

Mrs. Caroline Kennedy-Oral History Transcription

CK: We'd dash right down the bay because we usually had a fair wind, to the James I guess.

I: Oh.

CK: And turn up the James, and, uh, on the way down we'd have spats with, uh, we'd draw pales over the side and douse one another on the deck.

I: Oh, with bales of water.

CK: And, uh, we'd reach the James, the, uh, passengers would get off to go to Williamsburg and then there was a pageant down there, Old Glory, or something like that. An outdoor pageant that we'd go to in the evening of the day when we were on the James.

I: What year was this?

CK: 47, 48, 49.

I: Yeah, ok.

CK: In all, it was three months. I took two months, two week, uh, cruises over and over. In one week, in one year, it was equal to four weeks. This is

I: You must have really liked to it to have kept coming back.

CK: From New York!? Yes.

I: Oh, you were living in New York at the time?

CK: Oh yes, every spare dollar and minute I got I was down here.

I: Is that right? So you used to come out to Annapolis to catch the boat?

CK: Um, oh, back when they had a Tuberville trolley coming into Annapolis. Stopped at every backyard. Slow as could be, (laughter) out of Baltimore. And that's Captain Ira Stevens and me. Ira Stevens of Stevensville.

(The seem to be flipping through a photo album.)

I: Uh huh.

CK: He had sailed her as a um.... cargo ship-freighter-so he knew her very well. He knew every inch of the bay.

I: Oh.

CK: Oh, and a lovely story about him that I especially love was that, oh, he had been a, he had driven a trolley in Brooklyn before he came down here to do all the freighting on a three masted schooner. And he had, uh, I guess run over a man and killed him and that took him out of New York.

I: Oh, is that right?

CK: Yeah.

I: So that's how he came to be down here?

CK: Yeah.

I: Quite a switch, from driving trolleys to being commander of a ram schooner.

CK: (laughing) I should say!

I: Hah!

CK: So this was the crew with me. That's uh Eddie, I can't think of his last name, but he's from Snowhill.

I: Um hum.

CK: And I forgot his last name too. ... And this is another one of Eddie at ease.

I: Oh yes.

CK: And then Captain Ira. I guess that was over at Solomon's Island. We'd laze up the bay and then the Eastern Shore after the James, and then we went down to the Elizabeth and I guess that must have been the '47 trip because we went up the Elizabeth and all the, uh, Navy boats were there and we were there just at dusk and they were signal forming. And turning on their search lights and

I: (Chuckle)

CK: And someone from one of the Navy boats even called out to Captain Ira, I've never forgotten. You know, "How are things going, Ira?"

I: Is that right? How many, uh, crew and how many passengers were normally on this?

CK: Two. I was unofficial crew.

I: Huh, so there was two crew normally.

CK: Yeah.

I: And the passengers were

CK: Oh, maybe thirty.

I: Thirty. And what

CK: I don't really remember quite how many. But, uh

I: Were they most from this area? Or were they from all over?

CK: From all over, oh yeah. Yes the passengers (chuckle).... and we'd have get togethers in New York, if there were New York passengers. And then some of the others, I think, would get together and I've forgotten about 90 percent, or nearly 100 percent, of their names a long while ago. And, uh, Rose Felt's Yacht

I: Oh yes.

CK: was on one of the trips. Those were the smoke stacks.

I: Yeah.

CK: That's uh And Eddie

I: On the Potomac?

CK: Yeah, the Potomac, and Eddie had gotten me a border and I'd never forgotten realizing and, uh, because of the things through the doorways how bad off he was in his wheelchair. At that time there hadn't been that much publicity about it.

I: As you know, one of the funnels, as you may know, one of the funnels from that boat is down in Cambridge, in the

CK: Oh really? No!

I: As the public, uh, near the bridge there's sort of a public park with the marina next to it, a useful marina, there's that nice park with a circular drive, well up at the end of that drive there's a, there's a funnel, and that's one of the funnels from there

CK: Oh.

I: It's got a little marker on it.

CK: Oh fascinating. I'll have to get over and have a look at it.

I: Yeah.

CK: I may even have seen it and not known.

I: You may have, yeah. There's a little sign there that says, uh

CK: This is Eddie again-he was so talented. That's a glass of water on his forehead and he, uh, stood up with it on his forehead and lay down and got up again without spilling a drop.

I: Wow.

CK: Oh, and uh, and one year we went up the Rappahannock to the uh

I: Oh the reserve fleet.

CK: Yeah, and they were rusting away and I never forgot that particular we only went up the once, and as we, after we, left the ship's graveyard we were coming back to the bay and we were hit by a squall and nearly overturned.

I: Oh really.

CK: Yeah, the, the ...uh it was the worst I'd ever seen the masts go, but, uh, we got upright alright and got into a spot. That's the ship's graveyard again. And here I am up in the rigging.

I: Oh yeah, you got around.

CK: And those are our deck baths.

I: Oh yeah, I see you had shuffleboard there on the deck.

CK: Oh, Captain Ira. Oh, he loved to play shuffleboard and he'd, you know, he'd cheat if you gave him a chance. And he'd get this he had this reputation of being very stand-offish and not talking but I was bound to get him to talk. We got to be very good friends. He had a red this is Jim Nesbit, he's the one who, uh, bought her when she became the *Victory Chimes* and I think he sailed her off the Maine coast and off the Florida coast for a few years, I don't think it was all Maine-somebody seemed to think it was.

I: Hm.

CK: So after rushing down the bay (interruption)
Yes one, uh, we'd laze up the Eastern Shore most of the time and after we'd get down. As I say, the Elizabeth was as far south as we'd get but we'd stop at, uh, Tangier, and, uh, sometimes Crisfield. And I had to get to church one time from Tangier so they took me over in a boat to

Crisfield and (laugh) a taxi to get to the church. So it was quite a trip.

I: Quite a trip.

CK: But after that I got a special privilege. I didn't have to go to mass on Sundays. And that's Jim Nesbit carrying me piggyback here in Saint Michaels.

I: Ah.

CK: Up to up to Hudson's.

I: It's a long way to get a piggy back.

CK: Yeah. I was lighter then. We had a terrible time getting up this step because this is so heavy.

I: Oh, I didn't, I didn't, realize what kind of vehicle you had. I thought this would not be too much of a problem, but

CK: This is very heavy.

I: Is it very heavy?

CK: Yeah.

I: Ok.

CK: To lift. You may need a board or something for me to get out, but I can stand and sort of work my way along.

I: Well we can, we can, do something about that. I wasn't. I just didn't. I was not familiar with what you had.

CK: Urn.

I: I thought that it was more of a wheelchair with those large wheels.

CK: Yeah.

I: Yeah.

CK: Where you can get up a single step.

I: Ok.

CK: And this was the cook. He was from, uh, Carvil Hall, and uh, as unofficial crew I had the

Captain get me up with the crew if we were sailing early and I helped raise the sails and lower them and came home with rope splinters that my boss used to take out of my hands when I'd get home. He was very, very good. And, um, one trip, it was only a week's trip in October, and we were entirely wind bound at Saint Michaels.

I: Um hum!

CK: I was at the wheel. In fact that first picture is of me at the wheel. It took us 126 tacks to get out of the Miles River.

I: Is that right. Is that right. What a load of work.

CK: I loved it, of course, every minute of it.

I: I am sure.

CK: But my eyes were wind burned, I remember, after that.

I: Wow. Huh.

CK: That was quite a day. And this is the original owner. Knust. Henry Knust. K-n-u-s-t. I mean he owned it at the time we were sailing on it. And I had, I don't know where I got the idea that this was the *Maud* but it must have been something we took over the, ah, deck. This is the *Maud*.

I: Yeah, this is probably the, ah,

CK: This is something we passed along the way

I: Not the *Edwin and Maud*, but the, ah

CK: Not the *Marvil*.

I: *Levin J. Marvil*

CK: No, it wasn't the *Marvil*.

I: It wasn't the *Marvil*?

CK: I don't believe so. The *Marvil* wasn't in that good shape. We used to have to cross the *Marvil* to get to the *Maud* on the deck and I can remember seeing the, ah, bowsprit all rotted. I had no use for Mr. Knust because he wouldn't keep up the boats. He It was just a money making scheme.

I: Hm.

CK: But that's one of the many *Maud* pictures under sail. So many people took them and I had some of them blown up.

I: Yeah, she must have been quite the sight back in the 40's.

CK: I thought so.

I: One of the last of them to sail.

CK: Well, uh, one of the things that attracted me to her were all of the masts and so forth was that, during the war, the (Don Log ?) was wintered in the Long Island Sound and friends used to take me out in their camping canoe and we'd sail, we'd go right under, the bowsprit and the sailors would wave at us and anything that big And we, and one time, we came across to 0 Nanticoke, 0 Nanticoke Creek, and, um, it was just about dusk and another boat came by us and hollered at us, "Do you think you'll get that Old Scow up this creek?" And the Captain didn't answer at all, but Jim Nesbit and I sat out on the bowsprit and we counted twenty-six markers before we hit the head of the creek.

I: Is that right?

CK: It was beautiful to work up to, lambs grazing up on the lawn and that sort of thing.

I: Oh, nice.

CK: And That's ... oh, most of the rest of those are sort of personal. I lost my heart among other things. Uh huh, and he was a midshipman who was crewing aboard.

I: His name is Dyan, Paul Dyan. But we didn't make it. We were engaged for a while.

I: Oh, is that right?

CK: And we were going to sail the bay for our honeymoon but it just didn't quite work out. Yeah, he was going back to the Academy in those pictures.

I: Um hum. Well is Kennedy a married name?

CK: No, that's my maiden. I am a maiden, you might say.

I: What is your, I don't even know your first name Mrs. Kennedy.

CK: Catherine.

I: Catherine, I think ---- told me that. It's Catherine.

CK: Oh, and one of the real adventures I had was walking to the tip of the bowsprit while we

were under sail, under full sail.

I: Hum!

CK: And Captain Ira said, "Don't ever do that again!" And the worst of it was coming back because you couldn't, uh, of course you hunched out across the bowsprit. But coming back, because of the angle of it, you couldn't help seeing the water and that really was scary because we were moving at quite a

I: Quite a rate.

CK: Yeah.

I: Did you, oh, did they make much use of the push boat, the yawl boat?

CK: Oh the yawl boat, yes, when we He hated it, and he hated the generator.

I: Yeah?

CK: It was noisy. And all that. And he loved to sail. I remember coming up the Choptank to, uh, Cambridge one time, uh, wing in wing and we hit that just you could have broken an egg on it. He knew how to sail, all right.

I: Certainly sounds like it. Because they, they had a donkey engine aboard for anchor housing, I think.

CK: Yeah, to get the anchor up.

I: Did you anchor much, do you remember?

CK: I

I: Or were you tied up?

CK: Isn't that strange, that I don't remember. No mostly we were tied up at dock.

I: Tied up.

CK: We'd, we'd come up to, from Tangier, up to, ah, Cambridge and Oxford and Saint Michaels. And if there was time over, if we'd made better time, then we'd go across to Solomon's and the East River and the South River, so I, I claim I've been up, up and down, every river on the bay except the Potomac. But, uh, oh, one I didn't mention that was a big favorite of mine was the Maire Panade There's an Indian Reservation at the head of that, oh it's, we only did that once, like the Rappahannock was only once. But, oh, the Indians came out and serenaded us. We invited them aboard, I think, you know to look us over and they came out in the evening and sang

and sang for a couple of hours. It was

I: Nice.

CK: Yeah, you don't forget things like that.

I: I am sure not. In fact I put a whole lot of Oh and and at the we'd go as, I say, south and then come ambling up the shore but Virginia was dry at that time and by the time we hit Maryland again everybody's liquor was gone. So I've lost it, or I had it out at one time, but this picture of me and Jim Nesbit here at Saint Michaels with huge boxes full of liquor with Gordon's Gin across it.

I: Is that right?

CK: Yeah, an in those days the ah, old Longfellow's Inn was still

I: Right.

CK: Yeah, but we'd pull up right beside it there where the gas stop is now.

I: Now, I know you've been aboard the *Domino Effect*, as she's called now. Been a lot of changes on board her since you were on her.

CK: Tremendous. I mean the galley, for instance, was on deck. That was way up here on deck.

I: In that forward house up there.

CK: Yeah, and, uh, that Captain Files was so nice. I broke his back I know, because he carried me all through the hold. They invited me for lunch and once I got down the steps I just came down on my rear end and that kind of thing. But, ah, he carried me all the way through and so I didn't get too much of a look. But they showed me a stateroom and, oh, still had the original sinks. That was what was luxurious about these cruises, that you didn't bring your bedding or anything and you had running water in the cabins. In so many others you'd have to brush your teeth over the side.

I: Over the side.

CK: Yeah, and bring your own bedding.

I: Was the cabin that's there today, was, was it look like this back then or was this a lot

CK: Oh there's an awful lot.

I: of later alterations.

CK: The, ah, rear cabins.

I: There's a beautiful cabin back there now.

CK: Oh, it is now. And full of brass. Miss was saying she had all the brass to do, she was going to hire someone to do the brass shining, but oh, yeah, in fact one trip, ah, we, ah, it was so cold we had a pot bellied stove in the center of that cabin. And there were seats all around the edge so that, ah, it was enough seating for everybody in case it was pouring down rain or something like that.

I: But the cabin didn't, Did the cabin have this beautiful lavish wood like it does now?

CK: Oh no.

I: That was something they added later.

CK: Oh no, it was all painted.

I: All painted.

CK: All white paint.

I: I see. It was rather fancy for a work boat to have that type of interior.

CK: Well, and, and, Oh no, it certainly didn't. And what he was especially proud of was that spool rail around the stern.

I: Oh yeah, yeah.

CK: He liked to keep that up.

I: Uh huh.

CK: That was special, showed it off very well.

I: How about down below, have you noticed? You did take a tour, I think, down below, didn't you, when you were on board?

CK: Well that's where he carried me.

I: Yeah, yeah, You see many changes down below?

CK: Oh yes, completely. He showed me the galley and wanted to know if that was the original stove but I had, no idea. I had never seen the stove. I'd never been in the galley.

I: Yeah.

CK: But the cook would come out with hot muffins and hot coffee for us. And not to wake the other passengers, if I recall I'd carry my shoes in my hand and have nylon socks on and step out into a wet dock and forget it every time so that coffee was mighty, came in mighty handy.

I: I'm sure.

CK: , he always was an excellent cook and the meals were excellent.

I: Were they really?

CK: Oh yes, varied and all kinds of, uh, hot breads and desserts and all of that, and the, um, I was sorry I didn't get to see above the break. I mean, uh, Captain Files picked me up out of the salon, I guess you call it now a days, and I didn't really get to see the wheel, or

I: Hm.

CK: but right from in front of us there, that's where I often slept on deck and that was glass brick.

I: Hm. Glass brick?

CK: Yeah, where we are here. That was all glass brick.

I: Hm.

CK: Ah, it was so wonderful to sleep up there and watch the masts go around and around. And I'd always come down the night before, Sunday night, we'd sail Monday morning. Just to hear the sound of the, of the ropes against the wind.

I: Creaking.

CK: The lines were out and the water just lapping at the sides. It was the most heavenly part. So after making several trips I never got off at the James, they'd let me stay aboard with the crew and we'd have lunch on deck and that I didn't bother with Williamsburg, except for the pageant. Oh, the pageant, by the way, was outdoors. And we, and they drove us in buses to it so we'd all dress up in our Sunday best to go to it and just at the climax, or anyway, about the middle of the third act it poured down. It had been a beautiful moon-lit evening and walk through the park to get to the outdoor arena so we were just soaked and I remember actually taking moccasins off and pouring water out of them.

I: Wow.

CK: We were that wet by the time we got back to the, uh, bus. The nice driver kept meeting each of us with a towel which helped an awful lot as we got aboard. So he picked up his, ah, wife and

baby and said he'd take us some place to eat if we could pick up the wife and baby. But I never forgot hearing behind me somebody saying, "This is a real adventure. An adventure is a mishap in res.... retrospect." It stuck with me all these years.

I: Pretty good saying.

CK: I should say.

I: Did, ah, were the passengers, passengers, allowed to help work the boat as far as sail handling and things or were they

CK: I don't think any one really wanted to.

I: Yeah.

CK: They were more interested in the scenery and, uh, for instance, they'd get off as soon as we docked.

I: Um hum.

CK: Uh, go up the road at Oxford and buy stamps and mail postcards, and, uh, oh I remember one trip when one man, it was during the, ah, series, and every stop he had to find out

I: Is that right?

CK: who was ahead in the series. And I got to know, ah, oh dear, Captain Benson in Oxford

I: Yeah.

CK: And he'd loan me his bike and up at the post office there was a beautiful, uh, Irish settler who had, knew, me trip after trip on the bike.

I: You live in Oxford now?

CK: No, I live in Saint Michaels.

I: Oh, you live in Saint Michaels? That's right, a court in Saint Michaels. The Yacht Club Cliff.

CK: Yeah, it's just a three room cottage, very convenient, right out on the banks so I've got water all the time.

I: Yeah, that sounds nice. Well, I have a, I dug out some pictures that we have and, ah, most of them are not identified. Some are the *Levin J. Marvil*, some of them are a little bit mixed up, you'll probably be able to tell. I think there are some people that we've looked at here now who

are also in these pictures. Um, and what I'd like you to do, if you wouldn't mind, is as we go through them I'll write on the back of ours who they are if you know, identify them. They were taken in the 1940's for the most part so I think they may coincide with the time, I fact there may be some pictures of you here, as far as we know.

CK: That's

I: We'll find out in a minute.

CK: I should say. That'd really be something.

I: These were, ah, given to us for the most part, by a man by the name of Lester Trought, if that rings any bells with you. I think he was a Yacht broker in Annapolis.

CK: Right, uh, I think he opened a door that, galley door, or something, I was probably out moon gazing or something he really did give me a tremendous start. Now I wish I were there