

OH 515 Kate Hollingsworth

JENNIFER SHEA: Okay, this is Jennifer Shea, it is August 7th, and I'm in Annapolis at the *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* office with Kate... Captain Boomie, Kate Hollingsworth, collecting her story for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Oral History "Her Helm" Project. Kate, could we begin by you introducing yourself, tell me about you?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:00:30] Ahoy, ahoy, I am Captain Boomies, my real name is Kate Hollingsworth. You said you wanted birthdate?

JENNIFER SHEA: Mm-hmm.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:00:37] March 20th, 1985, and, yeah, I'm a... I'm a professional captain, it's, kind of, how I ended up here. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: So how did you become a professional captain? Did you... have you sailed all your life or...?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:00:54] I definitely grew up sailing. My father had me out on boats before I could walk. He had me in one of those... You know, there's pictures of him putting me in those baby carriers that you strap to you and then he's on a boat hauling lines with his infant daughter strapped to him. And my mother always tells stories about his first sailboat was a tiny, little Sunfish, and he would

have me or my sister out on this little, tiny boat in the Long Island Sound capsizing in front of giant cargo ships and things. So he absolutely had to be good enough to ride the boat and save his child before we all died, [laughs] and that was, sort of, how he got good at sailing. Nobody else in his family had sailed, he just is an ambitious character and went for it, and he's, kind of, instilled that in all of us at this point, so I thought, why not? I could also make boats float pretty good. [laughs] But really I think what happened from there was you grow up sailing, you go to sailing camp. You eventually start teaching at sailing camp because you're too old and you've learned everything already. So sailing camp led to needing to have some kind of licensing because the boats just kept getting bigger every summer as I worked until I had to have my captain's license. Do you need to...?

JENNIFER SHEA: No, I was just making sure it was going...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:02:35] No, no...

JENNIFER SHEA: [both speaking-unclear] [laughs]

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:02:36] I know, I know how that happens.

JENNIFER SHEA: So when did you get your captain's license?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:02:41] I got my captain's license...

Let's see, I got my first license...when I was 20? Yes, yes, and then I didn't get my master license until I was

22, which is, sort of, the more important one that actually lets you do more interesting things out on the water. But all in all, I had no intention of becoming a full-time captain, but I was offered...I was offered a job that was going to pay way more money than any of my friends were getting as they were graduating college. And I'm looking at graduating college going like, oh, I don't know, and 2008 happened and, like, well, there's a lot more money to be made by just keeping... doing what I've been doing professionally for a while now anyway, and it worked out really well for me. And I then parlayed it into being an internet goofball who talks about boats all the time.

JENNIFER SHEA: Huh, well, before we get on to Captain Boomie...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:04:02] Yeah, no worries... [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: ...so what...?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:04:04] ...I should probably consolidate everything I just told you a little better.

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, no, it's great, but what kind of boats did you start sailing?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:04:11] I started out on very small boats. My father was out on whatever boat people would let him be on, so it was Catalinas, it was Pearsons, it was Tartans when he got very lucky. There was one Swan in there that we both still fantasize about owning one day.

But just as crew, just as somebody who was allowed to come along for the ride. And then when I started doing it professionally, it was just camp boats, so JY15s and Sunfish and just whatever little boat they put the kids in. Then it became Catalinas and Sonars and all these 20- to 30-foot boats that you have to have a little bit more experience. You usually have to have crew to help you set the sails, things like that. So it's really funny when I think about being 17 and having these adults give me the hairy eyeball because they don't want to learn from me, some punk kid. Their big sailing adventure is just starting, and they're learning from somebody who doesn't look like an old salt, and I get it.

JENNIFER SHEA: So where was this?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:05:32] Ah, this is in New Jersey. So, yeah, I grew up... So that would've been in Jersey and I... and the Long Island Sound. I think my first big boat job, which... 20 to 30 foot, that would have been at City Island. So, again, I'm in the Long Island Sound being ridiculous, and it was just a lot of fun.

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, that's great.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:06:00] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So Captain Boomie...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:06:04] Boomies, it's...

JENNIFER SHEA: Boomies...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:06:05]...plural.

JENNIFER SHEA: ...oh, yes, it is. So, where did the name come from, where did the concept come from, what is this all about, Kate?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:06:16] Because this is an oral history, I'm going to tell you the truth and... as opposed to what I normally do when people ask me this, which is I come up with all kinds of funny, little lies. But Captain Boomies is a... it's because it sounds like boobies. [laughs] And I have no problem with that, and neither did my crew that came up with the name in the first place. So, once upon a time in the last, like, 10 years, I was working for a fleet of yachts, and I was the only woman captain. So when somebody would show up and be like, "Hey, I'm looking for this captain, where is he?" they would say, "Oh, Captain Hollingsworth over there." And they'd say, "Which one?" "The one with boobs." [laughs] So it became... I was Captain Boobies and... which can't really work very well on the internet, so I just tweaked it a little bit.

JENNIFER SHEA: I think that's wonderful.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:07:25] Yeah. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: I was going to ask you, what was it like being a female captain?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:07:32] It's great, it's totally great, and it was an advantage to me.

JENNIFER SHEA: How so?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:07:40] A few reasons, one, it makes you very memorable. When everybody's resume is coming across the desk and here's a name that is unique and clearly a woman, it makes people, sort of, stop and take notice a little longer. The other thing that it made easier was hiring other women, and working with women on yachts is so fantastic because they tend to fall in love with the yacht. Like they actually fall in love with the boat itself, and so taking care of it is an act of love, and you feel that, and it just makes the work so much nicer. It's a good thing. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: That's really interesting, and nobody else has told me that. [laughs]

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:08:30] So it's easier... as a woman, it was just easier to hire other women because they were less wary. It is a unique thing to do to live and work on a yacht, and so you need to be comfortable with the people that you're living and working with. So I really got to take my pick of some of the best crew out there in all kinds of positions because it's less "risky," is the word I'm going to use, to work for a woman if you are a woman.

JENNIFER SHEA: So did you hire men too?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:09:08] Absolutely, absolutely, if you're good at your job, you're good at your job, like... and I don't care. But I liked that I did have that advantage over other captains when it came to... I had one amazing mate once upon a time. She was a tall ship... she came from tall ships and could splice and repair and was such a brilliant mariner. Had so much skill in carpentry and all kinds of fiddly things that normally we have to hire out for, but she could handle them. And it was so satisfying to watch her work ethic just attack these projects and these boats, and it just felt great. She's a great teammate. She's a captain now, she's doing great.

JENNIFER SHEA: Where?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:10:06] Last I knew she was in the Mediterranean, yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: It's quite a peripatetic life being the captain of boats like this.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:10:15] Oh, yeah, it's strange. So I know one of the things that is both a good and bad thing for me is that show *Below Decks* [sic]. So there's a TV show that talks all about what it's like to be the crew on one of these large yachts, and they dwell on the drama, they dwell on the obnoxious guests. But that was almost

never something that I experienced, partly because we didn't have time, [laughs] you're just too busy for that. You might feel all of those feelings, but you're doing your job, and you've only got three hours to turn the boat around for this next charter. You don't have three days like they do on the show, so you don't get the same kind of ability to cause havoc.

JENNIFER SHEA: So where did you run charters from?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:11:14] I did charters in... I was only on charter boats in the Caribbean and the Mediterranean. I never did the East Coast except out on private yachts, and, yeah, I guess I did do a couple of Bahamas, Florida charters as well, but they don't count, they're too easy.

JENNIFER SHEA: They're too easy?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:11:38] They're too easy, that's an easy job.

JENNIFER SHEA: So why is that easy and the others aren't...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:11:44] Because...

JENNIFER SHEA: ...aren't?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:11:44] ...Florida, Bahamas, you can almost go as a parade of other yachts. When you're in Florida, you have access to all of the yacht care, maintenance, parts, crew. Everything that you need is right there, and then it's such a short run over to the

Bahamas. And if you've got a decent ship agent, that whole process is super streamlined, all the visas are taken care of, all of the customs paperwork is taken care of. It's just... like they're just ready for you. And then when you get there, the bunkering services, the provisioning services, everything is just designed to cater to these yachts when they show up, and it's so easy. It didn't feel like work. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: So what's it like in the Mediterranean?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:12:39] The Mediterranean is fascinating, and I always tell the story about being in Greece on this beautiful, little island. We anchored out and took the tender in, and we're having a day off, and I'm sitting at one of those little, rental umbrella beach places that they have. And one of the folks that works there came up to me and said... and I was like, "Oh, I'm sorry, I've only got big bills, and I see that it's only 20 Euro," or whatever it was at the time, "to rent a umbrella, and I've only got hundreds." And the guy goes, "Don't worry, you'll get me next time," [laughs] and I'm like, "When am I ever going to be here again on this spit of an island, you crazy, crazy man?" But it... it's... it was like that everywhere. Everywhere was, sort of, a surprise in how the interactions

went. They never went the way I was expecting them to go, just a little bit of culture shock everywhere.

JENNIFER SHEA: Hmm, so what's it like to be the captain of all these waters that probably you're not the most familiar with?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:13:55] I had great networks of other captains, and a lot of times, I had been there as a deckhand, so it was rare that I was actually somewhere that I truly didn't know. Which is why the process of becoming a yacht captain is sort of... there's a... what's... a path that you take, and you do. You start as a deckhand and then you work your way up, and you spend time as a mate where you do... you basically do all the jobs that the captain does, and the captain just checks your work behind you. So there's no... there's always a safety net of that. And then when you are captain... I almost never drove the boat once I became captain because I was training the mate to do it, so the mate did it the whole time. [sirens blaring] We'll let them go by. [sirens blaring]

JENNIFER SHEA: That's really interesting.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:15:04] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So you're training the mate to drive the boat?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:15:08] Yes, so, and run the crew and handle the back office, handle the home office, all the things that the captain has to do.

JENNIFER SHEA: So that was my next question, what does it take to be a good boat captain?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:15:25] You have to be really good at managing people and receipts. [laughs] That's what it takes on yachts. It helps if you've got years of being good at seamanship, but more importantly, you've got to be good at training people.

JENNIFER SHEA: So where did you get your training to drive the... those big... I saw on your website, some of the large cruisers I guess would be or...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:16:01] I'm going to let you in...

JENNIFER SHEA: ...liners?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:16:02] ...on a little secret, and that is that the big yachts, the really big ones, are actually way easier to handle than teeny, tiny boats because everything just happens so much slower. So as long as you weren't in full throttle going at the dock, everything else is going to happen slowly. And you've probably got crew that you've trained to give you really great information while you're at the helm. So they're saying things like, "Yeah, 10 feet on the starboard quarter, you know, three

feet midship, just snug it in, we got this." They... you can trust them to handle all the lines and fenders, and everything else about it is just easy. The only pressure is your own core temperature. If, let's say, the wind has picked up or you're a little nervous about how tight the slip is because you know that we had to switch to the small fenders because this slip is too narrow to use the big fenders, so you've got no wiggle room. [laughs] But that's just about controlling your own heart rate, I'm going to say, and trusting that you did the training ahead of time to have the crew that can handle it.

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, that's... actually, I... I've heard that, that it's...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:17:24] Bigger boats are easier.

JENNIFER SHEA: I haven't heard that one from anybody, but I have heard... I've heard that about the heartrate part like the... So what's the biggest challenge do you think?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:17:37] The biggest challenge is being... waking up and you're at work, going to sleep and you're at work. And the people you're with are always looking to you for what the feeling of the day is. And if it goes sour, it's still on you, so you really have to control that aspect of it because everybody else is also going to sleep, they're at work, waking up, they're at work. And the

feeling of it has to be one of lighthearted professionalism. You are a family, and yet, I need you to do your job to the very best of your ability and not make everybody else's job hard and therefore their living experience hard.

JENNIFER SHEA: Do you have a story to illustrate that kind of an experience, some sort of...?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:18:42] I have, [laughs] I do, I'm just trying to decide if I'm willing to embarrass some of these people like that. [laughs] I got a few of those actually. Oh, I've got one that's totally tame and ready to go.

JENNIFER SHEA: [laughs] Yeah.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:19:07] I know, I've got a good one. I was... my husband and I were working on the same boat together. It was a 140-foot-something or other, and I'm going to have to make up some of this because I signed too many nondisclosure agreements to really tell you everything about it. But one of the most interesting things that happened was...he was... my husband was my ship's engineer, and I was the mate, and the captain, we'd been working for him for two months at this point. And he was ribbing my husband that, you know, "You should really make a move on the first mate because otherwise she'll find somebody else. You know, she's a good catch." And my husband looks at him

and goes, "Did you not know that we're together?" Because we had just both been 100 percent professional. Every time we're up and on deck, we're just pros, and you would never know that we are canoodling in the engineer's cabin every night anyway. [laughs] So it was very interesting to know that he and I... My husband and I both just have the same work ethic, and it meant that we found other crew who had the same work ethic so that when we're up and on deck, we're just the best at this job, we get it done. And when we're not, you're never going to see it because you don't need to. [laughs] We'll go be unprofessional somewhere else.

JENNIFER SHEA: So I want to ask about what you're doing now, before we move to that, why did you decide to stop?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:21:19] It's too hard.

JENNIFER SHEA: Too hard.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:21:21] It's too hard on having a life at all. If you want to see your family, if you want to not... Yeah, if you want to see your family, you can't be a yacht captain. And I know tons of captains that are divorced at this point because their wife didn't work with them. This was a really hard thing for me and my husband because he is a brilliant ship's engineer. And I told him that I'm going to be land-based, and he figured out how to do that for me,

and turns out, he's actually a lot happier. Being able to go home at night is, kind of, nice.

JENNIFER SHEA: What's he doing now?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:22:07] He is... I don't know if I'm allowed to say. He is managing a shipyard, so he's fixing other people's boats.

JENNIFER SHEA: That's great.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:22:15] Yeah, it's perfect.

JENNIFER SHEA: Yeah, that's wonderful, that's wonderful how one can then transform these things. What was your first memory being on a boat?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:22:32] Oh, I was on like... I was on my cousin's grandfather's ski boat and had my face... I was always so excited to be at the bow of the boat and just letting the wind smack my face as hard as it could because that boat was so fast. And I know that... now thinking back on it, I know what type of boat it was. We were probably doing max 20 knots, [laughs] but when I was little, it felt like absolutely flying. And I was so excited for the day that I was going to be big enough to water ski off the back of it, and I would just fantasize about it while I was on board sitting at the bow and touching the vinyl plastic seats and just feeling great.

JENNIFER SHEA: Hmm, so tell me about this chapter. When did you move to the Chesapeake, why did you choose the Chesapeake?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:23:29] I chose the Chesapeake because... a couple reasons. I went to University of Maryland, so I already liked the region. And then as a yacht captain, we'd also stop in the Chesapeake, and I thought it was perfect. It's the perfect body of water.

JENNIFER SHEA: Why?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:23:47] Because it's so many options of places you can go and things to see, and there's... without being... what's the word I'm looking for? It's not exclusionary. You see little, crappy boats out there, and they're not just fishing boats, some of them are like, this is all I could afford, [makes revving sounds]. I'm going to rev up my little, tiny five-horse power outboard, and my itty-bitty jon boat just to throw a picnic for myself and my girlfriend out on the water. And then you have... oh, we're sitting across from the Annapolis Yacht Club and some very nice, large yachts that are completely gorgeous. And the harbor is full of these cruising catamarans and a couple of sport fish and a couple of picnic boats. There's so much going on here, and it's this beautiful protected body of water. That means you can, kind of, go out whenever you want, it's fantastic, perfect.

JENNIFER SHEA: Do you have a boat these days?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:25:02] I do, I finally broke down and bought a boat.

JENNIFER SHEA: What kind of boat?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:25:08] I have a 2008 Bayliner. She's 18-feet long, she's a little bow rider, she's basically that exact boat that is my first memory.

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, that's wonderful, that's terrific.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:25:26] It's so good.

JENNIFER SHEA: Where do you keep her?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:25:28] I keep her up in Middle River. She puts smiles on faces, and I can't ask for more.

JENNIFER SHEA: Very good, I was going to ask you if you prefer sailing or the [unclear] but...?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:25:40] So I like both, I know I'm weird that way. Sailing is an absolute joy, moving hundreds of tons of boat with just some canvas is an experience that I recommend everyone give a try. But a powerboat is easier, it just is. If you want to get out and go real quick and hop to a tiki bar, a powerboat can't be beat.

JENNIFER SHEA: So tell me what you do these days.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:26:13] Oh...

JENNIFER SHEA: What is Captain Boo-- Boomies up to? [laughs]
Ay, sorry.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:26:16] No worries, it's hard, I knew what I did. [laughs] Captain Boomies is... helps me do something that I've always wanted to do, and that is I get to go to boat shows and be the outrageous personality that I always wanted to be at boat shows, but I'm not buying boats, so nobody wants to talk to me. While also giving me just enough anonymity to be able to talk about some of my yachting career that I'm not allowed to talk about, so I just get to lie about it, and it makes everything that much easier by adding this extra layer of...

JENNIFER SHEA: Storytelling?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:27:08] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So you're a storyteller?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:27:11] Yeah, I suppose I am. It's fun. I think every sailor is secretly a storyteller, what else are you doing out there?

JENNIFER SHEA: You know that's a really interesting thing that sailors are story--I mean, I think there's a lot of truth in that.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:27:28] Absolutely, I don't know.

JENNIFER SHEA: Tell me more.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:27:32] Have you ever been out at sea for any period of time?

JENNIFER SHEA: Mm-hmm.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:27:37] One of the interesting things that I... that happens to people when they're out at sea for a while is they actually slow down their talking. They don't notice it until you get back on land, but you... everything, kind of, slows down. It's such a weird thing that happens, but what it leads to is this ability to think your way through what you want to say. And, ultimately, the only people to talk to are your crew, and they know you, and you want them to enjoy the time they spend with you. So you better be telling them some good stories so that they want to spend time with you.

JENNIFER SHEA: So Captain Boomies is a storyteller?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:28:27] Absolutely, absolutely, Captain Boomies is just out trying to entertain people, and if I can sneak in some boating knowledge while I'm at it, that's even better.

JENNIFER SHEA: So I was going to ask you about that because I... Captain Boomies, and you probably could explain more about, but tell me about your media presence. Why are you a "media Maven"?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:28:51] Okay, so Captain Boomies is an... I call myself an internet idiot. I suppose the term is influencer now or content creator, any of these things applies. But I love making these little stories to help

other people get excited about the water or learn something about boats that they need to know in my opinion because I'm a captain and I can't help, but I'm training everybody all the time anyway. Or invent situations that make other people feel better about maybe a stressful or embarrassing time they had on the water. So I will lean into any time that I'm having a difficult time, and I will show what that looks and feels and smells like if I could so that when you're in that situation, you can forgive yourself. Because even professionals end up in situations that they're not totally thrilled with.

JENNIFER SHEA: So, tell me about the videos.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:30:03] The videos, man, oh, I should probably talk about... I... I've always liked video, I've always liked movies, but it wasn't until I worked on *Beasts of the Southern Wild*, which is a film that was filmed down in Louisiana...

JENNIFER SHEA: You worked on that?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:30:26] I worked on that.

JENNIFER SHEA: How did you...? Tell me how did you work on that incredible film?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:30:31] I needed an internship, and it seemed like an interesting internship that, sort of, combined some boating know-how because they did need

somebody who could handle their very interesting prop boats and this storytelling film excitement. Plus we were filming in New Orleans, which is a city that I'm absolutely obsessed with and totally thrilled to spend time in. So it just worked out really well for me to go and do that. And then I knew that I should keep doing that, but that was just something that stuck in the back of my mind while I kept going off and doing yachting stuff.

JENNIFER SHEA: Did you major in filmmaking?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:31:21] So I was a math major, but I did take... I took a couple of mass communication classes, and they were fun.

JENNIFER SHEA: Uh-huh, okay. [laughs]

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:31:35] I know, it's one of these things where I think...I think all of my fellow content creators, the people that I gravitate towards and link up with in this situation, especially if they're in boating, we all have something else that we want to be working on. And so to show our love of the water and boating and all this, we're inflicting it on other people through great visuals. But it's because we've spent time stretching our brains in ways that force you to, sort of, smush it all together. So one of my favorite creators is a guy who's down in Florida, so I shouldn't talk about him because this is for

Chesapeake Bay but... eh. He watches boat ramp stuff, but he's a psychology guy, [laughs] you'd never know it to listen to him. But he... part of why he likes to do what he does is because there's... it's trauma moments for people. It's small trauma, but it's a fascinating moment that he's capturing, and he puts his own fun commentary over top, and he really is trying to help people. He explains what goes wrong, how to do it better, how to not have things go poorly. And then on top of that, he's making friends with all the birds and alligators and whatever else comes his way while he's down there, and I just, I... I get that. I do the same thing where my love of all types of boats leads me to begging to let the trash boat that goes around Baltimore's Inner Harbor scooping up garbage. I just wanted to hang out with that boat and so I asked them if I could go and just inspect it a little bit [laughs] because I'm fascinated by all the things that float. And it probably has more to do with the math side of my brain than it does with this beautiful vista of floating white fiberglass we've got going on here.

JENNIFER SHEA: So it's the why?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:33:52] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: And the how, yeah, interesting. So what are those pressure points in boating, sailing, or motoring for

people? I mean, what's the going in, the ramps, I... you know I have observed that myself, but what else? What are these other pressure points...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:34:15] So...

JENNIFER SHEA: ...trauma points?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:34:17] That's right, trauma points.

It's funny because for men, it's a perceived capability, right? And that is such a touchy thing. And having trained a lot of men over the years, they really hate to be seen as incompetent. There's nothing that makes them, sort of, choke and gag more than that feeling of being seen as incapable. And if you can help them through that, that relax, let it happen, you don't have to be working the whole time. You don't have to be perceived as working because that can actually look like you're not doing it. The less you do, usually, the more it looks like you know what you're doing, and so I usually end up training men to do less. It's a weird thing. Women are hyper focused on the safety of themselves and the people they love. So if you're on a boat and you care about all these other people on board with you, the safety of them is usually what trips women up. So there's a fear that comes from if I screw this up, I will hurt people. And I help them get over that by showing them to go so slow that it's impossible to hurt

anybody or to teach them how very powerful most of these boats are. You're not going to hurt them, you're not going to... they're not going to blow up into splinters of fiberglass if you touch the dock. You might...

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, so this is about docking primar...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:36:20] Oh, yeah, no.

JENNIFER SHEA: ...the docking trauma.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:36:22] The docking trauma for sure. Men out at sea, they usually... I've only seen one... The problem is my whole career has been wonderfully boring because I had great mentors who would teach me how to tell people, "No, we're not going, the weather window is not there." And I never had to go in situations that I wasn't going to be 100 percent comfortable and confident that we could do without damaging the vessel, so I never had to do that nonsense. I know other sailors who have gotten stuck in some ugliness, but I've gotten very lucky in not having to go there with one very annoying exception, and [laughs] it's probably my trauma point.

JENNIFER SHEA: What was it?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:37:21] I was a deckhand, this was very early in my career, and I was on a 150-foot yacht that was heading from Florida to the Caribbean, specifically Saint Martin and we hit some... We weren't making the right load

on our engines, something was wrong, and the engineer couldn't figure out what it was, and we'd gone through all these things. And then the captain dumped our fresh water because he thought maybe we're not making the right load because we're too heavy, which is an insane thing to have said when you're 150 feet, whatever. He dumped so much that we didn't have enough fresh water to prime the water maker, so now, we also don't have enough water for the air-conditioning units, which is a... which is like a bougie yacht problem to have, right. But it's not something you want when you have marble floors everywhere. Cold marble floors plus humid air means you have condensation and a rough enough sea state that now you've got an ice-skating rink, and you're sliding all around the interior of this boat while trying to transit down to the Caribbean. I was so furious with this captain, and a bunch of other nonsense happened on that passage. But I remember seeing in him and the engineer, because they were buddies from before, that they were both afraid. And they were afraid in a way that wasn't about our situation. It was about the fact that they didn't know what to do, and I never wanted to be that captain for anybody. So, because Boat Daddy's not supposed to cry. Boat Daddy's boobs are hard and scuffed, and Boat Daddy doesn't cry. And you'd never want to put your crew

in a position where they're telling you, "Absolutely not, are you insane?" You want it to be a collaborative experience, but you also want them to know that they're your priority, and therefore, anything else is out the window. This guy should have put in and had the repairs done and not put us through what he put us through. And I felt bad for him years later because I've been in situations where I was on a charter, and we couldn't bring up the anchor. And I don't know what to do because my engineer has the day off, and I don't want to call him and make him come out here and deal with this and I'm only halfway... I know enough to get myself in trouble in an engine room but not really, and I'm sitting here working on this problem, and I finally decided like, okay, we'll jump the solenoid. And I realize in that moment I'm like, ah, we're not going to do this because jumping the solenoid in this amount of power is going to start welding things together, and I'm not sure I'm going to be able to pull it away when I need to if it becomes a runaway. So I lovingly told my first mate to, "Put the fire extinguisher away, we're not going to do this, like, put that away, we're not going to do it. We're just going to wait, have another yacht friend come pick up our guests, and we'll just eat the cost of this and figure it out later." So sure enough,

we just sit at the anchor for a while. Turns out our charter guests were like, "No, we just really love this, can we just extend our charter?" And I was like, "Yes, you absolutely can." We had tons of food, we had tons of booze, they were totally happy, [laughs] and it worked out great.

JENNIFER SHEA: It's... That's wonderful. Where were you?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:41:57] Sorry, like, I'm just like, how much have I told you, what... can I say this without letting you know who the boat was? Yeah. This was in North Carolina, yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Doesn't mean anything to me.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:42:14] Sorry, yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: This is interesting about all the nondisclosures.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:42:20] Yeah, it's hard, it's...

JENNIFER SHEA: So why do you have to sign nondisclosures in the yachting industry?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:42:27] Because you are living on somebody's private vacation home. And nine times out of 10, these are people with so much money that they have security teams that would rather their person that they're protecting stay on a yacht that they can control the security of rather than on... in a hotel, which they absolutely cannot control the security of.

JENNIFER SHEA: Wow.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:42:57] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: That... I... it's the nuances of this career.

[horn honking] When this horn stops, I wanted to ask you how would you define your career right now? I mean I... it's... I'm intrigued by what you're doing, but I want you to tell me about this this career, what you're doing, and how does the DryLand Salon...?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:43:23] Oh, my gosh, yeah, okay.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what is it that you're now doing?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:43:28] Well, if you work for billionaires long enough, they will teach you that the only way to have real wealth is to have your own business. And I couldn't think of a better business than one that I could do with my sister so that I could actually see her more often, and so, so DryLand Salon, it became the answer to that. So my sister and I run a hair salon together, it's absolutely fantastic. It specializes in curly hair, which is great because my hair in boats get very curly. I'm sure there's tons of sailors out there who have the same issue that I do where humidity hits it and it springs right up. And I just really love my staff. It turns out that being good at managing people and receipts also applies to hair salons. [laughs] And I have a great team of people that

really makes it happen for me on a day-to-day basis, and I just step in to guide whenever we're up to something especially exciting.

JENNIFER SHEA: So you do that as part of owning your own business, what else do you do?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:44:48] I also make content for other people now. That's been an interesting addition where I get to make videos because I'm Captain Boomies. And I'm good at talking about the water and water lifestyles stuff that places like *Chesapeake Bay Magazine* want me to make content for them, and I happily do it.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what do you... what content are you making?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:45:20] I just got done with a series of videos for them called *Weekends on the Water*, and they let me take a great, little Pocket Yacht. That's what I'm going to call it because that's the company that let me have it, which is a 28 Cutwater, something that just has a single cabin, beautiful boat, super easy, great for the Chesapeake Bay. And I popped around to a bunch of different ports here in the Chesapeake and spent a night at each of them and made videos about, hey, if you're going to show up here by boat, let me tell you what I think is awesome to do.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what ports did you go to?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:46:00] I did Annapolis, Baltimore, Rock Hall, Saint Michaels, Oxford, and Cambridge.

JENNIFER SHEA: Nice.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:46:10] Oh, it was a ball.

JENNIFER SHEA: [00:46:12] And so do you remember what you thought was a fun thing to do in Saint Michaels?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:46:16] Oh, my gosh, the museum is incredible. They let me stay at the Museum, I never thought I would get that, but I then found out that you don't have to be some mega donor. You're allowed to just be a regular member and then you can dock at the marina, which was such good news for me. I have since become a member by the way.

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, good, okay.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:46:34] [laughs] And then the staff at the Maritime Museum as well is so much fun to talk to. They know everything, and we nerded out about wooden boats for a good long time. And I poked at some cotton wadding at one of... on one of their new builds that's going in, and they're just so pleasant the whole time. You really get to, like, smell the planks as they're going in and watch them swell with water when it's time to put them in, and it's incredible, just incredible.

JENNIFER SHEA: What else did you like about Saint Michaels?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:47:15] Oh, what else do I like about Saint Michaels?

JENNIFER SHEA: She says fishing.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:47:18] I know. I also love... the water taxi is super fun. I think that the folks that run the water taxi are so knowledgeable about all of the cool events that are going on. They know every cocktail in that area and which ones are best, like which bartenders have the best pours, very valuable information. And the spa that's right there is also great, I stop there whenever I show up in Saint Michaels. And all the distilleries, oh, my gosh, that was such a fun surprise when I first came to Saint Michaels. Learning the... yeah, there's brews being made right here, and you can sample it to your heart's content.

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, I'm going to go have to see that [laughs], it's great. So what else do you do? So you're doing the content, and you're doing videos, what else?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:48:24] What else? Oh, my gosh, is that not enough? No, I still...

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, it's quite a bit, but I know from reading your website you're doing...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:48:31] Oh, my gosh...

JENNIFER SHEA: ...more.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:48:32]...I think, well, one of the things that's... people get very excited about on my social media that I'm doing is I do... I captain boats that have just been delivered to the Port of Baltimore. So these big cargo ships come in, and they drop off these brand-new, 30-to 50-foot yachts, some of them are bigger than that, but I don't think I've filmed any of those. And they remove them by crane, put them in the water. I have to scurry down a little Jacob's ladder, get on board, start them up, and drive them away to what... wherever they need this boat to be. Meanwhile, there's still... like have the shrink wrap on all of the dashboards, and usually, I have to change the language settings so that they're no longer in Italian. And that can always be... that... sometimes that's a problem. I should probably just learn Italian so that I don't have to do that because it's a pain.

JENNIFER SHEA: So most of the boats come from Italy?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:49:34] Many of them do. Well, most of them get put on the boat in Poland actually. I think Poland, that sounds right, I could be wrong about that, and then get transported over, but many of them are Italian boat makers. So Azimut is one of the ones that I do a lot of, Galeon is one that I do a lot of. And, yeah, those are the two big ones that I see a lot of, which is nice because

one of the things that makes me special as a captain is that I've driven so many different types of boats, and that is rare. Most captains, they get on one boat and they drive that boat and they know that boat and they don't really change it up very often. And every boat is just a little bit different, so when you are jumping around the way I do, it makes you much quicker to, say, know where they put that weird extra relay switch in order to turn on this bow thruster. Because, yes, they have one right at the bow thruster, but then they also have one inline that's usually underneath this hatch here. And that's just something you'll only learn from having been on all of these different boats.

JENNIFER SHEA: So I was going to ask you, what makes you good at doing this?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:51:04] I'm fearless about driving anything that floats. Anything that floats, I can handle it, and part of that is just how I tackle boat floating in general. And it's that I know that as long as it is floating and I understand the current and the wind situation, and as long as it operates a little bit the way I'm expecting it to when I put it in gear and take it out of gear, I can make it do what I need it to.

JENNIFER SHEA: So where did you get that confidence, Kate?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:51:40] Years of practice. [laughs] No, it's actually... that probably has to do with being a woman captain because if I wasn't really good at it, everyone's watching when I'm doing it. So if you pull into a marina, and you're the biggest boat there, and they see you up on the flybridge handling the throttles now, it's, "Oh, it's a woman captain, let's all go out and watch" because... what is the adage? If a man screws up, he's bad at something, if a woman screws up, women are bad at it, and I can never do that to my fellow women captains, so it was very important to me to get good.

JENNIFER SHEA: Have you ever had a big challenge to you being a woman captain?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:52:41] No, no, because mariners respect ability, and I worked really hard to be good. I worked really hard to know my knots, to know my navigation, to know my currents, to know as much as I possibly could about seafaring, and other mariners respect that.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what's next, what do you want to do, I mean, what's the dream?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:53:15] Oh, my gosh, to have my own show where I get to just drive different boats all the time and all the weird boats, like the really weird...

JENNIFER SHEA: So you want...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:53:25]... ones.

JENNIFER SHEA: ...a show?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:53:27] Yeah, I think so, I think it's fun. I think the show part just gives me the access that I want. If I could do it and get paid to just show up and try out driving a paddle wheel for example, that I would do them. But I think you need to have people who are paying attention in order to make it worthwhile, I don't know though.

JENNIFER SHEA: You need an audience, yeah?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:53:49] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, that's interesting, huh. So I see you teach courses too, what kinds of courses are you teaching?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:53:58] Yeah, I teach usually at boat shows or for yacht clubs. I do seminars and I do... my biggest one is "Docking without Divorcing". It's fun, people like it because everyone comes up to me and says, "Oh, my goodness, we need this so badly because every time we pull into the marina, it's like the whole weekend just becomes terrible because we start yelling at each other. And I just never want to be on the boat again, but then I look at the pictures and I think, oh, you know, it was really fun, let's try it again this weekend." And it all just gets ruined when they come back to the dock, and I can

fix that. I can fix that pretty quickly for most people. The secret is usually put your wife on the helm, it does simplify the process. If you're a big, strong man, you should be the one lassoing pilings and leaping to the dock and running around with fenders. They're heavier than you think they are, and why you're having your 100-pound wife do it, I don't know, when she could just be putting throttles in gear and out of gear, which is not a very manly thing to do. And I... please forgive me for being so gender... [unclear] gender roles about this, but [laughs] it's just a fact of physicality at that point.

JENNIFER SHEA: Any other classes you're teaching?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:55:29] I do, I also have a class that I'm trying to get somebody to let me do. I've only gotten to do it once, and it's a... "How Much Did That Repair Cost?", And it's basically I'm trying to explain to people how to manage their yard period with their boat because people have real tense times, and I'm trying to fix that for folks. And my husband is one of the yard guys, and I have been on massive, massive yard projects for much... for really big yachts, so I understand how to manage a yard. And I'm trying to teach other people how to manage a yard but also to understand what goes wrong and why something might have been cost out at one hourly rate and end up

costing something else. And what you can do to help yourself end up in a situation where you have what you want, a beautiful working boat, and not damage your pocketbook too bad.

JENNIFER SHEA: I would think there would be great, great need for that class.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:56:48] Yeah, you'd think so, but most of the time, people don't want to talk about when boats go wrong. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: It happens all the time. [laughs]

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:56:56] It is all the time that boats go wrong.

JENNIFER SHEA: [00:56:58] Yeah, yeah, so any other courses you're doing or is the docking one? It was funny how docking is a throughline.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:57:05] Oh God, it so is, and it's the only time other people see you, right? So that's why it's the important one. And it's the one that gives most people stress and anxiety because they have a fabulous time when they're out on the water, they want to get there. They don't want to have it ruined by this tension and stress that happens when it's time to bring the boat back. Oh, Poor boats, poor boats, it's not your fault.

JENNIFER SHEA: So how did you get involved with this Her Helm Project?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:57:43] I think that happened because Jane Durden, who is the most fantastic captain, sailor, and champion of women on the water, she runs the Herrington Harbour *Women Underway* I think is what that project is called. And she was throwing these really great info sessions for women, and I think that's how I came across her desk essentially. And she recommended me to Kristin since she had already been part of the project. And then I think I went and recommended a bunch of people to Kristin as well.

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, that's good, there's... there are 50 wonderful captains, so that's good.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:58:30] It's so cool, I love that I'm part of that, and I love that I know so many of them personally, it's really nice.

JENNIFER SHEA: So do you have any advice for future female captains, something you'd like to pass along to them?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:58:52] Find good mentors and don't stay with somebody who's not a good mentor. I think you'll know they're good if they are trying to teach you to be them. If they're trying to stop you from being them, that's a bad mentor.

JENNIFER SHEA: Huh, anything else?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:59:20] Wear sunscreen, oh, my God, wear your sunscreen, it's so important. It's so much more important than you will ever know.

JENNIFER SHEA: So, in the future when people are coming to the museum to listen to what you had to say...

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:59:39] Oh, my goodness...

JENNIFER SHEA: ...or to read your transcript, what do you want them to know about you? What you want your legacy to be at this point in your... in the beginning of the next stage of your career?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [00:59:57] I want you to know that I'm a huge boat nerd and boating is so much fun. And it doesn't matter how you're doing it or what it takes to get out there on the water, it really is just an obscene joy. And the nerd factor is so ingrained in being an American, being a human. I think that boats let us be bigger than we ever could have been. Crossing an ocean is a crazy, wild thing to do, and we figured it out because of boats, it's so wild, oh man. I realize I forgot one of the other reasons I love the Chesapeake is the history, the history of boating here, oh, my gosh. Being the place that the King of England was like, "Burn that whole Chesapeake Bay down to the ground, they are designing the hot rods of the sea,

they are outrunning our blockades, and I want them gone, those pirates, those names, those, like, absolute terrorists, get them." And we beat them because we were building better boats, and I love that.

JENNIFER SHEA: Is there anything else you'd like to share about you and your life that we haven't covered so far?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [01:01:43] I said that my ship's engineer is my husband, and we actually didn't get married though until we got off of yachts full time. Because I was worried that this whole being land-based thing was not going to work for him. And I'm so grateful to him for figuring out how to do this adventure with me because it's actually led to a place where he and I get to do more fun boating than we ever got to do while we were working at it, and I'm really, really grateful to him.

JENNIFER SHEA: That's beautiful. So, one last, and this one's just for me, what for you is fun boating?

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [01:02:34] Fun boating is when it's my choice of what charcuterie goes on the table. [laughs] What are we having on the aft deck, I got to pick it instead of somebody else, that's fun boating for me. Where are we anchoring? I get to pick it. What bathing suit am I wearing? It doesn't matter, I got to pick it, and I'm going to splash around a whole lot and make an idiot of

myself, and you're going to listen to my music and my
shenanigans.

JENNIFER SHEA: Bravo.

KATE HOLLINGSWORTH: [01:03:08] [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: Thank...

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