

OH 521 Jen Bowie

JENNIFER SHEA: Okay. This is Jennifer Shea. I'm in Glen Burnie with Jenni... Jen... oh, wait, Bowie. And we are discussing her story for the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Oral History *Her Helm* project. I think that is all that I have to say. About you, and then we'll go from there.

JEN BOWIE: [00:00:29] Hi. My name is Jen Bowie. I'm 35, born May 29, 1988. I'm from a small town in Nanjemoy, Maryland, and now I'm up here in Glen Burnie for the Annapolis Bay Bridge.

JENNIFER SHEA: Ah. So where were you born?

JEN BOWIE: [00:00:50] So I was born in... It's called La Plata. I was born and raised in southern Maryland, so, kind of like Amish country. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: Ah. Did you work on the water, or were you... Was your family involved with being on the water?

JEN BOWIE: [00:01:06] So we are surrounded by water, so I've always done all my activities on the water. I've done little jobs here and there. Some of my family's crabbers. I'm familiar with the water. But I did get my first job at a marina when I was 21, 22, that led me to this job now.

JENNIFER SHEA: What was that job?

JEN BOWIE: [00:01:32] I rented out a little bait and tackle shop that had nothing in it but some coolers. And by the end of the first summer, I had sponsors for bait, tackle, gas. [laughs] Yeah. I couldn't get, what was it, your certifications for food and stuff. That was a little complicated. I was only in my 20s. [laughs] So what I did is, I invited food trucks. So, yeah, by my second summer there, our beach was filled. It was happy. And my shop was doing great. So... And that's how I ran into somebody doing this job, the safety boat work. Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Who did you run into?

JEN BOWIE: [00:02:17] His name was Denny Crownson. Old man. I'm sorry. Older man. [laughs] He was probably like 72 at the time. He came in. He had just drove straight from Colorado with a boat on the back. It was midsummer, 100 degrees. He was hot. He was frustrated. He was tired. But he had to get the boat in the water. And the next morning, he had to do a safety job at the Harry Nice Bridge, so the other side of 301. Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what is a safety boat captain?

JEN BOWIE: [00:03:00] So a safety boat captain is, any time you have work on the water, just like construction sites on streets, you have to have, one, your safety for that site, but you also have to have a way to get to and from the

places on the water, whether they're working on the middle of the bridge, or barges, or something else on the water. I am that transportation to and from, and then I'm their safety watch. So if they're working on the bridge in, like, scooper trucks and stuff, the bucket trucks, I go out there and I watch them to make sure, you know, things are okay. I listen for splashes.

JENNIFER SHEA: And then what do you do if you hear [laughs] a splash?

JEN BOWIE: [00:03:52] It's only happened once, but it depends where you are. There is a saying, Once you go down, you don't come up, construction-wise. These men, these brave men, are fully dressed in work gear. They have work boots on. They have full jeans on. It's just, kind of, known. It's just not very talked about. But 99 percent of the time, if you fall, you go down, you don't come up. Unfortunately.

JENNIFER SHEA: So that makes being a safety boat captain a difficult job.

JEN BOWIE: [00:04:45] Sometimes. Yeah. It's never happened, technically, on my watch, but I've been there around when it has happened. One time, for a construction worker who accidentally stepped in between barges. And they did all they could. Some went after him, almost got

their own lives, you know. But at the end of the day, 60-foot water. What are you going to do? I was actually at the Bay Bridge, the Chesapeake Bay Bridge, and I've seen jumpers from the bridge. That's probably the most I've seen, like, accident-wise, is not even with our own men or anything, is with people jumping off the bridge, committing suicide. [laughs] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what's... What kind of boat is a safety boat? How big are they? What are they?

JEN BOWIE: [00:05:43] It depends. They're all kinds. Think of a painter's van on the water. They're not luxurious. Most of them are just aluminum boats. Some are just little skeeters, you know, 15 foot. Some are maybe 30, a little more nicer, with the end cabin. We usually have generators on the back in the winter for our heaters. We never have AC. [laughs] We got windows and wind for that, I guess. Yeah. It's nothing luxurious, and it's no one particular boat. You can pretty much make any regular boat into a work boat.

JENNIFER SHEA: How big do they tend to be?

JEN BOWIE: [00:06:28] Usually about 30, 32 foot.

JENNIFER SHEA: Thirty? Yeah.

JEN BOWIE: [00:06:31] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Okay. Well. So going back to... [laughs] How

did you become a captain of a safety boat?

JEN BOWIE: [00:06:41] Pure luck and being nice to the right person. So I was at that marina that I was working, and Denny came in. Like I said, he was hot, he was frustrated. And I was allowing people to drink a beer inside my marina, so he cracked a beer. He said, "Honey, can you park my boat?" I said, "Yeah! Yeah, I can do that." [laughs] So I went out there. I took the boat off the trailer, and I parked it in one of our spots and everything. Before that, I had helped. Like, my dad, you know, my brother. I'd been the girl at the wheel with the guys telling her what to do, you know. But I'd never done it by myself. But I did it, and I did it good. So I played along with it. He said, "Have you ever done that before? Did pretty good." I said, "Yeah, yeah, all the time. All the time." [laughs] He said, "Do you have your boater's license?" I said, "Yeah, yeah." I didn't. [laughs] He said, "You want a job?" I said, "Well, what do you mean?" So he told me about, you know, the safety boat life and everything, and what it entails. And I had no idea the world of safety boats even existed.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what did he tell you about the safety boat life? I'm intrigued. [laughter]

JEN BOWIE: [00:08:07] He's very straightforward, straight to

the point. He said, "It's long hours. You sit there. You do nothing. You get paid for it. [laughs] But it's the travel that usually gets people. It's a week or two in this place, and then it's a week or two an hour or two down the road." And then you stay there, depending on where it is, because most of these guys that were working it were out of town. I was one of the first ones in town working locally. So it worked out decent for me. I have gone on one... Previous ones, now, that have been out of town. But he was straight to the point. He said, "You take a boat out. You take some guys out every now and then. You watch them work. That's it." Like, that is it. [laughs] You get paid for it. Like, all right. Now, there's definitely a lot more to it, but... [laughs] I started on just this little fishing boat that had nothing but a wheel, and started there. Made decent money, too, for it, to sit out there and suntan.

JENNIFER SHEA: Do you have to have a captain's license for it?

JEN BOWIE: [00:09:20] So these days... So I didn't have my boater's license, but that week, I had gone online and got my regular boater's license. For quite a few years, I went with just that. Had no problems. But I guess as the jobs grew, and with different companies, bigger companies, they want you to have those captain's license and stuff. So I

went ahead and got them. That way, I could still get the jobs.

JENNIFER SHEA: And so what license do you have?

JEN BOWIE: [00:09:53] So I have a six-pack. It's not your hundred ton. I'm going for that. Just struggling a little bit. So I have my six-pack, which means... It's almost, like, a hundred ton. I'm literally paying \$200 just to do an upgrade. But it's more about navigation and knowing your signals, your flags, your buoys, you know. They want you to know what's going on out there on the water. So...

JENNIFER SHEA: And the difference between that and the hundred ton is...?

JEN BOWIE: [00:10:32] Oh, just what you can actually drive. That's literally the only difference between those two.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what can you drive with this six-pack?

JEN BOWIE: [00:10:40] So I can do little tugs, you know. I can't haul anything over a hundred ton and stuff like that, which is absolutely fine with me. I'll never be doing that. [laughs] My safety boats are fine. So really, I've come into no struggles of what I can't do yet, because I'm not doing the really, really big stuff. So... I don't know.

JENNIFER SHEA: Hm. So how did you get trained to do this?

JEN BOWIE: [00:11:18] Good men that just had some spare time

on the job and showed me. Mike Nelson, Captain Mike Nelson, who actually told me about this whole project, and told the lady that was doing the pictures?

JENNIFER SHEA: Oh, *Her Helm*? Uh-huh.

JEN BOWIE: [00:11:36] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So he... Who...?

JEN BOWIE: [00:11:38] She contacted him...

JENNIFER SHEA: Uh-huh.

JEN BOWIE: [00:11:40] ...because he's in my old company, and he sent her to me.

JENNIFER SHEA: What was your old company?

JEN BOWIE: [00:11:46] Northeast Work and Safety Boats. He's based out of Connecticut, but he has teams all around the States. So I worked for him for about eight years. Yeah. So he... Mike Nelson, Captain Mike Nelson, he was Air Force. He drove planes most of his life, and then he went to boats. He has a passion for sailboats and stuff. He taught me just about everything with patience and guts, and he made me get out there and actually do it. And when no one else believed in me, because I look like a 16-year-old little girl out here on these sites, he said, No. She's doing it. That's final. Like, he was amazing. He stuck up for me. He made me feel like I could do anything, and he taught me everything.

JENNIFER SHEA: What's the most difficult part of being a safety boat captain?

JEN BOWIE: [00:12:49] Oh, I hate to say this, but being a woman. Being a woman out there. Being the only woman. And getting those comments of, Oh, well, we got a woman driver. Oh, we're going to die today. There's definitely been those few assholes. But even... I'm not even so sure if men can help it, but, you know, you got a whole bunch of burly men, and they see this little girl walking up, and that's their captain. They always feel some type of way. It may not be hostility, but it's always a little bit of a worry until I'm actually out there and they see that I can actually handle it. I've worked in gale force winds. I've rescued teams from other captains. Like, I have done some crazy stuff. And I know what I'm doing. I'm confident. But getting past that hurdle of, I'm a girl in that man's world.

JENNIFER SHEA: That was actually one of the questions I wanted to ask you.

JEN BOWIE: [00:14:04] Really?

JENNIFER SHEA: Have you ever been challenged?

JEN BOWIE: [00:14:07] Oh, yeah. Oh, yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Huh.

JEN BOWIE: [00:14:10] Yep. I always get those little

comments. I wish I could remember his name. I know it's in my phone. There's this one guy who was doing safety meetings. He's a project manager at the Harry Nice Bridge. He was probably the most sexist man I've ever met in my life. We were at this safety meeting. And I'm not the only girl, but the other women... I think one was doing bridge control. I think one was doing office or something. But I was the only one out there with the guys. And during this safety meeting, he kept making comments about... What did he say? Something about, Make sure you're not wearing high heels out there. Yeah. And then when he was talking about... Don't get me wrong. He made good points about safety. But in those, like, he would put little innuendos of, Make sure you're bringing... you want to come home safe. You know your women like shopping. They're going to be worried about you bringing home that check. Just trying to make jokes, but I feel like he was doing it because I was there. And then he made sure his team didn't talk to me. And my boss actually let me call him out on it, which was awesome. But...

JENNIFER SHEA: So what did you say?

JEN BOWIE: [00:15:34] So it was, like, the third day in, and I'm out there on the water. And you're... They're building a new bridge. There was, like, five, six

different bucket trucks for different companies. So you need to know which one that you're watching, because all of them are white, 60 feet away. You know? The guys are supposed to call me or radio me and say, Hey, this is the position I am on the bridge. They would call one of the guys that doesn't even work there in my company, and he would call me. And it was a guy named Ray, who was, like, "Hey, Jen, I don't know why they're calling me. I'm not even there." I said, "I do. But where are they at?" But it happened, like, the third day, and he got frustrated. He said, "I gave that motherfucker your number three times and told him he needs to tell you, and he's still telling me." So I called my boss, and I told him. And I said, "They are refusing to tell me. They're literally just calling another man they know is not here to tell me where they are. Like, can I say something?" He said, "Absolutely. Go ahead." So I called that guy right there. I said, "If your team does not want to tell me where they are, tell me where they are, we are not going to be here working for you." Still didn't call me. [laughs] The next day, somebody called me to let me know where they were. By then, the job was about over. But he... That was probably the worst I've ever been through. Other than that, it's just little comments, this and that, but then they get

[snaps fingers] over it quick. They don't mean no harm by it. That was the only one where, like, there was intentions. So, yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Well done you. [laughter] So what does it take to be a good safety boat captain?

JEN BOWIE: [00:17:36] [makes sound] Patience. [laughs] It is one of the most boring jobs, as much as it is interesting. I've gotten to do a lot of interesting things, but in between those times, you sit there for six, seven hours doing nothing.

JENNIFER SHEA: So what's the interesting part of it?

JEN BOWIE: [00:18:02] I have helped tugboat... Sorry. I've helped barges pivot and stuff like that. One of my favorite things to do was to be the littler safety boat that helps maneuver barges, because you'll have the tugboat pull up to the piles... To the bridge, and you have to have someone pin it really fast while the guys tie it around and tighten it, and I used to do that. And that was probably the funnest thing, is, like, ramming these barges, [laughs] and putting them up against the piles. That's fun. So...

JENNIFER SHEA: Do you have a favorite memory? When people ask you, What was it like to be a safety captain, is there a story you like to tell?

JEN BOWIE: [00:18:53] Probably when I worked in the gale force winds down there on the Potomac. It was the most crazy experience. I want to say it was 2016, 2017. We had a whole bunch of crazy storms right back-to-back. It was the middle of winter. And gale force winds are... I think it's 35 knots and over. And it is extremely dangerous. We had crews out there on barges dredging, and the gale force winds [snaps fingers] would start to pick up, and they wouldn't call it, like, call it off for us to go get them, until it was gale force winds. Like, they wanted to make sure, because if it died down just a few knots, you know, they were still okay. So in one week, it was, like, three different times. One of the other captains actually refused to go out, which you're allowed to do, because it's so dangerous. But it just felt really good. I just put my big girl pants on, and I went out there, and I got them, and I brought them back to shore. And it was a crew of like six. And one of them was a... Oceanography? He did oceanography. I forget what that's called. But he was from England, too. His name was Graham, and he shook my hand, and he thanked me. And he said, "You saved us." He said, "Thank you so much." And from then on, they just had the utmost respect for me, which was amazing. So that's probably one of my favorites.

JENNIFER SHEA: Bravo. [JB laughs] So [clears throat] why do you think you have that kind of confidence that you could just go out and do it?

JEN BOWIE: [00:20:59] [Sirens] I don't know. It's not always a good thing, though. [laughs] I just... I'm not going to have no regrets. I learned very young that I know what I'm worth, and more people, more women, in particular, need to know that, right there. They need to know their worth. Otherwise, they will let everything and anything run over them. Know your worth. And I learned that probably when I was a teenager. I have worked three jobs at one time. I supported myself at 14. I had my own apartment at 16. I've been helping my parents ever since. I literally... I own their land, because I pay for it. I've just always worked very, very hard. And after quite a few years of being run over... Because I was that hard worker, you tend to get used. I just realized, again, know your worth, stand up for yourself. That's pretty much it. Don't get me wrong. I have no filter. [laughs] It has gotten me into some shit sometimes. [laughs] Because I will stand up at every opinion I have. I do feel like I still need to learn that not every opinion needs to be so strong. But I'm working on it. [laughter]

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, I say bravo to you. So why did you decide

to step down from being a safety boat captain?

JEN BOWIE: [00:22:40] So my daughter's 14 now. When I started stepping down, she was probably about 12. Joe is work...his work has picked up, and he's out of town a lot. We were both being out of town a lot.

JENNIFER SHEA: That's tricky.

JEN BOWIE: [00:23:00] And just being realistic, he has an amazing career. He is going places. He has worked damn hard for this. I want to help him. So that does mean me stepping down a little bit, me being the one that's home, and finding a job that is around home. So... But it's worth it for the family aspect. He is absolutely worth it. He is the hardest worker I've ever met in my life. He is the most honest, sweetest man. And he has done this for us.

JENNIFER SHEA: So how did you meet him? [laughter] I... You've told me this a little bit, so [laughs] I'm going to ask you for the record.

JEN BOWIE: [00:23:47] So I was his captain. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: Love that.

JEN BOWIE: [00:23:50] He was a deckhand. And we probably should have never met again in our lives. We worked one time. Our whole careers together, our companies have only worked with each other, at that point, one time. I was

taking him and a couple other people back and forth to barges. Some of them could ride the...the big tugboat. Some of them could ride the safety boat. He was riding the tugboat. I don't know. I never, like... I was already in this like six, seven years probably, but I had never been attracted to, like, a guy out there. I just... I didn't let myself, you know? I seen him, and he was throwing this really big rope. And he had a cutoff shirt. He had his work pants and work boots on and everything. And just something caught my eye about him. He had these baby blues. [laughs] Well, he wouldn't talk to me. [laughs] He wanted nothing to do with me. So I acted like my window was broken on my boat. I jammed it. [laughs] I fake jammed it. I climbed up on the barge, and I said, "Hey, my window is broke. Do you think you could help me?" He smiled. He said, "Sure." He came over. He literally touched it for a second. [laughs] He said he knew from the beginning, but I don't think he did. He said, "There you go, sweetheart." And he didn't leave. He struck up a conversation. And then our... That job was about two weeks, and every day, he would come and he would eat lunch with me. He would bring me lunch. We would sit there on my boat away from everybody and just talk about everything. He was going through some stuff. I was going through some

stuff. And really, we just thought we were venting to two strangers, so we were just letting it out, you know, our flaws and everything. I knew some crazy stuff about him the first few [laughs] days I met him. I fell for him right then. [JS laughs] And we have been together for a [laughs] very, very long time now. Technically, we've been together nine years. Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So how many crew do you have on a boat, a safety boat?

JEN BOWIE: [00:26:26] So it all depends. The... Like, the safety boat aspect, usually it's just one captain.

JENNIFER SHEA: Just one captain.

JEN BOWIE: [00:26:32] Sometimes they do require two captains or two boats, a captain on each. But most of the time, it's just you, yourself, and that's it.

JENNIFER SHEA: All by yourself?

JEN BOWIE: [00:26:42] Yep. That's the patience part.

JENNIFER SHEA: Mm-hmm.

JEN BOWIE: [00:26:47] That's the sitting there doing nothing part.

JENNIFER SHEA: Uh-huh, uh-huh.

JEN BOWIE: [00:26:50] Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: So do you see yourself going back to working on the water?

JEN BOWIE: [00:26:56] Yes. Absolutely. Just not right now.

Or if I could find something that was locally, just locally, and not too demanding and everything, I would. But right now, my focus is family, and my daughter, and her going into high school. And I know once she's 18, she'll want nothing to do with me for a little bit, so I'm going to just soak it up [laughs] while I can. So, yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Short period of time, very short.

JEN BOWIE: [00:27:26] It's already going by way too fast.

JENNIFER SHEA: But what kind of thing would you like to do on the water? Safety boat again, or would you like to try something else?

JEN BOWIE: [00:27:37] I thought about, like, charters and stuff, but I really... That's really not my scene, the whole fishing and all of that. That's not my scene. Like, it's fun to go and... Every now and then, but... I'm not so sure. I haven't actually thought about what I want to do. Really, up until this point in my life, it's always been, What can I do to get me through? What can I do for money? What can I do to pay my house bills? You know, what can I do to make it in life? Up until literally about five days ago, when I up and quit being a manager and said, I'm going to figure out me, I haven't thought about me. So I'm going to start thinking about it.

JENNIFER SHEA: That's great. That's great.

JEN BOWIE: [00:28:24] I'm happy. I feel good. I feel free.
[laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: So one last question about the safety boat. So you said you traveled all over to do this. So where did you go?

JEN BOWIE: [00:28:35] So I've been from the Chesapeake to the Potomac, to the Susquehanna River, Delaware. Mostly it's different bridges, so you've got the Bay Bridge, the Harry Nice Bridge. I was in Bear Creek at that little train bridge. It's beautiful. That's up there at Havre de Grace. That might be on the Susquehanna, too, or, like, a turnoff of it. The Key Bridge, so Curtis Bay. Just a lot of different bridges, a lot of different, you know, rivers, bays, stuff like that.

JENNIFER SHEA: So did you have to learn the waters every time you got up there?

JEN BOWIE: [00:29:22] Some, yeah. I like to know my surroundings. I like to know my path before I even take it, so I would always prepare. But most of the jobs... So you'll take your boat to one of the marinas or a slip that's near where the site you're going. Sometimes it's only a mile. Sometimes it's 5, 10 miles. But most of the time, it's very close to where you put your boat in. But

I've always... It's very important to know where you are, what your path is, what may be in the way, so I've always prepared for that.

JENNIFER SHEA: Did you own the boats that you were...

JEN BOWIE: [00:30:06] Never.

JENNIFER SHEA: No. So the boat belonged to the...

JEN BOWIE: [00:30:08] Always a company.

JENNIFER SHEA: The companies?

JEN BOWIE: [00:30:10] Yep, always the contractor.

JENNIFER SHEA: Did you work for different companies, or...?

JEN BOWIE: [00:30:13] So I worked for the Northeast Work and Safety for about eight years. I worked for a guy named Mark, who wasn't the owner, he's a foreman, but it's called Marksman. That lasted about two weeks. He asked me for nude pictures, and then when I said no, he didn't have work for me. It's really weird. Strange. Marksman. Write that down. [laughs] Yeah. And then I worked for Smith, which is what my husband works for, but they do a lot out of town, so he worked me a little bit for safety boats when I wanted it and everything. They're a good crew. That's a good team. But it's out of town, and right now, my husband's out of town, so I can't. Other than that, there's not many.

JENNIFER SHEA: I was wondering, if you'd been other places, what

you found interesting, maybe unique, about boating on the Chesapeake.

JEN BOWIE: [00:31:34] Honestly, just the different amount of jobs that nobody knows even exist. There's so much... You know, over half of the things we get over here, we have built, we have, you know, shipped, are done by water. Nobody realizes that. We had a power plant built, and literally, all those parts came in pieces on barges from China and other places, and they came to our water, literally by water. There are so many things that are... That have to be done by water. They literally built a power plant.

JENNIFER SHEA: Which one?

JEN BOWIE: [00:32:19] In Charles County. Yeah. It was Charles County. And they took it to the... They took it through the Chesapeake all the way down to the Potomac, to the 301 bridge. They rented out that whole beach, and they brought pieces that are the sizes of two houses put together. Yep. So the work, the different types of work, from the things they get to build from the parts they bring, to the actual work that's in the water. You know, you have your dredging. You have your bridge building. You have your geologists, oceanography, that they come out there. Testing soil. I've been on a lot of ones that, you

know, you have to test any of the soil to see the sturdiness of it, the toxins in it. They're always testing, especially for environmental purposes. There's a whole lot of different environmental things going on. Just all these companies are doing so many different jobs that no one has any idea exists at all. I think that's pretty crazy.

JENNIFER SHEA: Anything else about the Chesapeake?

JEN BOWIE: [00:33:42] Like what?

JENNIFER SHEA: That you find special compared to, say, some of those rivers.

JEN BOWIE: [00:33:54] I don't know. I don't want to call one special over the other. I like all of them. It's probably my most comfortable, is the Chesapeake. Not just because it's beautiful, because it absolutely is. [laughs] Everything flows right there to the Chesapeake. Literally, all the waterways [laughs] go to the Chesapeake, and the Chesapeake goes to all those different ones. It's, kind of, just, like, a meeting ground for everybody. Everybody has always been on the Chesapeake. If you're from Maryland, you've been on the Chesapeake. That bridge is absolutely beautiful. But that was, kind of, my comfort spot, is the bridge.

JENNIFER SHEA: The Bay Bridge?

JEN BOWIE: [00:34:43] Mm-hmm, The Bay Bridge. I know it inside out. I've been under it more than I've been over it. And there's two different... So there's a ferry slip, it's called, that we take our boats in, that has a lot of history to it. So I like going in and out of that one.

JENNIFER SHEA: Where is it?

JEN BOWIE: [00:35:06] So if you're looking at the Bay Bridge, it's to the right. It's on Oceanic Drive. If you take Oceanic Drive... I guess regular people can only get so far, because it's going to become a work site. But what people don't know... They shouldn't know, [laughs] is after that work site, it leads down to... It's called Ferry Slips. And back in, probably, I think it was the '60s, the '70s, they had ferries that went back and forth the Chesapeake. And that was their own ferry slip, and they built it all out of this, like, mahogany wood and stuff like that. And what's left of it is what now we use as the workers to put our boats in and out, and then tie our boats up and everything. So it just has a lot of history to it. It's beautiful. It's half fallen down, but it's, kind of, like, just a perfect picture scene. I love it. But that's probably my safe place there. Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: That's great. I'll look for it going back over.

JEN BOWIE: [00:36:14] You should.

JENNIFER SHEA: [laughs] The right side, you said.

JEN BOWIE: [00:36:16] Yes.

JENNIFER SHEA: Okay. Probably went to Claiborne, where I live.

You, sort of, talked about this a little bit, but I was wondering. How does spending time on the water work into your whole life? But you've, sort of, talked about [JB laughs] that a little bit.

JEN BOWIE: [00:36:37] Yeah, it gets complicated.

JENNIFER SHEA: Yeah, it... I can see that.

JEN BOWIE: [00:36:42] Yeah. You got to pick one or the other, for the most part. Yeah. That's why I'm lucky to have a good partner, and for us to have the understanding of, you know, we both can't always pick it, because we both absolutely love it, but realistically, his career is... I don't want to say better than mine, because it's not better. [laughs] It's brought us a lot further. It's got us this house. It's got us where we are today in life. So... And he's proud of it.

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, I was going to say, how does it define you? And you just, sort of, [laughs] talked about it. So what would you like future female captains to know about you?

JEN BOWIE: [00:37:37] I never back down. They have tried to break me. They have tried to joked me out of a room. I've never backed down, and I have never felt, you know, the

guys can do it better, because it's nothing to do with sex. I can go in there and do the same thing most of those guys can do. I'm not the best. I'm not saying I'm the best. But I have been told, and I know I am, one hell of a captain. I know how to work boats. I really do. So it has nothing to do with being female or male.

JENNIFER SHEA: And what does it take to work a boat?

JEN BOWIE: [00:38:22] Confidence, but also actually knowing what you're doing. Don't just go in there and pretend. Be interested in it. That's the main thing. If you don't have interest in something, you're not going to want to know about it. Have interest in what you're doing, and you'll do great.

JENNIFER SHEA: So continuing that, what advice do you have for future female captains?

JEN BOWIE: [00:38:53] Probably the same thing. Be interested in it. Learn about it. But also don't back down. If you know you can do it, go do it. Be a smartass right back with them. Don't be timid. Don't be shy. Be one of them. Because that's the only way you're going to make it through.

JENNIFER SHEA: Interesting advice. [laughter] So... I mean, this is the legacy question. So, you know, you... You're only, sort of... You're young. You still have a whole

bunch of your career ahead [JB laughs] that could go in so many different directions. But do you ever think about what you want your legacy to be, about being a woman on the water?

JEN BOWIE: [00:39:58] I don't know. I'm not so sure. I'm not so sure I'm done with it yet, so...

JENNIFER SHEA: And that's... That's the sense I'm getting, that you've hit the pause button [laughs] for a second.

JEN BOWIE: [00:40:11] Yeah, yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: Because it's part of life. But [JB laughs] it would be interesting to see what you do next.

JEN BOWIE: [00:40:20] I'm going to do something. I am going to get back out there. I mean, I have, kind of, thought about starting my own company. If I really... Me and my husband have talked about it. If I really put my mind to it, I could do it, because I have learned about the business aspects of it. Again, pay attention. Pay attention. You learn...

JENNIFER SHEA: So what... What do you have to do to run a company like that? How do you get the business?

JEN BOWIE: [00:40:48] One of the biggest things is, a lot of these companies have to be with a company that is... Has that equal opportunity. So how a lot of these people get around that is, they'll put their wife as 50-percent owner.

And then they're equal opportunity, because they have a woman owner, but really, it's just their wives, so... But a lot of these companies have to contract with equal opportunity. You have to have so... So much percentage of minority, you know, women, this and that. Me being a woman owner, I really do feel like I would be able to get a lot of those contracts. But also, I have made a good reputation. I could probably name 20 companies, or people in the companies, that I could say, Hey. I'm starting my own company. Let's get together. And they would be, like, Hell, yes. Once you work with me, you know I'm not just playing around. Like, I know what I'm doing, and I absolutely take it seriously. So there's a lot of different little quirks and secrets, you know, to a company, especially knowing how to make it successful. And every different type of business has those things. And with the boat industry, one is that equal opportunity. Two, it's knowing what the work is. Again, it's paying attention. They have meetings to know who gets contracts. Yeah.

JENNIFER SHEA: And how do you get a contract?

JEN BOWIE: [00:42:37] So... Knowing the right people. I'll say it that way. Knowing the right people. And again, paying attention to the world you're in. I know that, you

know, where I could go to get into these meetings. I know who I could talk to, to start this, and just pay attention.

JENNIFER SHEA: So how do you get the boats that you'd need to do that?

JEN BOWIE: [00:43:03] That would be my only struggle.

JENNIFER SHEA: Yeah.

JEN BOWIE: [00:43:04] [laughs] Because that takes a lot of money. I'm not sure yet. Make a deal... I thought about making a deal with, like, Smith or something to rent out one of their boats for my company, just give them a little percentage, and then buy my first boat. Start that way. Or just save up, buy my first boat. So there's different ways I can go about it. I just haven't took it seriously. I'm not ready to. But I have thought about it. Like, on... Like, drinking wine, sitting here with my husband, talking all night, we've definitely planned the whole thing out. But [laughs] we're not there yet.

JENNIFER SHEA: That's a very exciting idea.

JEN BOWIE: [00:43:49] It is.

JENNIFER SHEA: Very exciting, Jen.

JEN BOWIE: [00:43:51] It's scary, too, though. So I don't know yet.

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, when the time comes, you'll know.

JEN BOWIE: [00:43:57] I will.

JENNIFER SHEA: You will know.

JEN BOWIE: [00:43:59] Yep.

JENNIFER SHEA: So is there anything else that you would like to add to this conversation about your stories or something we should know about you and your experience we haven't discussed?

JEN BOWIE: [00:44:16] I don't think so. I don't know. I don't think so. I don't know. [laughs]

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, I'm very struck by how you're willing to, sort of, dive in and learn these things. It's very impressive, [JB laughs] because I... Oh, one last question. And this is one that I'd like to ask everybody. What is the thing that you find the most challenging about being the... A captain on a boat?

JEN BOWIE: [00:44:48] I guess the lifestyle. A lot of the men... I hate to say it that way. It's just because not a lot of women do it. But a lot of the men are not married or divorced, because they're away most of the time.

JENNIFER SHEA: I've heard that, yeah.

JEN BOWIE: [00:45:06] Yeah. And that's their life, and they've accepted it. So it's probably the lifestyle is one of the most, like, hard things to deal with, because you can't always stay in town. It doesn't work like that. So you have to know that that's your lifestyle. And it was

mine for a long time, until I settled down. But...

JENNIFER SHEA: How about driving a boat? What's the biggest challenge for you in driving a boat?

JEN BOWIE: [00:45:45] Honestly, I really don't have... I'm more comfortable in a boat than I am in a car or anything else. It's just always came so natural. And again, I've always paid attention. I really don't see a challenge in driving a boat. Sometimes I don't go up on the trailer right, [laughs] but...

JENNIFER SHEA: Interesting. That's the kind of thing that I've heard from a lot of [laughter] other people.

JEN BOWIE: [00:46:15] Yeah. I usually just gone hell with these days. I just get it up on there, ram it, and just done with it. [laughs] I really... I don't want it to sound that way, but I don't see a challenge driving a boat. It's not really a challenge. Like, just pay attention to what you're doing. That's it.

JENNIFER SHEA: Well, thank you. That's good advice. [laughter] Wonderful. Well, thank you.

JEN BOWIE: [00:46:42] Thank you.

END OF AUDIO FILE