

My Knowledge of the History of the Skipjack 'Ada Mae'

(Chesterpeake or Chester Peake)

My name is Raymond Ward Morrison Jr. My father, Raymond Sr. saved the Skipjack 'Ada Mae' from being scrapped in the early 1960's.

In his spare time, to make extra money, he would find old boats that were in disrepair and fix them up. I have many photos of the boats he rescued back then. As I remember, when I was around 6 or 7 years old, Dad found the Ada Mae on Tilghman Island in Maryland (Photo 1). He would travel the Eastern Shore of Maryland looking for boats to refinish and sell. After getting her able to float, she was towed to Ethel's Boatyard at the head of Frog Mortar Creek, a head water of Middle River in Maryland. The boatyard is long gone but it was directly behind 'Bengie's Drive-in Theatre. It is there that the following photos were taken (Photos 2-6). We used the Ada Mae the boating season after Dad finished her. I remember taking her down Middle River under engine power till we got past Hart and Miller Islands in the Chesapeake Bay, than the sails would go up (Photos 7-10).

At that time Dad worked at National Brewing Company in the Maintenance Department. From what I remember, National Brewing Company leased the 'Ada Mae' from Dad originally and at some point in time bought the boat. The Palmer Marine 2 cylinder engine that was originally going to be placed in the Ada Mae (Photos 11 & 12) was traded for a Universal Atomic 4 marine engine. Johnson and Towers Marine that was located on Holabird Avenue in Dundalk, MD, wanted the Palmer engine for their display and Dad was more than willing to trade for a newer, more powerful motor.

At one point some years after he sold the Ada Mae to National Brewing Company, he bought the previous boat that they used for promotions, a Ketch rigged sailboat (Photos 13 & 14). I still have 2 pair of the rope blocks from her. Dad would eventually end up with his own Marina in Baltimore and for many years would travel the East coast looking for unusual and unique boats to buy and restore. I have many photos of some of them and I also helped restore several. All were wooden and other than the Ada Mae, all are now just memories of yesterday.

If you follow this link it will show the 'Ada Mae' as I remember her, originally with the pelican logo. You may notice that the mast is shorter than when my Dad owned her. I remember Dad saying that National Brewing Company had shortened the mast and boom because they didn't want to operate her that fast.

https://books.google.com/books?id=RDpGWABMvZsC&pg=PA77&lpg=PA77&dq=skipjack+chester+peak e&source=bl&ots=Ki1_Y8OlvS&sig=cYp0fzHewb6Je5Kr8izN_JDzEes&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0ahUKEwiRjuCxsKnRAhUr34MKHXV2C-MQ6AEIjAB#v=onepage&q=skipjack%20chester%20peake&f=false

The following links are what I believe to be the information that was relayed to you by Mr. Phillips' widow and I have included part of the info I have found on Mr. Hennessy. I can assure you that key statements to the prominence of the skipjack are not correct. The photos that are included show that the ownership and restoration was done by my Dad and I was there helping him. It seems that Mrs. Phillips has recalled the events incorrectly. I do remember that the 'Chesterpeake or Chester Peake', I don't remember the correct spelling, was the name given to the Ada Mae by National Brewing Company when they leased her from my Dad. I didn't know that was the name of their pelican mascot, so I have learned something from this research. Mr. Phillips might have been the person hired to Captain the Ada Mae for National Brewing Company, I don't remember who they used. I do remember that Mr. Hennessy was the spokesperson for the brewery at that time. I had never met either of them.

http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2001-09-13/news/0109130057_1_chesapeake-bay-skipjack-phillips

September 13, 2001 | By Frederick N. Rasmussen | Frederick N. Rasmussen, SUN STAFF

William T. Phillips, a retired launch operator for the Association of Maryland Pilots and former owner of the Chester Peake, the famed skipjack that sailed the bay as a goodwill ambassador for the National Brewing Co., died Monday of a heart attack at Johns Hopkins Hospital. He was 73.

The 40-year South Ellwood Avenue resident, who was born into a family of tugboat and barge operators, got his first taste of the waterfront as a youth.

"His one uncle had tugboats at the foot of Wolfe Street, and another had barges near the old Arundel Co. cement plant in Fells Point, and that's where Bill was introduced to working and running boats as a teen-ager. And he got to know the harbor like the back of his hand," said his wife of 49 years, the former Helen Baranauskas.

Born in Baltimore and raised in East Point and Fells Point, Mr. Phillips was a graduate of St. Patrick's Parochial School.

He served two years in the Army as a military policeman at Fort Gordon in Georgia, and after his discharge in 1952, went to work for the Owens Yacht Co. in Dundalk, testing newly built boats.

In 1954, he went to work for the Association of Maryland Pilots operating the association's launch that picked up or delivered pilots to ships entering or departing the port of Baltimore.

His territory ranged from the Inner Harbor to North Point, Curtis Bay to Sparrows Point, and even Seven Foot Knoll in the bay.

"He loved boats, and when he was on one, he was in his glory," said Capt. Randy Bourgeois, a Chesapeake Bay pilot and member of the association.

"He was very personable and always had a big smile and a story," he said. "Bill was well-respected and loved by our pilots."

Mrs. Phillips said her husband was on call seven days a week and worked nights to make sure pilots got on and off the vessels on schedule.

"He'd go out in all kinds of weather, and it made no difference if it was foggy or stormy, he'd never let a pilot lay over on a ship," she said.

He retired in 1990.

Mr. Phillips found a 1915-vintage Chesapeake Bay skipjack, the Ada Mae, in a Kent Island marina in the 1960s.

He restored the boat and re- christened it the Chester Peake.

During the 1960s and early 1970s, it cruised the bay, from the C&D Canal to Smith Island, for the Baltimore brewery.

On board was the brewery's spokesman, Frank Hennessy, dressed in nautical attire, who was later dubbed "The Commodore of the Chesapeake Bay" by Maryland Gov. Theodore R. McKeldin.

Its sail was embroidered with a large drawing of Mr. Boh, the one-eyed, mustachioed waiter who had promoted National Bohemian beer since the 1930s.

The vessel became the weekend venue for Mr. Hennessy, whose broadcasts for radio station WCBM mixed colorful weather and fishing reports with Tidewater trivia.

Mr. Phillips donated the vessel in the 1990s to a North Carolina maritime foundation.

"He was a great conversationalist, and a visit with Captain Bill never lasted less than three hours," said Elaine Eff, Maryland folklorist and former neighbor.

He was a communicant of St. Brigid's Roman Catholic Church, Ellwood Avenue and Hudson Street, where a Mass of Christian burial will be offered at 10:30 a.m. Saturday.

In addition to his wife, he is survived by a son, Mark Phillips of Owings Mills; a daughter, Linda Smit of Phoenix, Baltimore County; and four grandchildren.

http://articles.baltimoresun.com/2000-01-15/features/0001150379_1_hennessy-chesapeake-bay-chester-peake

A former WBAL Radio personality, Hennessy joined National in 1957 and worked there until 1975.

In his role as company spokesman, he delighted audiences with his colorful weekend fishing and weather reports and anecdotes, which he broadcast over WCBM Radio from the decks of the Chester Peake, a 1915-vintage Chesapeake Bay skipjack that National used for promotional purposes. (The skipjack's sail was embroidered with a large drawing of Mr. Boh, the one-eyed, mustachioed waiter that had been promoting National Bohemian beer since the 1930s.)

Dubbed "Commodore of the Chesapeake" by Gov. Theodore Roosevelt McKeldin, Hennessy was a familiar figure to Bay yachtsman as he cruised the Bay from the the C & D Canal to Smith Island, dressed in a snappy nautical cap, white duck pants and blue blazer.

"During the summer months we'll be cruising the Chesapeake Bay, attending races, regattas and other special events, hoping that Chester Peake will serve as a graceful symbol of the wonderful Land of Pleasant Living," he told The Sun.













