

SAN DIEGO YACHT CLUB

Oral History Program

An Interview

Morton J. Carlile

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This interview was conducted by Oliver B. Peter and Bob C. Kyle.
Transcribed by Charlotte R. Chalfant.
Edited by Oliver B. Peter, Bob C. Kyle, and Mort Carlile.
Final typed by Charlotte R. Chalfant.
Supervised by Oliver B. Peter and Bob C. Kyle.

Interview of Morton Carlile

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Mort Carlile Interview

OP: This interview is part of the Oral History Program of the San Diego Yacht Club. Mort Carlile is a long time member of the San Diego Yacht Club, Life Member 4,

MC: It's unfortunate that somebody died this year that was #2 so I guess I'm #3 now.

OP: Oh, ok, #3.

MC: Doesn't make any difference. You don't want to get to be #1.

OP: You've been a very active and competitive racer, in your day, and you've moved on to power boats and other boats which we'll discuss. Please state your name

MC: Morton Joldersma Carlile.

OP: We're here about 10:45 June the 12th in the library of the SDYC conducting this interview. Ollie Peter and Bob Kyle are the interviewers, where were you born?

MC: I was born in Los Angeles and shortly thereafter, went to the Sons and Daughters of the Golden West Orphanage, where I was adopted by a Navy doctor and his wife and was brought to San Diego in 1924

OP: Were your parents involved with the Yacht Club?

MC: No, the best I know of my parents I was a mistake from the USC campus and that's why I went to the Sons and Daughters Golden West Orphanage.

OP: How about your adopted parents?

MC: My adopted parents were not involved in the Yacht Club, no.

OP: And their names

MC: Helen Joldersma, my adopted mother, and Dr. Rudolph Joldersma my father, adopted father.

OP: And how did you get the name Carlile?

Recording currently at 2:38

MC: Well, my mother was a Carlile. After the war I went to work for John Burnham & Company. Thanks to Uncle Donald. I worked at the insurance business for a year or two and then I had an offer made to me by the Valley Bank in El Cajon to come to work managing their insurance department. The reason they wanted me was because my uncle, Dr. Morton Carlile, whom I was named after, was an extremely well known Dr. in El Cajon, Lakeside, Santee, all that area. And so they asked me after I went with the bank for a short time, if I would legally transpose my name from Morton Carlile Joldersma to Morton Joldersma Carlile. Because, in those days, I guarantee you, 1945-46 if you didn't have a name local to the El Cajon greater area, nobody was going to talk to you about business because you came from San Diego. And that might as well mean Nome, Alaska.

OP: Interesting. So then you stayed in the insurance business?

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MC: Stayed in the insurance business there until I got married and then my wife's father, Sam Lofton, who was a member of the yacht club -- not then but later on -- asked me if I wanted to come into the insurance business with him -- with Farmers Insurance group He was a district manager for San Diego, which I subsequently became the District Manager, when he retired.

OP: Now, Sam's interest in the Yacht Club, was that in sailing or power boats ?

MC: He had powerboat, he had the stink pot which he bought from Ash Bown. That was a 32' Hunter and then he got a 42' Chris, oh I take that back, he got the "Lovely Lady" that used to be owned by Paul Jenkins, who was around the yacht club for many years. He was a successful Imperial Valley entrepreneur and Sam bought the "Lovely Lady" which was a 40' Express Cruiser and then he bought a 42' Chris. And I was the boat boy.

OP: And Jenkins?

MC: Paul Jenkins was very, very active for 20 years in the power boating end of the yacht club.

OP: And that was his widow that bought the other cruising boat..?

MC: The other one, that Sam had, no. I think it was a different Jenkins. Because this one was from the Valley and the Jenkins that bought Sam's 46' Alaskan. Her husband was either the president or vice president of John Deer.

OP: And she was very active in cruising for a good many years.

MC: She had a skipper that used to be her husband, shortly after they got the boat

OP: She recently sold that boat. How did you first get interested in the water?

MC: Well I lived in Mission Hills, and so Morgan Miller and Bud Caldwell, Fred Hopkins, Steve Hall, Dick McDonald, all that whole gang from Mission Hills used to come to the yacht club

OP: Was Larry Manzer a part of that group?

MC: No. It was where I first lived down in Hillcrest, where I got to know Larry very well.

OP: So, they boated together?

MC: They used to come to the yacht club and we came down here and sailed and played football out in parking lot and all that type of stuff and I was pretty big for my 13th birthday, I was 6'1" and weighed 230lbs, which is a little big for Starlets. So I got the opportunity to sail with Ash Bown on a Star boat as a crew.

BK: When would that have been?

MC: That would have been prior to the war, I joined in '38 as a Junior member. And then I sailed with Ash in Stars and then I went in the service. Then I got out and I started sailing with Malin Burnham. While I was in the service, for the short period of time that I was at Camp Callen, I sailed with Dr.

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Niles Martin, who was quite a famous Star boat skipper from the East coast who was a doctor here at the Naval hospital during the war. So I got started in 1938 and then progressed from Stars, eventually into the big boats sailing with Gene Trepte, and those guys. And then after the war I made my first purchase, I got a Penguin. I was a little big for a Penguin but that's all my wallet could accommodate. And the Penguins were a big fleet here at that time, Bert Israel had them, everyone had them.

OP: Were they built locally or ...??

MC: I don't think so. I think they were brought in. Now the ones that went into 110s, because Dick Locke got the 110s started here at the SDYC and Gerry Driscoll. Driscoll's woodworking shop, just off the premise here, got the contract to build 110s.

OP: That's Jerry Driscoll?

MC: Yeah, that was Gerry Driscoll, with a G.

OP: So how long did the Penguins last?

MC: They lasted for 20 years I would guess. The fact, the thing that eliminated them I think was the Lido 14.

OP: So what time do you think then that the Penguins became active, what date?

MC: It was shortly after the war, I'd say about 1948, 49.

OP: And then the 110s

MC: And then started building the 110s. I had bought a Star boat and was racing Stars but I couldn't do better than 2nd because I couldn't beat Lowell North. Well, his mast weight was 38 lbs, my mast was 58lbs. His boat number was 2000 and something and mine was in the hundreds and I just didn't have the equipment. Not that I may have beat him or not have beat him, I used to beat him once in awhile.

OP: But that didn't discourage you in sailing?

MC: No, but that's what turned me into 110s because you could buy a 110 for a lot less money than a new Star boat. And they were strictly a one design class but they were inexpensive and so they were 24' long, 2' longer than the Star boats but they were really a neat little boat to sail. In fact, I raced one in the Southern Cal Regatta, down here. I don't remember what year that was in.

OP: Was that a single-handed boat?

MC: No, it's a two-handed boat, had a spinnaker on it. But it's very narrow, very long and with a very deep keel.

OP: Who crewed with you then?

MC: Well I had a number of crews, nobody was constant. My wife crewed with me, Sammie. I had a guy from the office that crewed for me for a while. One day a race out here, and my wife was

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pregnant, she couldn't sail and the wind had come up pretty heavy and so it was time to go race and Ruth Bown turned to Ash and said "Sammie's not sailing today, she is pregnant, you get your ass in the boat with Mort and go sail." And so Ashley, who didn't normally crew for people, got in the boat and sailed with me.

Recording Time is currently at 11:22.

BK: Who were some of the other 110 skippers that you competed with?

MC: The ones, Dick Locke, was up until the time we got in it, he was the number one guy. Unfortunately he was a handicapped guy. With leg braces and a small man. Well I had a big full main but I was a 235 pound guy and I could hang out and as the wind came up. The main didn't do much but she sailed on the battons and on the jib and you go just as fast as the wind and the slim sails. But yet in light area you would kill them. But then there was guy by the name of Bob Mann, and he lived in La Mesa. Bob had owned PCs when he was younger, when Scholfield, Bone, and that whole gang were in the PCs, more or less after George Jessop and Joe Jessop and those guys got out of it --Roosevelt and that whole bunch So Bob got into 110s and he sailed very hard. In fact the year the 110 nationals were here, the year I went and sailed with Lowell North at Newport for the Star Worlds, it was a hard decision to make. Do you stay here and sail the 110s or after all my years crewing do you want to go sail at internationals. So I was glad I went with Lowell.

OP: Where was that nationals held?

MC: At Newport, Newport Beach. And we had 42 boats. We had Augustino Strolino. And Gary Comer, who had won the nationals, and owned Lands End, who recently passed away. But the competition was like being in the majors versus being in the double A ball.

OP: And how did you do in that race?

MC: We won the Worlds. And then Lowell invited me to go with him next year to Rio but unfortunately North Sails could only charge off one person, and I couldn't afford to pay Sammie's way, so I didn't get to go.

OP: Did you continue to sails Stars after that?

MC: No, I sailed 110s for about another 3 yrs and then I went into PCs.

BK: And roughly when was that?

MC: Year wise, that would be somewhere close to '58 or '59, I would guess. Because that's when I got involved in the San Francisco Challenge Cup and I managed to take Keith Lister's Cal 32 up there.

OP: What did they sail there?

MC: You could pick any boat within 5%, if you were the defender, of the certain rating. So they could wait and decide who they wanted to start at the five minute gun. Now the challengers had to name their boat ahead of time and just go up there and sail. So we went up a few days early and we were practicing and we had Glen Waterhouse, who was an old Star boat sailor and who was sailing the

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“Dorade”, which was a famous yawl. And he was going sailing, and we said well Glen what should we look for and not? Well I can’t be a trader to the San Francisco Yacht Club, he said, but I’m going sailing on the “Dorade” today and I’m going every place in the race course that I wouldn’t go if I was you. So we went out and spent the day chasing “Dorade” around the bay. Glen Waterhouse and the Star boat fraternity was extremely strong in those days. When they came to race here, Ashley and Stars put everybody up, so you knew everybody, and knew them well.

OP: And how did you do in that race?

MC: We won the Lipton Cup up there and I defended it down here.

OP: Was the Lipton Cup or the San Francisco Challenge Cup?

MC: I’m sorry, the San Francisco Challenge Cup.

OP: And that you said, was in the Cal 32?

MC: That was in Keith Lister’s “Amorita” no, it was “Cholita”. Which was a Cal 32 and then we came down here and we were re-challenged the next year and they challenged us in a 105 or something, similar to a PC and similar to a Rhodes 33, that people raced a lot in those days. And consequently we decided to defend it in a PC, so they had me skipper the PC. I had Ash Bown and Malin Burnham sitting with me. Bud Caldwell would have been sailing with me but he didn’t belong to the SDYC at that time. He would come in and sail but he didn’t belong to the club and you had to belong to the club to sail. So we raced the PC against the Rhodes 33 or the 105, which was in the same class as the 33 basically, and we were able to win the cup again. Now after the race, I forget the guy’s name, everyone knows it, particularly Jim Reynolds, a friendly guy from the SF yacht club.....

OP: Blackhaller?

MC: No, it was a guy, good friend of the Burnhams, he was in the mortgage banking business, so I’ll think of it sooner or later. But anyway, they came into Ash’s car lot, and said, well you guys are just lucky, you know where you can beat that boat under the right conditions, so Ash says, well I’ll tell what, we’ll swap you boats and we’ll bet you 10 grand that we will beat you, they wouldn’t take the bet.

BK: What was the name/number of the PC?

MC: Ok, we raced the PC I had at that time, which was #40, which is not considered one of the fast hulls. But it was within our financial reach, Bud and I owned it together. So they decided that #21 was a real hot hull, so we raced it in the # 21. But Paul Kettenburg put running back stays on it and put a genny on it. See PCs were originally designed for a genoa. But it overlapped enough and there were enough bangers and etcetera, going on that they put the smaller jib on. We went out and tuned up before the SF Challenge against Wally Springstead. In #21 with the genny and with the running back stays and we could start 20 yards behind him, come about even with him and sail faster and sail right up across his bow and leave him like he wasn’t even there. But the genny was the power. Those boats would be considerably faster today if they had a genny. But the people didn’t want them.

OP: The original decision not to use the genny was based on...?

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MC: That was a class rule that had changed it to. The boat was rated. However Paul Kettenburg knew, that the PC with the genny on it would be a faster boat, but he was concerned about holding it in and being able to point high enough, that was why he wanted running back stays. But he had that experience back with George, many years before. George Kettenburg that is. It really speeded the boat up but we never got to use it again, we wound up with the genny but nothing to use it for

OP: How long did you sail PCs

MC: I would guess probably 8 or 10 years

BK: What was your boat called, #40 you said?

MC: It was "Panic". I owned #27 prior to that, which was "Confusion", the one that Ash Bown and Johnny Fox used to race when they raced against Giddings and those guys. And the old story was then that the pre war boats were faster. The mahogany that they were made out of took on less water. The masts were probably lighter. Now I think the masts were lighter because subsequently we got #18 and we broke a mast. I forget how it came down, but anyway, we got a used mast, from over at Kohler Kraft

that never had worked on a PC. And we put this used mast in, but we weighed the mast before we put it in and it was considerably lighter than what the normal PC sails with. It made #18 a real fast boat.

OP: Who were some crew that you had during your PC time?

MC: Primarily most of the PC time was Bud Caldwell, because he and I owned #40 together. Also included my son and his son, who were 12,13 or 14 yrs old. In fact we went to the PC nationals at Newport and the third day of the nationals we were tied with Wally Springstead. And were sailing in the ocean off Newport Beach and shortly before the start the boom came flipping around and hit Bud over the eye and just laid open a big gash, so he was trying to wipe blood away and crew. So we had my boy at 10 or 11 and Bud's son at 12 or 13, sailing with us that day. So downwind, I'd have to steer the boat and have the jib, or the spinnaker guy and the sheet in each hand because the kids weren't strong enough to pull on it. But anyway, we did very well that day, and the next day, which was the finals, Wally was leading but he was going to the wrong mark, and we were really cleaning his clock because he was going for the wrong mark. Well about then, the committee boat went down in front of him and pointed to where the mark was and headed up to show him where the mark was. So they got headed up and he beat us by half a boat length. But at the trophy presentation, it was sort of fun because they called us up, of course we took the young boys up with us, and they had a ball. Then Wally went, and Wally wouldn't even let his son Rocky, even sail on the boat, because he had to have a strictly professional crew.

OC: You said Wally Springstead?

MC: Wally Springstead. He had to have John Shoemaker and Morgan Miller and the hot dog crew. Otherwise he wouldn't sail and so when Wally came back with the trophy and as he walked by me, I was sitting in the aisle, and said, "I think I know who really won this series." And he walked on by. But I felt sorry for him because his son gave up sailing, he could sail around here noncompetitively but in the big races he wasn't allowed on the boat.

Recording currently at 23:59.

OP: How many children did you have?

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MC: I had three boys and one girl. All of whom sail and all of whom sailed Sabots and that type of thing here. My number one boy, Gary, went on to the Naval Academy and sailed on the Navy sailing team there. And he also raced in the Honolulu race. For the Naval Academy he chartered the "Duelo", a Cal 40 for the Honolulu race. Then number two son, Jeff, kept crewing with me until we got him a Star boat. And number three son, Bruce, crewed for Jeff in Star boats, they won the Green Star but then we got a bigger boat, we got a Cal 34 and they started sailing with me all the time on the Cal 34. Then we got a Cal36 and they started sailing with me on the 36. Jeff use to skipper the 36 a lot, he was an outstanding helmsman. But Gary, of course, lived on the East Coast, because he married a girl from back there.

OP: What was your number one son's name?

MC: Gary, the number one son.

OP: And he had a pretty good instructor back there at the Naval Academy?

MC: Not really. They had instructors but I don't think they knew anywhere as much as the kids did. In fact Gary sailed there, as the number 2 dingy skipper and he was a pretty big boy to be in dingys. And the number one dingy sailor was Billy Campbell. And he and Billy sailed at the same time, as the 1 and 2 for the Academy.

OP: Somewhere along the line, wasn't his future father-in-law involved with the sailing program back there?

MC: Yes, his father-in-law, became, was the commanding officer of the main station, across from the academy, across the river. But he was also in charge of all the watercraft at the Naval Academy. And so for some reason, his future father-in-law, just really liked him. To the point, he got called down from his room to the Officer of the Day once who said, get in that classy uniform and get down here. He reports in and the guy says do you want to take the superintendant and his family sailing tomorrow on one of the yawls? He says, well sir, I'm a plebe, I'm not allowed a yawl command. He says, son, I know you're a plebe, I know you're not allowed the yawl command -- answer the question, do you want to take the superintendant and his family sailing, or don't you? We don't give a damn what are you're ratings or qualifications. So he took the super and his family sailing the next day. Then in church on Sunday, he just happened to be sitting on the isle, as Jim Calpert, who was a three star super went by, and he nodded "how are you today Mr. Carlile" as he went by. And a few of the guys said, "the God damn superintendant knows you by name!" But he said "Dad, I'm gonna be a big shot entertainer." About a month later, he called and said, I'm taking John Warner and his family, who was the Secretary of the Navy then, sailing on one of the yawls. Well Bob Steel, his to-be father-in-law, that's who they called, that's where they went, he's the one who referred Gary.

OP: When was he at the Academy then?

MC: He graduated in '73, so it would have been '69 through '73.

OP: And when did he retire then from the service?

MC: He retired as a Commander from the Navy.

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OP: And how many years service did he have?

MC: He had, I think 22 years at the time. But that's when we were downsizing the Navy considerably.

OP: And he remained on the East Coast?

MC: He remained on the East Coast, the whole time. He wound up as XO on the LPD and then his Admiral called him in, and he said Gary, you're up for selection, I'm on the board, but I can't do you any good as much as I'd liked to because they're only selecting one captain, out of a class of 600. And he said the chairman of the board, knows who he wants and he's a three star, so I suggest you set a time, in the next year or two that you would like to retire. And put it in now, so you won't be retired early. At that time, they were taking captain who had just completed the graduate school, up North there somewhere. Who were on their way to San Diego to take over as skipper of a guided missile cruiser, on their way here he could out his orders in for retirement. That's how fast they were putting officers out

OP: But Gary remained in the boating business?

MC: Yeah, well he has been involved with sailing back there, off and on with the Academy and stayed in with the sailing program down there. Bob Steel, his father-in-law, retired down on the Chesapeake and he has a sailing school and is a dealer for a couple boats, so he goes down and helps him.

OP: Did your daughter get involved with sailing?

MC: My daughter sails Sabots. And then she would sail with us occasionally but she wasn't that really wound up into it.

BK: You sailed in the Lipton Cup several times...

MC: Yeah, I guess six or seven times

OP: Who are some of the skippers that you sailed for?

MC: Sailed with Ash Bown when he skippered "Mickey". Also with Ash when skippered Tim Shepard's 8 meter, the "Emily" which was the biggest and funniest thing that happened. The "Emily" was a beat up 8 meter. Tim used to be with the newspaper, It fit in the category for the Lipton Cup, at Newport, so Tim wanted Ash to sail it. So we went up there and went out and practiced the day before. Well the "Emily" had 8 batteries in it, big batteries, just to keep the pumps working to keep it from sinking. So we went up and we're tuning up on the wind and there was a little bigger boat than us up the windward, and we kept sailing and Ash says we're taking them, and slowly we footed with them and slowly came to windward until we could realize that it was Bill Ficker sailing a 12 meter. That night, at the yacht club, prior to the race we overheard Ficker talking to a bunch of Balboa Yacht club guys there, and what he said was, San Diego, that relic they sent up here, I'll tell you what fellas, I'll take the relic against the fleet, if you want to put some money on it. And we beat the crap out of them the next day. "Emily" was a very fast boat. In fact it was a lot like, when we were in the Lipton in '61 when I sailed "Bongo." It was the most unusual boat I've been on in my life. You stand on the foredeck with a chute and it was a fast boat down wind. You hear no bow wake. No bow wave, you go over the side and there'd be a little ripple, but that's it. No bow wake. Every other boat I've been

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on in my life, you always heard a bow wake, even on a PC. That was something, it was built in Norway or some place, and whoever designed it, designed one hell of a fast boat.

OP: Who owned the “Bongo”?

MC: Milt Reynolds and a guy named Bill Bennet from Las Vegas. In fact they came to me and wanted me to race the boat in the Maztalan race. The trouble is Bill Bennet was part of the hotel and all the gambling group -- very unsavory group over there. I turned them down, because both Ash and Malin said you know, you’ll be a hero if you win the race but if you don’t Jesus you’re gonna be a bum. I wouldn’t get mixed up with those guys under any circumstances. So I told the guy, the company wouldn’t let me do it. So little did I know, that one of guys knew someone in my company, one of the top people and he calls them. And says why can’t Mort sail?

OP: In the Lipton Cup races, were you skipper a number of the times ?

MC: No, I was only skipper once. In “Bongo”. But I crewed on “Mickey”, crewed on “Emily” and crewed on “Cholita” when Malin won it. Crewed on the “Carousel” when Ash Bown won it with “Carousel” and a couple of others...

OP: Who were some of the skippers then?

MC: The skippers primarily were, Gartz Gould with “Ballerina” and Denny O’Bryan with the “Mickey”

OP: That was a PCC?

MC: That was a PCC, both of those were PCCs. George Kettenburg with a PCC, in fact that was the closest racing I’ve seen in my life -- Ash Bown and George Kettenburg and PCCs racing up the bay. Every time they crossed they were a coat of paint apart. Scared the hell out of me. That was most of them. Ash was the Lipton skipper a number of the times. There became a click in the club and that’s when “Amorita” defended it. The owner, was from La Jolla, Fred Liebhart, the architect. He had a lot of heavy weights with him. In fact Malin was skipper in the boat for him. That’s when there was a lot of politics. They picked they were going to sail “Amorita” but they decided to have eliminations. So there were a number of boats out there and we were sailing “Bongo”, and evidently they crossed us off. We had honorary memberships to Mission Bay yacht club, so we decided we were going to race “Bongo” against them in the Lipton. Then the SDYC committee made its decision. John Washington was the head of the committee, and they came down the dock, and instead of going to talk with Malin and “Amorita” they turned left and came into Ash’s slip, where we had “Bongo” and said we would like you guys to represent SDYC. Now what do you do? So Ash and I had to take the Commodore of Mission Bay out and apologize over hell’s half acre and tell him we just couldn’t represent Mission Bay because we got selected by San Diego. But John Washington was the key, he thought Bongo was so fast that unless a blew like stink that we’d win. And he was right as rain. We won by two, three minutes.

Recording currently at 36:17.

OP: Did they keep the elimination program for the Lipton Cup going for a long time?

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MC: That would come and go and after that click sort of got worn out a little bit. Some of the guys weren't quite as interested. Then they started getting over to one design racing, which we also felt should be one design racing anyway. Because in San Francisco when you can name the boat that's going to race against you, and they know everything about you and they can pick whoever they want 5 minutes before the start, plus see what they do, they have a guy up the river who is checking the morning wind and how hard its blowing in Sacramento, how hard its blowing halfway down, how fast the wind is moving towards the bay, what's the average wind speed in Stockton in here or there, and they know well how hard its going to blow or what's going to be a drifting match, before the race starts. And they just happen to pick the boat that couldn't beat the Cal 32.

OP: What are some of the reasons that some of the clubs are winners year after year after year?

MC: Well the San Diego Yacht Club or the Newport Harbor Yacht Club pretty much dominated the Lipton Cup. I think there was a great deal of interclub rivalry that took place in that time.

OP: What are some of the other championship regattas that you were involved in? You mentioned the Challenge Cup, was there also a big boat series in San Francisco?

MC: No, that was the Frisco challenge. No I didn't sail anything up there other than that. I wouldn't sail there again if I had to. The next day, I was nothing but a tailer on the winch. The next day at breakfast, I went to go pick up a cup of tea and I couldn't lift it. I hurt so bad, you can't believe it. Lance Morton and I were there. He was the cranker and I was the tailer, and I was gripping the line so hard, to try and keep it from going out, and he was cranking it, and Ash would say, "well crank the boat up a little bit more."

BK: Where was that?

MC: That was "Cholita" in San Francisco. It blew like stink that day and that's what you did, you either lean it over or crank it up. That was the difference, because it was blowing so damn hard.

OP: You found San Francisco sailing a little different than San Diego sailing?

MC: I'm not a golfer, I play out a little bit, but I would have been a golfer in San Francisco, I would not have been a sailor. When the buoy that you're sailing for is way the hell down there and you're hard on the wind, sailing way up here, then you hit the tide off Angel Island, you start, down, down, down, down. If you're lucky you make the buoy. And the buoy is moving at 5 knots, I mean its throwing water and if you don't make it, you have to tack, and then work you're up and get around enough to be able to get around before you hit the buoy.

OP: It requires a little bit of local knowledge and the current and tide there?

MC: Yeah, we had John Rumsey, who was around the yacht club here for many years. Very competitive guy and crewed with everybody. I don't think he ever owned a boat himself. But John was local, because he had come from San Francisco, so consequently he was coaching us, as did Waterhouse with the Dorade. My only claim to fame, so to speak, would be the Lipton Cup and the Frisco Challenge. I won the 110 Southern Cal Championships and that kind of stuff, PC, Southern Cal championships

OP: How about some of Mexican races? Were you involved in those?

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MC: I made a lot of Mexico races. I raced down the first time with Ash and we got fortunate and won the race.

BK: What boat was that?

MC: That was on "Carousel."

OP: And the "Carousel" was an Owens 41?

MC: Owens 40 cutter.

OP: Owens 40 cutter.

MC: the "Carousel" was an interesting boat, it was a design of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to try to beat the rule but make it fast. So it was a fat, pregnant, little boat, except when you got to the water line, it was an 8 meter under the water. But with a mast head rig and the light air in San Diego, it was just faster than hell. We were racing up against one of those M boats, which were a lot bigger than a 12, and in LA, it was a light air day, and we just sailed right up across their bow. Of course we had a couple girls sailing with us, three in fact, and three guys, we sailed across their bay and we were getting all this hooting from the guys over there, but they got real quiet when we went across their bow.

OP: Was that race with the "Carousel," Acapulco?

MC: Acapulco, we also raced with Ash. We raced many times in the Ensenada Race and we won the Ensenada race overall. Ash was probably the greatest sailor the Pacific coast ever saw. Because he had the gifted ability of having a super touch but also knew how to tune everything. Malin was probably the best helmsman I ever sailed with in my life. But he wasn't much better tuning a boat, then me. You tune it up for me and I could sail it fast, but if it isn't tuned up I can't get out and on my way. And I don't know what to do to change it. I mean sure I know how to jig the lines and stuff. I had my 110 and Ryan bought it from me and I went to the PC and then he wanted to get rid of it later. I bought it back because I couldn't afford a PC. And I went out on the 110 and I couldn't beat my way out of a paper bag. Well they had put a square, about a 2 inch, peg in the top of the jib halyard or in the jib stay, to put the mast back a little bit. So I took that out, put it back the way it used to be, and then I killed him again. The 110 you sail with a slightly cocked forward mast, and if it wasn't you might as well not go out on the race course. Now why, I don't know.

OP: When you move from different boats, you're saying the tuning and the set up of the boat was entirely different?

MC: Yes, it was. Now Ash was no dummy, he had a lot of good skippers sailing with him, like when we raced the San Clemente Island race, which we won a number of times on "Carousel." You had maybe, three skippers, three guys onboard the sailboat, the other two guys just crewed, they didn't touch the tiller. And same thing going to Honolulu. Malin and I had just gone down off watch, the water comes pouring across the deck and through the skylights that they have. Malin and I were yelling, "hey, we're drowning down here!" We stick our head up, and we're just going left and right, up and down, and poor old Caldwell is on the helm, trying to keep it straight, Ash is trying to slide in behind him, to try and take the wheel, the damn spinnaker pole was touching the water one minute, and the boom dragging in the water the next minute.

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BK: What boat was that on?

MC: That was on the “Roland Von Raymond” and the “Roland Von Raymond” was brought to San Diego by the Treptes. It had been built by Hitler for the TransAtlantic race. I don’t know how well it did in that, I guess pretty well. And then Clem Stose, who was an old-timer around here, was in Europe, and he saw the “Roland” and he called Mr. Walter Trepte and they decided to buy it and bring it here. So they raced the “Roland” for a number of years. Before they got a boat called the “Evening Star” which was a big yawl. Treptes always had big boats, that’s what they enjoyed -- big boats. And Malin was generally the skipper, a lot of the time, on “Evening Star” and I skippered the PCC in the San Clemente race for Trepte once, and we won the San Clemente Island race.

OP: What was the PCC that the Treptes’ owned?

MC: I’m not sure the name of the one, to tell you the truth. I can’t remember.

OP: What other Transpacs did you sail?

MC: I only sailed one other one, and that was on the “Fairweather” with Pappy and Mami Allen. That was, you might say, not as competitive. The Allens were wonderful people, we ate like kings and drank like fish.

OP: When was that?

MC: That was...I was married, so it was about ’55.

OP: Now was Gary Gould sailing on that boat? Was he a crew on that boat?

MC: No, Gary’s a good friend, a Realtor,

OP: Because, didn’t he sail with Pappa Allen at one time?

MC: He sailed with Pappy some, like the kid that was the cook. No that was on the “Roland”. Ma Allen was the cook on the “Fairweather” but on the “Roland” it was a good friend of Gary Gould, -- Worthington, Bryan Worthington. He was the cook, he had one of those Army belts, with snaps on it to hold him up in the galley, to try and make things happen. So I only sailed Honolulu twice, sailed Acapulco six times, San Clemente about 15, Ensenada race probably 25 times.

OP: Did you like the Transpac race?

MC: Oh yeah, it’s a good challenge, it’s a lot of fun. The year I went, I don’t think Gary was with us, he was with his dad who skippered the “Brilliant” that year, He and Paul Rayburn owned it together but they got too far North, and when they got too far North, they lost the wind and they were chasing garbage for four or five days. We had a recording baragraph on the “Roland” and every hour you would check the baragraph, if it starts up tall, you start heading 10 degrees south, if it goes up anymore in the next hour, you hit 20 degrees South, if it still goes up you hit 40 degrees South, because the Pacific high will move up and down. If you get caught in that Pacific high, you can sit there windless for four or five days. The farther south you sail, the longer the course, so you want to sail as close to it as you can, but don’t get caught in it. So Ash really instructed us on the recording baragraph, every

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hour and that's how it was set up, 5 degrees, 10 degrees, 20 degrees, and he says if it starts up fast, call me in a hurry because we need to put up the chute and get out of here.

OP: And this was sailing on Trepte's boat?

MC: It wasn't Trepte's at the time. Trepte it sold the boat, when he got the "Evening Star" and then there was a developer in Los Angeles, Hal Williams. He was in bankruptcy, he was hiding the boat at the SDYC, when we raced the Honolulu. But, he didn't belong to the SDYC. Ash was the skipper, the sailing master. We all had titles, and when it came around to Malin, he wrote "passenger".

OP: Was the "Evening Star" the one from San Francisco?

MC: No, the "Evening Star" I think spent most of its life out at Newport. It was a very fast, for a big boat. It was very heavily canvassed. She was particularly fast in light air.

OP: Was that a sloop?

MC: No, it was a yawl. And it was about 55-56 feet long, I would guess. We finished off the Point Loma in one of the San Clemente races, in "Carousel" with Ash and the "Roland" and we were converging at the finish line and finally she got right behind us. We weren't a boat length apart, and could hear that bow wake and see those big bow sprits sticking right down our stern. We managed to beat her across the finish but I thought we were going to get run over.

OP: What then, was the last sailboat you owned?

MC: The last sailboat I owned was an Islander 36 and we raced that quite a bit and we were very, very fortunate with it, we did quite well with it.

BK: And the name of that boat ?

MC: Was "Cabaret" and that started a string of Cabarets. Then we wound up going into powerboats, when we left that. Turns out when the kids get to be in their early twenties, they start having girlfriends and getting married, you need a bigger refrigerator and a generator. Then you get into a powerboat because you need an anchor wench because you are getting too old to lift the anchor up.

OP: But you did a fair amount of anchoring on Glorietta on the Bay with that 36?

MC: Oh yeah, we used to tie up alongside the Murray's powerboat. And I had one of those Honda portable generators, and every time I go to start it up, Pat would lean out with an extension cord, "here just plug into me, I don't need to listen to that."

OP: I believe that's the same Honda generator that I took to our Mountain place, for back up power.

MC: Yes, I think so. They're a neat little generator, but they do get noisy. Pat had a 40 foot Chris with a good size generator so he just would hand us a line. So when we got our 53, he was having a problem with his, and I say here let me lend you a line.

OP: Tell me about the 25 Ensenada races. Whom did you sail with mostly?

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MC: Mostly with Ash.

OP: Did you ever sail your boat on the Ensenada race?

MC: Yes I did. When I had the Cal 34. And we were unfortunately doing extremely well and could see the finish line and it was blowing real hard, and we were surrounded by Cal 40s and boats like that, but there were no Cal34s around, so we were looking fairly good and we got a knock down. Jerry Fisher was sailing with me. He was skipper and I said keep the tiller down, don't lift it up because you could snap it, unfortunately we had a knock down, so he pulls it up and pulls it back and snap, we snap it off, right at the hub, and boom. So we had to let the spinnaker sheets go and everything and then we put a couple wenchies on the tiller after the sails were down and used the winches to move it back and forth, because we weren't strong enough to move it by hand. We had to power back. But that's the only time. I take that back, we also went in a Columbia 40, on the San Diego to Ensenada race. We would have won the race, we finished with "Thorough Bred" and a couple of the other big boats but Milt Reynolds forgot to pick up the packet at the start and we were disqualified as not racing.

OP: With the 34 did either Bruce or Jeff, your sons, sail with you?

MC: Yeah, Bruce and Jeff sailed with me on the 34. And that's what kept them from going on in the Stars, they enjoyed the big boat too. So it was a family situation, and later on, I had Jeff sail the boat quite a bit of the time. Gary would sail it a few times.

OP: But the 36 you never sailed that in the Ensenada race?

MC: Not in the Ensenada race. I raced the Oceanside race. We ripped our reacher coming home. When we put the damn thing up. So John Driscoll beat us on corrected time. He was racing on an Eriksson 39, which rated lower than the Islander 36. We raced around here a lot, we were pretty fortunate the boat did very well.

BK: And what years were you racing the Islander 36?

MC: The Islander 36, would have been about 25 years ago, I would guess. 22-24 years ago

OP: You had the Islander 36 in the '70s didn't you?

MC: Yes.

OP: Other Mexican races, Acapulco, ?

MC: San Diego to Ensenada, Newport to Ensenada, and then San Diego to Acapulco. I never sailed the Mazatlan race.

OP: And did you race in some of the, what they called it, the Mexart races, when you were in Acapulco?

MC: Oh yeah, we raced Star boats down there. Malin and I and Lowell sailed on Chalk, which was a Mexican entry, the Cenderos family, Jorge and Manola Cenderos. The agreement was that they would do the cooking. Well it turns out that those Mexicans and those types of families, don't know what a cook is, except a person that is working in the kitchen. So the rest of us had to try and do the cooking.

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In fact Lowell says, “Mort, as soon as we get to Acapulco, I’m taking you to dinner any place and time you want to go”, because Lowell can’t cook either.

Recording Currently at 56:33

OP: In response to one question I think you said, the last sailboat you had was the 36?

MC: Islander 36, yes.

OP: Do you currently have a sailboat?

MC: Yeah, I have a Harbor 20.

OP: And do you sail that competitively down in the Cays?

MC: I started to and it was fun and we had 5, 6, 7 boats racing. But then with the Harbor 20, some of the guys that own them here, don’t race them. Then down in the Coronado Yacht Club, they got to play their game, and by that, I mean, one of them is dry sailed so it never has that bottom paint on it. A couple of them use illegal jibs that are particularly good. They won a handicap -- boats that give you 2 seconds a mile or 5 seconds a mile, if it isn’t standard boat. The guy that is a fleet captain said I don’t really care if I get disqualified, I just want to win the race. So that’s what they’ve done, so now they’re trying to get them into a team match racing thing. They can’t even get three boats out. Now, at Newport, they’re all one design boats and you use the equipment from the sailmaker, everything is the same.

OP: But you still keep your competitive edge up by sailing?

MC: No, I sail there occasionally in the beer can, something like that.

OP: When you talk about down there, is that the Coronado Cays?

MC: Coronado Cays

OP: And you have lived in the Coronado Cays for a number of years?

MC: Oh yes, about 30 years.

OP: And do you have, someone might say, “a fleet of boats down there”? Around your house?

MC: No, we don’t have a fleet. We have 7-8 boats, but those are dingys, jetskiis, ski boat, sail boat, and a couple electric boats, we just accumulate boats.

OP And a Defever?

MC: And a Defever 53. We got alongside the house a Sabot and a couple of Hobies that people raced for a while when they first came out with a single hull. But we manage to have a few boats.

OP: But you say that your family has kept up its interested in sailing?

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MC: Oh yes, very much so. However, they play more golf now and race less because we don't have anything as a family boat to really race anymore except the Harbor 20, which is a great boat. If it wasn't for the PCs, it would go great at SDYC.

OP: Now on the PCs, you later had an adventure on the PCs, as I remember, son Jeff and Bruce were sailing. And could you tell us when that was?

MC: Yeah Jeff... it was when the Doctor from Coronado was very active and had Morgan Morgie Miller, I mean Davey Miller, and two or three of the hot shots racing it with him. That was probably 25-30 years ago, because the boys were about 20, 21, 22. We had PC 27 and then 40 and then 16 and then 18.

OP: What the number of the last one they had, that you re-did?

MC: I think it was number 18, it used to be Roger Bryan's boat. Ash said Bryan was the World's Greatest Sailor. And I said why? He doesn't win. Have you known anyone else who can sit in your backwind the whole damn race and never lose a foot to you. He can't past you, but he just sits in your backwind, when he's covered, he just sits there, he doesn't know he's supposed to fall back, he just stays there.

OP: What changes have you seen in the SDYC since you remember?

MC: Well it's most like a big corporation today, where it used to be a small company. I think the unfortunate thing is you get so big. You used to come to the dining room and you knew practically everyone in there and you'd have everything from food fights to standing in front of the fire place. But now, you come in the dining room and you know maybe two people in the whole dining room. And its like anything, gets big, gets successful and the real stir up is, there are a lot of little clicks I'm sure but there just isn't the coordination there used to be. But on the other hand you've got to remember, I'm getting older than hell and I'm not around the docks much or anything.

OP: Did you have any involvement in the Amercia's Cup?

MC: No, never have. The closest involvement I had, was when Dennis Connor came out the front door one day and comes up, puts his arm around my shoulder, and says, "Mortamer, you know this having to raise money for this thing is a real pain." And I said, "Dennis, you kids got to pay for your toys." I never donated a dollar. I think the America's Cup is the biggest joke I've ever seen in my life. And I never liked it. I would love to see all those boats that they've got, and all the money and all the talent they got of there, I would like to see a 5 vs. 7 race series with every boat racing every race. And whoever wins, wins. Only one boat per country of course. But it would really be one hell of a spectacle, where two boats chasing each other around, a boat length a part, is as boring as the day is long.

OP: You mentioned Dennis Connor, did you ever sail with him? Or did you guys sail on boats together?

MC: Very seldom, he sailed with us on Carousel a few times. He got his break because of me. I was going to race to Acapulco with Ash and my mother had a stroke and was in a coma. So two weeks before the start, I had to go tell Ash there is no way I can go because she could come to, the doctor doesn't think she would, but she could. And I can't get off the boat once we start because the boat

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would be out of the race and all the problems that went with it. So Dennis took my place. Well Ash became a mentor for Dennis. I mean Ash was his mentor. Up till then, the only two people Ash had mentored were Malin and myself. And hell, every time we were racing out there, we would hear a motor and look around behind you and there is Carousel right behind you and after you get in, you come over to the Carousel and Ash tells you everything you did wrong.

OP: Would you say that a lot of people have learned a lot about sailing from Ash?

MC: Not really. Because he didn't share with other people. He shared with his crew and he only really mentored at that time, Malin and myself. But a lot of people, learned from Ash, on the standpoint, he makes a boat go faster than anyone else.

OP: What effect does the emphasis on environment in San Diego, mean to you, in terms of the water? What impact has it had.

MC: Well, I think, like kids, as they said from Mission Hills, a bunch of them from Point Loma, we all got to know each other here. Well they kept about 25 young fellas out here playing football, having water fights with skiffs and that type of thing. But all sailing together and sailing against each other and all working on their boats, the Starlets, because we had probably 25 Starlets in those days. And we had an inspection every year at Opening Day, which one was in the best shape and all the things that went with it. But it took, I'd say, about 25 guys, I don't know if any of them ever got in trouble of any kind. So the only trouble I recall at all, is when the Driscoll brothers broke into a boat and stole some equipment. They got kicked out for a couple of years.

OP: Is there anything we haven't mentioned? You'd like to cover?

MC: I think I talk too much.

BK: No, I think we've had a wonderful discussion. You've covered a lot of good ground, and I think we should thank you for your contribution and call it a day at this point. We may come back with other questions when we listen to this and when you look when we transcribe it.

MC: Well be sure to check with Bud Caldwell on all that Starlet stuff because you so many sailors from Starlets went to the big boat. That was guys like Gary Gould and that whole gang.

OP: We will get that information

MC: Bud will bring it, when you talk to him he'll bring it

OP: When we had some pictures at Opening day down there, there were some Starlet pictures that George Lindley spotted and said "Hey, that's my boat!" So it's fairly been fascinating what Bob has been able to do to bring the history together.

MC: Well its generation, after generation, generation of Starlets, that came along and then the majority of those guys went into the other classes and crews and etc.

OP: Thank you Mortamer.

MC: Thank you gentlemen. **Recording at 67:34 at end of Interview.**