore that I mentioned, and I think a high school, a young high school woman, Tammy Willey, who I've been trying to get a hold of but I haven't got one email from her, who did painting?

JB: [00:42:13] Mm-hmm. Yeah, and that...there wasn't anybody else employing women at the time in the yards.

JD: That was...yeah.

JB: [00:42:21] But Jim had had experience, he did a custom build for a couple, and she asked if she could do the trim work inside the cabin. I remember the boat was...she used cherry, and he was always, he always talked about how delicate her work was, and it was a beautiful job. He didn't have...he didn't feel like that just because you

were a woman you couldn't do the job. I mean, and his wife came down and worked on the boats. She didn't do carpentry work but she helped with the painting and stuff like that.

JD: What about the daughters, your wife? No?

JB: [00:43:13] Not much. June became a teacher and Jane was a nurse, she was a psychiatric nurse.

JD: Different path in life. Mr. Jim had done a number of these sort of historic projects, boats, but also other projects as well then and later, the windmill, and I think there was a shallop.

JB: [00:43:41] We built the *Mayflower* shallop and he also raised the gunboat *Philadelphia* off of Lake Champlain, which is on the third story of the Smithsonian Museum. And he did...the Smithsonian also had a Holt Reaper, 2018 Holt Reaper that was in pieces and Chappelle got him to take that on, which was he said probably the most difficult project he ever did, but he restored that.

JD: The reaper, really? Interesting. Did you know Chappelle?

JB: [00:44:13] I did, yes.

JD: What was he like?

JB: [00:44:16] He was cantankerous. I mean, he and Jim were constantly, in a good way, arguing about things, especially Chap had a certain view of how things happened historically as far as the process of building boats on the Shore and

what have you, Jim took exception to some of the things.

It makes for some interesting discussions over time.

JD: Oh, you don't remember anything specifically?

JB: [00:44:45] Unfortunately...well, there's always been...New England has always been the hub of ship building, and where the expertise is, and there's counterpoints to that. You can show that it may have started here and gone there, just, you know, things like that, how the bug-eye developed, and what have you.

JD: So some pride on his part in the ship building traditions.

JB: [00:45:17] Sure.

JD: Especially with those Richardsons from Church Creek and elsewhere in his background.

JB: [00:45:22] Sure.

JD: Do you know...and nobody seems to remember this, Mr. Jim's father was not a boat builder, he was...

JB: [00:45:31] He did build a boat.

JD: He did build a boat?

JB: [00:45:32] He did, you know, he farmed, but yeah, he was involved in the construction of one boat in particular, and some others as I understand it.

JD: And then Mr. Jim himself I think spent time in the boatyards in Cambridge as a kid and started pretty early.

JB: [00:45:57] He also spent a little bit of time working for the railroad up in Marcus Hook in Pennsylvania as an apprentice.

JD: And you think that was an instrumental part in developing his craft as well?

JB: [00:46:11] Well he, you know, one of the things that seems to be lost, these men from the standpoint of the mechanical issues, they could figure out how to fix anything, how to do anything. We moved heavy objects without any machinery, we did it all the time, and never thought anything about it. I forget what age he was up in Marcus Hook, but they had a steam engine that jumped the rails and he told me how when they went up there, the carpenters went up, set the steam engine up, locked it up, moved it over, and set it back on the rails.

JD: I've definitely experienced even farmers moving buildings, all kinds of innovative ways to use physics.

JB: [00:47:02] I just had a discussion with a good friend of mine who's also a boat builder and a good friend of John's. He's been at it as long as we have, Peter Zukowski. And it came up this idea of master shipwright and most of us, we don't use that term at all. We're not denigrating anybody that does, that's fine. That's fine. But for us, we knew master shipwrights and there just isn't anybody around that

has the capabilities and the experience they had. I mean, when you can stand and look at a vessel that's being built and two of you decide, okay, here's the water line, and then a month later she goes in the water, and she's sitting right on the water line. Their capabilities it's unfortunate that the details of that will be lost. I mean, and Chapelle recognized that, and Chapelle wasn't formally educated. My father-in-law, he got his high school diploma, excuse me, [clears throat] I think when my daughter got hers.

JD: I'm sorry, Chapelle got his high school diploma?

JB: [00:48:30] My father-in-law did.

JD: Yes.

JB: [00:48:34] No, Chap wasn't formally educated either. I don't know how much schooling he had.

JD: Okay, I guess I thought he was.

JB: [00:48:38] No.

JD: All right.

JB: [00:48:41] Yeah, he always said he did it the hard way.

Jim never finished high school. Early on I worked with men who didn't finish grade school and yet their knowledge was tremendous.

JD: Absolutely. And then that's very true of many interesting routes that our boat builders, shipwrights, have taken to

get to this point. And many of them are educated, but they also came through as artists, and other kind of...traveling through their lives experiencing a lot of different things before they came to this. And that's honestly true of the other *Dove* crew, 70s *Dove* crew members that I've spoken to. But some did come from college, abandoning college to say, I really want to apply knowledge, I want to learn how to actually do something. It seemed very much to be a mission for them. I was wondering because you lived in the community, and you'd been there before, and now you're certainly entrenched in it afterward, thinking back to the 70s, how did the surrounding community, what did they think about what was going on down there? And then of course after, I know there's sort of the mythology of Mr. Jim grew up after as well, I mean, it probably existed then, but what do you remember about at the time how people reacted to the project?

JB: [00:50:10] Within the community it wasn't unusual. It wasn't seen as anything unusual. You still had a lot of people around that had the skills. I mean, watermen were still building boats in their backyards and Jim would get a call that they were stuck with something, they would go down and help him out on a weeknight, or weekend, or something like that. Yeah, it wasn't seen as unusual. And

he had been involved, we had already done the *Adventure* for South Carolina, he'd done work for the Smithsonian, he restored a couple of Northwest Indian log canoes for the Smithsonian. Yeah, within the community I won't say it was taken for granted, but it wasn't seen as anything unusual. And you've got to remember, there were a lot of yards operating and boats were being...just wooden boats were being built everywhere.

JD: Even in the 70s?

JB: [00:51:07] Mm-hmm.

JD: Yeah. And then as time went on, and he passed in '90, '91, something like that...

JB: [00:51:15] Yeah, '92 maybe, I forget the date.

JD: It seems to me that things seem to change a little bit. There seemed to be this legendary aspect, I mean, with the museum, the Richardson Museum, is that a correct assumption on my part? Things seemed to grow as he passed away, his reputation, or do you think it's just a continuation of his reputation in his lifetime?

JB: [00:51:45] I think people weren't aware...I mean, we...and I've tried to find some of those correspondence, even when I first went, I mean, this is in the late 60s, early 70s, went to work from him, he was corresponding with people in New Zealand, Australia, he was corresponding I think with

somebody in Belgium, all these individuals were building wooden boats and through whatever means there were a couple of articles written about him in some of the major boating magazines or what have you, or they would get in touch with Smithsonian and chat, so he had this reputation. There was even a group that were going to go down, I can't remember where, in Polynesia, and they were trying to...what they wanted to do was build, somehow build a windmill, small windmills, that they could do in various villages for sustainability, and he was involved in that project with the design and everything like that.

JD: Primarily through the mail?

JB: [00:52:57] Mm-hmm.

JD: Wow.

JB: [00:52:59] Yeah. And the Herreshoff's would come to visit once in a while. Aviation is something I'm interested in, my father being a test pilot and everything. My mother was also a pilot when she was...she was one of the first pilots, women pilots in New Jersey. But Augie Bellanca of the Bellanca Corporation aircraft builders would come through and visit because everybody years ago was working in wood and they would come through and see Jim, keep in touch with him. Every once in a while they'd have a problem, or something, or "would this be possible"?

JD: So even back...even then many, many skilled boat builders, but he stood out maybe because of his connections and the projects he sought out or were brought to him, yeah.

JB: [00:53:55] Yeah, I mean, it seems like the projects came to him to be honest with you.

JD: Was he respected by other boat builders? Was there, I don't know, professional jealousy? What was he like within the boat building community? Which I know was kind of informal.

JB: [00:54:13] I will say without mentioning any names, there were some builders that because of his methods, he didn't lay a boat down, he could, but he just didn't. You think about it.

JD: Lofting you mean?

JB: [00:54:30] Yeah. By the time you've lofted it, you could have it built, that was what he always said. Which is true. Lofting is very involved. There were a few boat builders that felt like he really had more of a reputation than he deserved because of his methods and process.

JD: Right. So, I mean, that was...because he could do it without lofting and others couldn't?

JB: [00:55:04] I don't know.

JD: It's just that's...[crosstalk]

JB: [00:55:09] We never...you know. And it didn't seem to bother him.

JD: And one of the things I'm exploring is the extent to which he represents...to what extent is he unique and to what extent does he represent a passing away of a skill set that still exists, but let's face it, it's not as prominent as it was before, so to what extent does he represent a typical Chesapeake Bay boat builder, and to what extent was he unique. It seems like it's complicated.

JB: [00:55:43] It is, it is. And the uniqueness comes...he was very...he didn't learn to read till late in life, he had trouble. He taught himself poetry and then he taught himself to read from that.

JD: Did he have a learning disability? Dyslexia or something? Not sure? Never diagnosed probably.

JB: [00:56:05] The daughters always thought it was probably dyslexia. And he read very slowly. He told James Michener one time that he had a hard time with his books because it took so long for him to get to the meat of the problem and Michener told him that he wrote him that way to weed people like him out.

JD: Michener did not write short books. [laughs]

JB: [00:56:31] No, no, but he...you could be talking to him about something, he would go to a book and open it up, and

in a couple minutes find a page where he read it, and he might not have read that book for years. He remembered things like that. But he educated himself on the historic aspects of the vessels or what have you because, like I said, just like with Victorian houses, a boat built at a certain time, the knees were either underneath the deck beam or alongside of it, certain knots were used certain time periods in the rigging.

JD: And he knew all of that?

JB: [00:57:10] He educated himself on those things.

JD: Because building a pinnacle, or *Adventure*, or something like that is not a typical...it's not a skipjack, it's not a bugeye.

JB: [00:57:21] And he wanted to represent the time period. And then keeping in mind when a captain got a hold of his boat, the captain made changes or whatever worked for him, no matter what the time period was. Captains had certain ways they liked to have things in their rig and what have you.

JD: That's true.

JB: [00:57:39] So this idea that something is specific to a time period isn't totally correct.

JD: Do you remember any modification or adaptations made to *Dove* as far as rigging or anything like that?

JB: [00:57:55] Not really. You know, Bill Baker had really done his homework on those aspects of it. And I think there were...I know of with the deadeyes and things like that, we discussed size, and what would be easier to work with, what would be easier on a rig, and stuff like that, but nothing major.

JD: Were you part of the trip down to St. Mary's? Were you part of the crew?

JB: [00:58:26] I was.

JD: Okay. [laughs] Well tell me about the experience.

JB: [00:58:29] We were told not to ... to go lightly, not to full sail her, but we did. Once we got on the Bay, I mean, she...I was just really shocked at how well she sailed.

JD: No wind initially though, right?

JB: [00:58:47] Right, until we got down the Bay. So we were able to ease into it.

JD: And how long was the trip down?

JB: [00:58:59] I don't remember that to be honest with you.

JD: Somebody...there was a story about a stowaway, was it Jim Elk, another Katherine, do you remember that?

JB: [00:59:12] No, I don't. No, I'm sorry.

JD: That's okay. That's all right. And so as you came into St. Mary's there were...do you remember that moment? There were people waiting, there was a celebration.

JB: [00:59:28] I do, but vaguely. I can remember one thing, I was extremely tired by the time we ...I'd been up the whole time, but I don't remember a lot of details to be honest with you.

JD: That's fine. And the captain was Boyle at that time?

JB: [00:59:45] Mm-hmm.

JD: Is that right? Had you been...do you remember if you all had been working with him as the boat was being finished?

JB: [00:59:54] He was fairly late coming, coming aboard. Other than familiarizing him with the details.

JD: Well I would think...several members of the crew said that they'd sailed but they'd never sailed anything like this before, so he was in charge, right? Had you sailed a vessel like this? *Adventure*? It's not really like that.

JB: [01:00:14] I had sailed the *Adventure*, yeah.

JD: And that's about it?

JB: [01:00:16] Yeah.

JD: Had you started...I have to imagine you started sailing once you got down to Dorchester?

JB: [01:00:25] Yeah, we sailed in the evenings all the time, yeah, especially if there was a thunderstorm coming up and there'd be winds. I know that sounds...

JD: [laughs] Wait. That's the opposite of what I do.

JB: [01:00:37] I know, I know.

JD: So you took to sailing for sure once...yeah.

JB: [01:00:41] Yeah, we sailed quite a bit. And the guys working at the shop were all local guys so if it was a good windy evening we'd take the boats out.

JD: So after *Dove*, did you stay at Richardson yard? What was the trajectory of your work after that?

JB: [01:01:02] Before *Dove* I had my own crew, after *Dove* I actually quit boat building and bought a Peterbilt truck and drove a truck for six years.

JD: Okay. Was there a particular reason why? Just something different?

JB: [01:01:20] Just a change of pace.

JD: But is it only in recent years you've gone back to doing some of that boat building work or?

JB: [01:01:33] I went back...I went back in '85 and stayed twenty years.

JD: Oh okay.

JB: [01:01:40] Then I had a friend of mine that owns a construction company, GC, and I don't know, I guess I was sixty-four or sixty-five, and he said, convinced me to come and work for him, so I worked for him about ten years. Well, it was a nice change of pace, you know, something different I hadn't done before.

JD: Sure. So you ran your own yard for twenty years after doing the trucking?

JB: [01:02:04] No, when I came back, I had worked for myself, I worked for myself, but I was actually...I spent most of my time doing jobs for Generation III, David Wheatley, over at...you know.

JD: What were they building then?

JB: [01:02:23] No building, it was all repair.

JD: All repair? Of pleasure boats? All kinds of boats?

JB: [01:02:30] All kinds, work boats, pleasure boats, whatever. We started...we were working...we had a little shop right by...just down from portside by Cambridge Bridge, and then brought the property up at the head of the creek, and developed that. I was with him through all of that.

JD: So still doing...

JB: [01:02:49] I subcontracted to him the whole time.

JD: So still...was he still doing skipjacks and...there were fewer skipjacks obviously.

JB: [01:02:58] I mean, it was work boats, pleasure boats, and whatever. We had a fifty ton lift so...we didn't have it initially, we went down to Crisfield and bought one, and brought it up on a barge with a tugboat, and put that in, so we had pretty good capability. Charlie Smith had the

shipyard at that time, Cambridge Shipyard, so they were the two major yards.

JD: I mean, you did a variety of other things, but if somebody asked you would you say I'm a boat builder? Is that you're life's work?

JB: [01:03:34] Yeah I spent forty-some years at it so.

JD: Any regrets about taking that path in your life?

JB: [01:03:42] Not really. I mean, it's very challenging, and you work in a small yard you do everything, carpentry, rigging. Painting ... Actually for David, David injured himself and I wound up being the finisher at the yard spray painting hulls for my last years there.

JD: What part of the work do you enjoy the most?

JB: [01:04:09] Probably carpentry. And then I enjoy rigging when you're rigging something like the *Dove*. I mean, I did most of the rigging on the original *Dove*, but I rigged a [Bezilla Premier?], I went to Africa for a while for the *Ernestina*. I don't know if you're familiar with that project or not. She was called the *Effie Morrissey*. But anyways, rigging on that scale was very enjoyable, challenging.

JD: Goodness. So *Dove* in particular, did that project have a particular impact on you or it was really just another step along your path?

JB: [01:04:55] At the time, to be honest with you, it was just another build. At the time I didn't really see it as any...I mean, we knew the vessel was unique obviously, whether it be from the standpoint of the build, wasn't anything we hadn't been through before.

JD: Any sense of being part of history or something that was going to be seen by the public for, what, forty-some years?

JB: [01:05:20] Not really.

JD: No? That's fine. Just doing a job.

JB: [01:05:23] Yeah.

JD: Fair enough. Were you...so thinking a little bit about Mr. Jim's legacy and maybe the Richardson Museum, I was trying to remember what year, it was the late 90s when I was briefly involved. It was after he passed, yeah?

JB: [01:05:40] Mm-hmm. But he...Bob Spedden approached me, and I don't know what year it was, Jim was still alive, and this is when the hospital was still at where the Hyatt was, and what have you, and the committee what it was Committee of 100 got together and they were planning, and all this was going on, Bob came to me and said, "Do you think Jim would be willing to let his name be used? We'd like to start a maritime museum." And I said, "I'm sure he would." He said, "Well, would you talk to him?" I said, "Yeah." Then Bob came down one time and Bob said...he said right up

front, "We'd like to use your name. We want to use your reputation and your name to get this off this ground and everything." And Jim said, "Sure, yeah."

JD: That's interesting.

JB: [01:06:34] That's how I...I mean, that's how that...

JD: So he had his blessing as it were.

JB: [01:06:38] Yeah, yeah, exactly. Cause I think Lila had said if he knew what was going on that he wouldn't have appreciated it, but that's not true at all.

JD: Oh did she say that? Yeah.

JB: [01:06:50] Yeah. I mean, and she's not the only one. Other ones have said that he wouldn't have appreciated it, but he knew right off the bat what they were...I mean, Bob put it right out there. He said, "Sure." I mean, he was...the man was very community-minded obviously.

JD: Sure, yeah. Well, I mean, I think there's more I could ask, but is there anything else that you would add about your own work, about Mr. Jim, that I haven't covered?

JB: [01:07:25] No, I think you were pretty thorough. You know, if anything comes up, you can email me or call me. I leave my phone in the truck so if you leave a message I'll get back to you.

JD: Sure, yeah, I appreciate that.

JB: [01:07:41] I'd be glad to do that.

JD: Let me stop this for now. [Audio cuts out]

[Audio cuts back in]

JB: [01:07:45] ...being built, you know, I think the level of skill is absolutely equal if not better.

JD: When you talk about the knowledge level, you mean the formal education, or just being able to access...

JB: [01:08:00] The skill, the hands-on skill levels. I do think knowledge levels, I mean, the only way you gain that is through experience and time. And you can't ask somebody that's twenty-five years old, even though they may think at twenty-five, and we all did, we've got a good handle on it, but in time that builds up. And I think it's not acquired the same way now, but it's just as good.

JD: Because there's boat building schools.

JB: [01:08:33] Yeah, exactly.

JD: And that was not...

JB: [01:08:36] And the other thing is, like everything, there's probably ten ways to do something and only two of them are wrong. We're all pretty much set in how we accomplish things. We're doing the *Martha Lewis*, restoring her, you know? And Peter, and John, and I get together and we each have a different idea on how something could be accomplished, and we all know it can be done that way, so we sit down and decide which gets the job done, costs the

owners the least amount of money, and then who's willing to do it, that way. But everything is a collaboration really.

JD: Great. Well thank you again.

JB: [01:09:21] Well...

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