

Before The Mast

News From The Richardson Maritime Museum

www.richardsonmuseum.org

March 2005



"Master Boatbuilder"
by George Wright

After A Long Winter We Spring Into The Future

A long winter has come and gone since the previous issue of this newsletter. With last September's issue delayed a month for late-breaking news, we decided to forego the December, 2004, issue and just get back on track in 2005.

So some of this issue's items may seem like old news, but for those of you who may not keep up with our day-to-day happenings, it is our opportunity to fill you in on our story since last we met in these pages.

While some of the visible progress we have made has been significant, much of our work here at the Museum has lately been behind the scenes, creating the foundation for the future, much like Mother Nature's quiet work over the dormant winter months.

This may not be exciting or glamorous to our friends who would like to see stories about grand new boats we have built or restored. But for those of you who care deeply about the Museum's ability to continue serving the community and preserving its maritime heritage well into the future, it should be welcome news indeed.

Not only are we laying the groundwork for the capital campaign to build the Richardson Maritime Heritage Center, but we are also assessing the overall strengths and weaknesses of the organization as a whole and addressing those areas that need to be shored up before we can proceed with confidence.

So before it's time to get back out on the water, take this opportunity to sit back, relax and take a break while you read about the down-to-the-wire renovations at the Boatworks for Mr. Jim's Birthday Party, some new renovations that we hope will reinvigorate a too-long-dormant arm of our organization, the talented young lady who is adding her own spark of excitement to exhibit and education projects, and other notable items from our recent past and our plans for the future. Happy Spring! ☺

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Roger Pfof, left, and Herm Kramer were the worthy winners of the 2004 Mr. Jim Outstanding Service Awards.

*Dedicated to James B. "Mr. Jim" Richardson
and the Unique Wooden Boatbuilding Heritage of
Maryland's Eastern Shore*



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Are We "There" Yet?

At the risk of paraphrasing a statement of recent notoriety, the answer for our Museum depends on what your definition of "there" is.

The answer is "no" if one fixes only on reaching a certain "there" with little appreciation for the value of the effort, for what happens on the way or the significance of what follows the arrival—the purpose of the trip.

The answer is "yes" if, like a passionately dedicated sailor, one enjoys the experience of being underway—thus always "there"—on an epic voyage with keen anticipation of the exposure to, and the ultimate promise of, the adventure.

The Museum crew is underway ("there"), charting the distant course, weathering rough passages and establishing marks and waypoints for principal developments, such as the creation and operation of the Richardson Maritime Heritage Center on historic Cambridge Creek.

We now are moving on the initial leg of the journey envisioned by the Museum founders just a decade ago. It will take all hands to carry out the fundamental tasks of recruiting talented volunteers, raising the funds, restoring the vessels and doing the research to place the educational programs and special exhibits in proper historic context. All of this constitutes "Putting History on the Water."

This newsletter, like those before it, is full of examples of the special efforts of the volunteers and the singular developments underway that lay the foundation for the future passages.

We will continue to face strong currents and heavy going, but we know where we are and where we want to go on the epic adventure. In the strongest sense, we are "there," on course in the direction of our dreams and the dreams of those before us who envisioned this grand journey when we first set sail. ⚓

—Frank Newton



Last Chance For Ten Grand!

Our Tax Relief Raffle drawing will be held Tuesday, April 5, at 7:00 p.m. at the Museum. As of this writing, tickets are still available. They are \$100 each and the winner will receive \$10,000. **Only 300 tickets will be sold** and they are going fast.

For more information, visit our website, www.richardsonmuseum.org or call Melissa at 410-221-1871.

Welcome, Melissa!

The Richardson Maritime Museum is pleased to welcome our new staff member, Executive Assistant, Melissa Spielman.

Last summer, while working as a photographic archivist at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, she sent the Museum an email with her resume. Tired of the commute across the Bay from her Easton home, she was looking for “employment closer to home where,” she wrote, “I can contribute to the success of an organization.”

With Melissa’s resume showing experience not only as an archivist but with exhibit design and in administration of a nationwide nonprofit organization, Museum Administrator Cyndy Carrington Miller immediately called her and set up a meeting, even though the Museum was not in a position to hire anyone just then.

After getting acquainted with this Dorchester County native’s winning personality and obvious talents, Cyndy called President Frank Newton and said, “You’ve got to meet

Melissa and we’ve got to find a way to hire her!”

After several months of patience on Melissa’s part as we figured out how to bring her on board, she joined the crew in November and has fit right in, making herself an invaluable member of the organization in a very short time.

Not only has she taken over a significant amount of the administrative responsibilities, she also has provided improvements in the Museum’s exhibit signage and begun a focus on educational programs that will allow us to better serve the community.

“Melissa is the future of this organization,” says Cyndy. “When I met her, I knew she was exactly the right person for us at this critical time in our development. I’ve done some of the administrative groundwork, but Melissa provides the unique museum expertise that we need right now to fulfill our mission in the community. I’m delighted to have her working with us.” 

More New Crew Members

Our annual election of officers and Board Members in January was not as routine as usual. While Treasurer **Mark Murphy** had agreed to run as Secretary (in addition to his role as Treasurer) to fill an empty and essential slot on our officers list, **Rich Richardson** stepped in and offered at the last minute to accept the responsibility of the office and has since served the organization well in that role.

At that election, two 2004 appointments were confirmed as Members of the Board—**Robert Bromwell** and **Toby Frey**. **Bill Jones** was also elected to another term.

John T. Adams, Jr., has retired from the Board after several years of service, as has **Vince Leggett**, whose own organization, Blacks of the Chesapeake, left him little time for the increasing demands of membership on the board of our growing organization. Vince, however, will still be involved in helping to create diversity within our educational programs and encourage a focus on the exceptional but heretofore under-appreciated African-American component of the area’s maritime heritage.

We will also greatly miss the presence of **Bonnie Shertenlieb**, who has retired from the Board after serving since the organization’s beginning. The foundation that she helped to lay in those early days and continued to support through the years will serve us well into the future even

without her smiling presence.

Since the election, Dorchester County Chamber of Commerce Executive Director **John Nussear** has been welcomed as a new Board Member, and Bayside Realty’s **George Simmons** has been lending us his advice and support at Board meetings lately.

Also on the governance level, we welcome **Mike Starling** from the other side of the Bay, Vice President of Engineering and Operations for National Public Radio. Mike has agreed to help us out with our fundraising efforts, as has **Lois Colaprete**, who has been doing some foundation research for us until the birth of her second child (probably by the time you read this!) takes up all of her spare time.

At the grass roots level, we welcome **Pat Murphy**, Mark’s wife, who came to us offering to write stories about our volunteers. You can find the first installment of her work on page 5. And **Debbie Haynes** is helping us to establish a serious educational program, working with children and adults within the community and beyond.

We welcome the support and dedication of all of these wonderful individuals in helping to move us forward as we grow into the new Richardson Maritime Heritage Center.

We would love to welcome you, too! 



Showing Off The Boatworks At Mr. Jim's Birthday Party

When last we met in these pages, the second floor of the Boatworks was undergoing renovations that we hoped to have completed in time to hold Mr. Jim's Birthday Party there.

Well, it came right down to the wire, including picking out paint for the floor and walls the day before the event, but Victor MacSorley and his crew got the job done beautifully. The area is 60 feet by 40 feet of uninterrupted space and, except for terrible acoustics, was a wonderful setting for our annual event for thanking our volunteers.

We had delicious food, thanks to the donated catering

services of Sheila Nimmerrichter, Melissa's mother, and guests helped pay for the party through a silent auction, with items donated by some very generous individuals and businesses (see the list on page 7.)

As always, the real purpose of the event was to recognize the volunteers who keep this organization going and the local businesses and organizations that have helped us out during the year.

Victor MacSorley was recognized, of course, for his company's

beyond-the-call-of-duty efforts on the renovations. Also thanked were the staff of Powell Realtors for putting together the Riverboat Cruise last year, Tom Gasper for his grass cutting along Maryland Avenue, and Carole Kramer and the rest of the Dorchester Garden Club for sprucing up the crepe myrtles and plantings along that street.

Special recognition was given to Melvin Hickman, who retired as curator at the end of 2004. His stewardship of the collection has served this organization exceedingly well for

many years and his services will be missed.

Our volunteers receive awards in three categories. The Richardson Maritime Museum Volunteer Awards went to Dan Cada for his management of the stairway renovations last spring and Rich Richardson for his contributions as docent, computer wizard and reinvigorating the Plank Owner program.

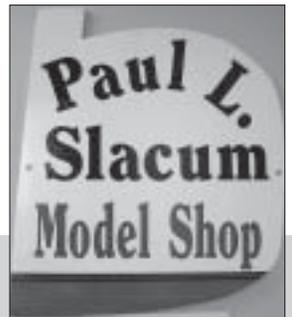
Ray Henderson, Ken Guelta and John Ericson received the Ruark Boatworks Volunteer Awards for their continued efforts at the Boatworks. John's mentee, Joe Slaughter, received the first Ruark Boatworks Apprentice of the Year Award.

The Mr. Jim Outstanding Service Awards go to those individuals who make significant contributions to the organization as a whole, and Herm Kramer and Roger Pfof were the very worthy recipients for 2004. Both have demonstrated a continued willingness to serve wherever and whenever needed. Their suggestions for improvements have added significantly to the progress we have made and they both deserve a very large round of applause for their efforts.

As do all of our volunteers! ☀

Renovation Contributions

Victor H. MacSorley Construction, Inc., the Nathan Foundation, and Provident State Bank each recently made \$10,000 donations toward the Boatworks renovations. We thank all three for their very generous support!



Model Shop Open

Herm Kramer, Ken Guelta, Roger Pfof and other volunteers have created a bright little corner in the Boatworks for the new Modeler's Guild Room.

After the old shop at the Museum was taken over by the new office, a new location needed to be found, and what better place than near the tools at the Boatworks.

With the room ready, all we need are the model makers. Anyone interested in being a part of creating a new and improved Modeler's Guild, please call the office at 410-221-1871. ☀



Herm Kramer

by Pat Murphy

Entering the Boatworks door, I expected to see a dark, dingy warehouse. I stopped short. A beautiful wooden sign identifying the Ruark Boatworks, est. 2003, greeted me on the wall just ahead. New flooring and separate doors to the interior gave this foyer a professional look. “Paul L. Slacum Model Shop,” read the colorful sign on the next door.

“What?” I wondered. This room, too, was decked out with a new floor, as well as shelves and a couple of sturdy work benches. Herm Kramer quipped, “It looks different, doesn’t it?” He went on to explain that, because of changes at the Museum, the model shop had been lost. So he and half a dozen other volunteers spent two months transforming part of this building into a clean model shop, complete with finished off entryway.

Growing up in Cleveland, Herman Kramer’s love for boats surfaced early when, at 15, he joined the crew of a 19-foot racing sailboat. “Crewing also meant you helped keep it working,” Herm explained. Thus began his education in boat maintenance.

Herm’s passion for boats and the water was temporarily harbored while he pursued another love—softball. He was an “avid player” until an injury benched him at the age of 40. It was his wife, Carole, who steered him back to the water, and weekends found them racing a 25-foot boat on Lake Erie. After a career move to Baltimore, they upscaled to a 32-foot cruiser.

By the time the Kramers moved to Cambridge in 1994, Herm had years of experience on the water and some well developed skills. These he has generously shared, first as a crew member on the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester*, then joining the ranks of volunteers here at the Richardson Maritime Museum. We’ve been delighted to have this “student of history” and experienced modeler on board and credit him with numerous accomplishments over the past seven years.

At the Museum, he designed a new display layout and then led other volunteers in the hours of labor necessary to complete these improvements. Over at the Boatworks, he again joined with others to clean away years of dust and debris from the upper floor, transforming it into a clean environment suitable for archives. On the main floor, he has

exacted a “labor of love,” taking part in the restoration of a 1952 Dovetail, “...or Draketail, as they say on Hoopers Island,” he adds.

Herm’s career experience in management has also been utilized. He is currently acting as docent coordinator. If Herm is on hand as docent, you can often find Carole running the Gift Shop. She also participates in Museum events by baking and setting up.

What are Herm’s dreams for the Museum’s future? He has quite a list: a larger Gift Shop to help cover operating costs; reinstate



Photos by Ivana C. Casche

Herm Kramer is a multi-talented volunteer, equally at home in the Museum as docent, teaching kids about maritime history, and at the Boatworks, passing on his woodworking skills.

model building classes and races on the pond; expansion of the Museum’s displays by building some models they don’t yet own.

Herm Kramer’s desire has been to bring history to people in a way that they can see, feel and experience it. “I think it’s tremendously important that you get some idea of where you are living and why.” But he is quick to remind us, “It’s not feasible to have a museum or to maintain a skipjack without volunteers.” And volunteering, he says, “puts something back into the community and keeps you mentally fit.” Thanks for your shining example, Herm. Now, all hands on deck! 🌀



NATHAN FOUNDATION

The Nathan Foundation answered a plea for help issued at Mr. Jim's Birthday Party for a new computer for the office. With Melissa Spielman (right) coming on board, we badly needed an office upgrade. The Nathan Foundation generously added \$2000 for a new computer to their grant of \$10,000 towards our Boatworks renovations.

We thank the Nathan Foundation for its continued support for the Museum, the Boatworks and the preservation of the maritime heritage of Dorchester County. ⚓



NEW EXHIBIT

A new exhibit at the Museum includes photographs and artifacts from the George T. Johnson & Sons Shipyard, which was established in Cambridge in 1890. The collection is on loan from George Johnson's granddaughter, Betsy Johnson Davis.

The Johnson Shipyard built the bugeye *Brown Smith Jones* for the Maryland Oyster Police. Also on exhibit are artifacts from that boat, along with a half model built by volunteer Herm Kramer for Ms. Davis. She has graciously loaned it to the Museum for the exhibit, and we welcome all to stop in and get a glimpse of Cambridge's past. ⚓

Wish List

Now that the Nathan Foundation has filled our need of a new computer, there are a few more items that have popped up on our wish list.

If anyone can help us out by donating any of these items or funding their purchase, please call Melissa at 410-221-1871.

- Paper Shredder (\$60)
- New Phone System (\$250)
- Laminator (\$200)
- Volunteers (Priceless)

Coming Soon

The model of Mr. Jim's *Antho-M* donated by William H. Combs has been beautifully restored and will soon be on display!

Skylark For Sale



Photo by P. Amy Pallise

Thanks to Whitey Thayer of Solomons for sending *Skylark* flying across the Bay to us. Currently docked at the Boatworks' bulkhead, she was built in 1965 by Thayer and renowned Eastern Shore boatbuilder Maynard Lowery of Tilghman Island.

Thayer has generously donated the 40-foot wooden boat to the Museum, and she was accepted on condition of sale to keep the historic vessel on the water and help the Museum's operating program.

She is exceptionally well appointed inside and received an excellent survey by Fred Hechlinger of Annapolis.

Anyone interested in purchasing *Skylark* should contact Frank Newton at 410-960-5811 for more information. ⚓



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but out of respect for their privacy,
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