

**SARASOTA COUNTY WATER ATLAS  
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
NEW COLLEGE OF FLORIDA—FALL 2010**



**Interview with:** Patrick “Pat” Murphy  
**Date of Interview:** October 31, 2010  
**Interviewer:** Willis Schueler  
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**Schueler:** So, could you—just to start—state your name?

**Murphy:** Name is Patrick Murphy.

**Schueler:** And, could you tell me a bit about your background, where you’re from?

**Murphy:** Born in Iowa, came down here first time in ‘48. I actually, pardon me, came down here for the first time in ‘43. I was very young. Then, we moved to California for two years, Kenosha, Missouri for two years, and back here in ‘48. Been here most of the time since then, except I went to Florida State in ‘54 for a Bachelor’s degrees, then Tulane for a Master’s degrees in the early ‘60s. Been back here since ‘69.

**Schueler:** When you first moved to Sarasota, you were about starting high school, that sort of age?

**Murphy:** Oh, I was in 2nd grade in elementary school at Southside.

**Schueler:** My math must’ve been bad. When you first moved here did you spend a lot of time on the water? What was your relationship to the water?

**Murphy:** Oh no, this town had about 10 to 12 thousand people and it was during the war. When we came back it was still small in the late ‘40s, early ‘50s. It would grow a little bit in the ‘50s, spurts. And then, it really jumped later on.

**Schueler:** So, but for you personally, when you did first get really involved with the water? Sailing, or any other activity?

**Murphy:** That was in actually ‘48 or ‘49. We met a kid by the name of Cliff Fox who had a paper route. My brother had a paper route at the time. He had a pram. He got the first pram that the Sarasota Sailing Squadron had. It was built by a guy by the name of Stan Lowe, who had a boat building place out at the old airport in one of the barracks. He gave us rides in it, and we got, shall we say, bit by the sailing bug, and I got the first pram in the family. It was the Mather Furniture Co. pram, and my brother later on got the Sea Gypsy Boat Co. pram, which was the one Cliff Fox had because he had gotten a

little large, you know. We sailed for a couple years in those things, had a great time, and were totally bit as a consequence.

**Schueler:** Could you clarify for me the relationship with the Sailing Squadron? I know you mentioned that in your response.

**Murphy:** Well, they started when I was a kid. We started hanging out at the old city pier. That was when Sarasota was a much smaller place. We in a sense had a little club down there. Or, actually we had friends down there. We hung out at the old Johnson Marine Supply hardware store, which was on Palm Avenue and then later on over on Main Street until we went to college.

**Schueler:** Ok. Give me one second.

**Murphy:** Like a lot kids, you go to college, you learn a trade or for me, I became a schoolteacher. Then you came back to where you grew up in some cases. And you start doing the kind of sports you did when you were a kid. Since sailing was the sport I did, I started doing that. I started crewing on some of the small cruisers they had. They had races that would go from Big Pass all the way up to Bradenton and back again. We raced on one of those boats. In fact, a variety of boats until eventually we got our own in the middle '70s, which was a San Juan 21. It went from one thing to the next, and eventually I became Commodore at the Sailing Squadron for a couple years. At the time, the squadron was totally...there wasn't anything out here. There was a small house back there, there were about five boats out in the yard. One of mine was one of the boats. When I became Commodore, our platform was to open the place up, and start making it act like a club. Which we did.

**Schueler:** So, you say beforehand it was just a very small sort of club.

**Murphy:** Oh, it was extremely. It was not utilized very much. It was open like once a month for an event such as a race or something like that. We decided to open it basically seven days a week. And somehow we did.

**Schueler:** And whenabouts was this?

**Murphy:** Somehow we did this.

**Schueler:** When was this, basically?

**Murphy:** '79 and '80 I was Commodore. In '81, I became club manager. The idea there was to keep everything going like it had before because the squadron had had a long history of having great ups, I mean with a certain Commodore. And, the next Commodore wouldn't anything, so here it would fall down. But, I decided to give as much structure to the place as I possibly could. Which is having a race schedule, an event schedule. Which is basically still there. Which became the heart and soul of the place when you get right down to it. It kept it going, plus the fact that we started attracting lots of customers or members through our boat storage out here, which we didn't have before. And, that really made the place.

**Schueler:** In that response you talked about some of the events that were the regular and instituted. Can you talk a bit about those?

**Murphy:** We would start the year off with a Hangover race. Two weeks later, we would have the Snowbird Regatta, which was a subtitled a "winter warm-up," which generally happened. Then, we

would go to the Cherry Pie in February, and various other regattas in April. We started attracting national regattas such as the Lasers and the San Juan 21s were down here for a while. Every month we would have some function that highlighted the month. For the Fourth of July, we started something called the Firecracker 400. Wasn't there something called the Firecracker 400 for a auto race someplace or five hundred, something like that? We just patterned it after that. Our big regatta was naturally Labor Day, which dates all the way back to 1946. That was the main goal in terms of regattas we had. We had the Great Pumpkin. Did that go on yesterday, I think something like that for Halloween. Commodore's Cup we started in December. Commodore's Cup, it's one of the bigger ones. Probably because it also dovetails with the boat parade that starts out here in the bay, you know there's a lot of people out here during that time. There's a lot of people out here during that time. All these things, basically gave the squadron structure, a reason for being as well as storage facilities here, and the docks.

**Schueler:** You would definitely say then with this structure, that drew people in.

**Murphy:** Oh yeah. They would look at this place like they'd found heaven. This is how we used to be, you know. It's small. Most of these people came from up north. Many of their clubs became larger, and more static in terms of their membership. Started having, you know, too much structure. They liked it here because it was sorta loose. They still do.

**Schueler:** Was that one of those things you keep trying to maintain in this day and age?

**Murphy:** I do. I haven't been manager for two years, so it's become a little less more structured since I left. Soon to change. (Laughter)

**Schueler:** Going more back to your story, so, I presume in these regattas you've sailed a lot, right?

**Murphy:** Well, at one time I used to. Back in the '70s and early '80s. After I became club manager, gradually things got to the point where I really had to stay on the property more and be here for these things to occur properly. At one time, I was doing the race committee work, I'd give awards out, I'd do everything. The idea was that a lot of the people that did these things normally or were supposed to be doing them had other things to do in the course of the week. I'd make sure everything was set up, so if they wanted to come in and do this particular thing, it would all be there. For a while, I used to give out awards and stuff like that. Eventually, people started to step up to the bat. So, I drew back.

**Schueler:** So, when you were involved more in the sailing of the races, do you have any favorite memories from that?

**Murphy:** Oh, I don't know.

**Unidentified friend:** First time he beat me.

**Murphy:** I can go back farther than that. When I got first place in the San Juan 21 mid-winters in working sails. We had one helluva race out there. It was blowing 35 out of the north. I mean, this cold front came through and all I had to do was stay ahead of a particular guy, a boat, and win it. I did. I mean it was hanging on for dear life. I mean the kid I had with me, he was light. I didn't weigh that much. Never have. But, we hung on, and stayed ahead of this guy, by the name of Fred Greene, and were able to win the regatta as a consequence. It was quite a race, four or five foot waves out there, you know. Just on the north side of that bar. It was something else.

**Schueler:** In that, you mentioned you had a kid with you. Was that a common thing to do when you racing?

**Murphy:** You had to have a crew for the San Juan 21. It's got two sails and you need the weight to hold the boat down, and you have to crew for that. It was a 21-foot boat, and the bigger the boat, the more the crew that's needed. If you got a spinnaker with the boat, which some of them have. You need three people to handle the sails. But, I only had two, so it was a two hand deal. It was a good time, but gradually things got to the point where I just had to drop out of that kind of activity and do the club thing. Other than that, we had a hand in building everything out here. We had a bunch of guys who came in here and had the expertise to do things like this. I made a drawing of this on a piece of paper, and they built it. The only thing they changed is they put these 4x4s to support this extra wide roof, which is smart. That's what Jay Vellum did.

**Schueler:** So, with this, and basically the whole club. You would say volunteer labor, giving back to the squadron, was prevalent?

**Murphy:** Oh yeah. Being a school teacher, I had for twenty-seven years a part time job. Gradually, when I became club manager, the part time job was the Sarasota Sailing Squadron. When I retired in '96, the squadron became a full time job. From '96 until 2008, I had one job for a change, which meant I worked 50-60 hours a week on it instead of forty.

**Schueler:** And entirely unpaid, right?

**Murphy:** Oh no, I got paid for it. It was not a lot, but it was....I started out at five thousand, went to seventy-five hundred, and then ten thousand, then twelve-fifty gradually worked up to about forty-two, which wasn't a lot money compared to what they're paying the present manager to do.

**Unidentified Friend:** We're getting screwed left and right.

**Murphy:** You got that. They don't do half as much as I did.

**Schueler:** When you were club manager, can you just describe a bit what you did on a day to day basis?

**Murphy:** In opening this place up? First thing you do, because you got a bar in there, the first thing you got to do is take care of the cash register. Make sure it balances, or comes close to it. Not always perfect, sometimes it is. Then, you got your paperwork to do in the office. Then, you got to go out and do an inventory of boats. You do that at least four times a year. It takes a while to get ready for it. You gotta bill people for these things. Make sure they pay what they need to pay and so on. I'd do the billing at the first year, and everything would go on the machine. In like '85 or '86, we switched to a computer from a hand entry system, which gradually made things much easier, easier to keep track of data, much easier.

**Schueler:** So, just a clarification for me. To have a boat stored either on land or on water, it costs... or?

**Murphy:** Oh yeah, there's certain costs associated. We try to keep the costs low. I mean, they've gone up considerably since that time, though, which wasn't long ago. They keep raising it because they think they need more money. But they didn't need any more money now then when I stopped in 2008.

**Schueler:** So, you'd say what's the main factor... Never mind. Would you say storing your boat here is much more affordable than...?

**Murphy:** Oh, it's much more affordable. The rates here are dirt cheap compared to what it would be in a commercial marina. I mean... the boats out there, the only thing they pay on the mooring field is for a dinghy to either store here, or use one of the club's dinghies to go back and forth. That's all they pay. That's about two hundred dollars a year. I mean they got a lot of costs associated with having a mooring out there. Gotta install it, gotta maintain, gotta maintain the boat because the barnacle situation. That involves having a diver go down on it, and if you do it right, it's every month. The boats in here, these boats they pay a higher rate than what they do on land. The boats that pay the least would be the small prams, the seven and a half foot prams over there with the white sterns. The boats in the racks pay a bit more, about twice as much and so on. But, all that income goes into a general fund, and basically the general fund is used to fund various buildings that we have here because from time to time they have to be maintained. And, for a period of time we were replacing them. The structures we have here right now are fairly good for another ten, twenty, thirty years. The clubhouse was basically redone the last time in the year 2000. The original clubhouse, we started out with it, is inside. It's where you have the Florida Power and Light poles supporting the flat roof up there. Well, roof over that thing is now an aluminum roof. It definitely has a slope to it, it's not flat like the original roof was. Everything's been built basically around the structure in terms of the clubhouse. The original building out here is the stone house, which is out back. That was designed to support a concrete floor with stone walls, and basically a clubhouse that would look out over the bay. It was never built because it was really too much of a leap, too expensive at the time. They came down here, and starting modifying a lean-to that they put up where the present structure is, present clubhouse is. There was a barbecue pit over towards the water, that was very ramshackle, run-down, and that was rebuilt several years ago.

**Schueler:** So the original clubhouse, the one with the FPL poles, was built with volunteer labor?

**Murphy:** It was all volunteer labor. The materials that we used to construct it with was all donated or stolen or whatever. I don't know. But, it all had a history going back to 1958 when they started erecting things out here. It was done by basically Florida Power and Light people because they were the early members of the club, not that they were the only members of the club, but they were the working people. The guys who put the place together. They were low buck people, and we kept the dues, and storage fees, and things like that low buck as a consequence.

**Schueler:** With the mooring and storage fees so much lower than a commercial marina, do you know a lot of people and families that if this didn't exist couldn't afford to have a boat or to sail frequently?

**Murphy:** Oh yeah, a lot of people couldn't do it. I mean, if this didn't exist you wouldn't have any place for any of this stuff out here. Other than somebody's backyard or garage if you could get in there. Most garages become full of junk that people buy, and I mean, some of these boats take up a lot of space. There's probably three hundred boats on trailers out here, or maybe two hundred boats on trailers out here not counting the small boats over there. And basically, it takes a lot of traffic out of the various launching ramps as a consequence of having them stored here. Plus, this is the site for doing regattas. And, regattas in Florida, all the places along the coast, various lakes and whatnot around the country, are big things. A lot of people are drawn to it because a lot of people do this. It's a green activity. There's very little pollution involved in it. Not like the big muscle boats they bring up and down the Pass and run around the island every now and then. A lot of kids are involved in this activity over there. In the summer, which is when they do their prime courses, they get a lot of kids going through their program. A hundred, two hundred kids take classes out here, and some of them continue

during the year. In fact, right now I think there's some kids over there that are going to do a sailing class on Sunday. I mean, all of this has evolved. It's not something, shall we say, that was designed to happen now, and did. It's not something that the public, or the city, or the county has to afford or has to pay for. It's something that they paid for, and we provide the property for it. The small boats over there, the prams, a bunch of Lasers that they use in their sailing programs are all granted free storage. Just for teaching sailing here. What's it gonna cost, thirty, thirty-one million for a rowing facility, which I think is a wonderful thing. But, it didn't cost anything. Yet, there's probably two million dollars worth of structures out here. Very little to maintain it, ya know.

**Schueler:** Just talking more about the kids' programs. Do you have to be a member of the Sailing Squadron for your kid to do it?

**Murphy:** Anyone can sign up for it as long as they got space for it in the summer. They start doing their sign ups in early or middle spring, and by the time school lets out in the early part of June, they're in full force. They stop once school starts up again.

**Schueler:** Is there programs on offer for adults?

**Murphy:** Ok, for adults. Years ago, one of our members started a Red Cross class for adult sailing, and it still continues. There was at one time, I don't think it's there anymore, but we had classes out here for the handicapped with a program called SALT. It still may be here, but I don't think so right now. I know they have sailing classes up in St. Pete for them. They used to have them here. All of these come and go. Most of them stay, they just constantly modify.

**Schueler:** When you go out in the water, what do enjoy about that?

**Murphy:** It's quiet. One of things I like to do when I sail, and I got a 18-foot Marshall Cat Boat, which I race some Sundays in the motley races. I like to race. I mean, I started out racing prams, and I still like to race. I raced my San Juan, I had a Santana 20 for a while that I raced until I started full fledged as manger here, and couldn't do it anymore. But, I still like to race.

**Schueler:** So on Sundays, is there like informal racing, is that what you were implying?

**Murphy:** It's basically informal. You don't have a race committee or anything like that. You got a time that you start, and basically when you finish, you record your finish time, and basically hand it in at the finish. They'll know exactly where you were. It's very informal. When you doing formal racing, there are costs associated with that. You have to have a race committee. You have to have a powerboat out there for the race committee. You have to have starts and finishes that are very formalized. But, not with the motley races, which draws fifteen, sixteen boats just about every time.

**Schueler:** Would you say the Sailing Squadron is a fairly unique thing for Florida or in general?

**Murphy:** It's unique the way it was done. It's unique in the fact that it has as many boats out here stored. That's basically where our prime income comes from, other than from our dues. We started when I became Commodore under the platform of opening the place up. We had seventy-five members in the club. Both women and men, they were counted separately. Now, we finished in like 2007 with 954 memberships. In other words, some time in this period time, instead of counting the wife and the husband as being separate members, they combined them as a family membership. It changed the way you count things. We finished with 954 in 2007, it might of been 2006. But, gradually since then its gone down to the point where they have a little over 800 memberships. That probably has something to

do with the state of the economy, and whatever. It'll go back up again.

**Schueler:** Do you think the Sailing Squadron, something like this, could be started today?

**Murphy:** As long as they had the property. And they had people who would put their shoulders to the grindstone, and start to build it. Nowadays, basically what they do....you don't have the property on the waterfront like you used to. That's why it would be a shame to have this place go. I mean, Sarasota needs the Sarasota Sailing Squadron. I mean, really needs the Sarasota Sailing Squadron because all of the activity that takes place here. I mean over on the other part of City Island, you've got the Outboard Club. The Outboard Club has very few members over there. They don't store boats, and they have a nice clubhouse, but it's only open for parties. Basically, what the squadron used to back in the late 70s. By opening this place up and running it seven days a week with various activities, has really been the key to the whole thing. I mean, because not everybody can come out here on the weekend and do something. But, other people come out here constantly during the week and take their boats out, and go sailing. Plus, you got your classes. Sometime around the year 2000, or a later than that, I started storing kayaks here because I got people coming in wanting to find a place to store a kayak. Up in the upper part of those storage structures over there, where it's very difficult to lift a boat to. You could put a kayak up there because they're so much lighter. And, I started doing that and we got a lot of people who use their kayaks on the weekend out here, and during the week for that matter.

**Schueler:** Would you just talk a little bit how public access to the water has changed as you have been living in Sarasota?

**Murphy:** When I was a kid, all the activity was over at the old city pier, which is where Marina Jack is right now. Everybody used to launch their boats on Golden Gate Point because there were several properties over there, which were undeveloped, and there was this seawall that was eroded. So, they had a place to launch, and they could store their trailer while the boat was in the water. Since then, you've got various places in the city that have built places to launch boats, but it's primarily for motorboats, like Centennial Park, and over here where I call Bob's Fish Camp, which is the public launching facility on City Island. And I guess, there's various other places in Sarasota also. What's happened in Sarasota with the exception of here and the various city parks, you got a lot of buildings over there that have been constructed since then, you know. There's very little access for city residents as a consequence. Like from where the John Ringling Causeway ends over there on Golden Gate Point right along the bay front. One time, you could walk along there. You can't do that anymore. Maybe you will some day, who knows.

**Schueler:** You lease this land from the city, correct?

**Murphy:** This land is leased from the city. We had a license, in perpetuity, and the city decided to change that in 1988, and give us a lease. And, the price of the lease was based on non-city memberships. And, for non-city memberships, they pay fifty percent more which goes directly to the city of Sarasota for the membership and fifty percent more for the initiation fees. Those fees go directly to the city of Sarasota, which amounts to a little more than forty thousand dollars a year.

**Schueler:** I read recently that you renewed your lease?

**Murphy:** Well, I don't know. They are gonna talk about it tomorrow down at City Hall. It seems that the staff they needed, that they needed direction or didn't want to follow the city's dictates. Basically, when I listened to it, I listened to it on TV, it sounded like what they wanted to do was reconfigure all leases at a twenty-five year term. I mean, one of the city commissioners, by the name of Turner, wants

to have at a five-year term, and twenty thousand dollars more, and raise rate. The city commissioners, three of them, voted to leave it at approximately forty thousand, which is where it is right now, and make it twenty-five years. What they also sounded like is that they wanted all the other leases to be configured at like twenty-five years, too. Somehow, the staff wants to go back for more direction, or they didn't agree with this or whatnot. They're going to have another meeting down there, which I guess a lot of squadron members will go to.

**Schueler:** How do you think that the fee increase and cutting the lease to five years will affect the squadron?

**Murphy:** It will reduce the membership. Every time you have a fee increase, they've raised the dues three times actually since I was manager, and two of those times were probably unnecessary. Every time they do that, they drop members, and consequently what they bring in is less.

**Schueler:** When you started, what were the fees like? What are they like now?

**Murphy:** I think initiation fee was may have been twenty-five years and the membership was ten dollars. Gradually, we changed it. It went up to thirty five, and eventually sixty for a membership. Then for city membership, it was like a hundred about the time I left or a hundred and five or something like that. It's gone up considerably since then. I just don't know what it is. I don't keep track what it is.

**Schueler:** I think this is probably good for today. You have anything closing things you want to say?

**Murphy:** No, no I don't.

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**Interview with: Patrick "Pat" Murphy**

**Date of Interview: November 7, 2010**

**Interviewer: Willis Schueler**

**Date of Transcription: November 11, 2010**

**Schueler:** Going back to where we were at the beginning, the "Old Florida" sort of feel to the club, could you go on about that?

**Murphy:** Basically, this is post-and-beam construction, which is what most of the early structures were patterned after. I designed that structure back there over the deck. That was basically taken from the lean-to's that had out on Siesta Key at the beach. The various lean-tos they have around City Island are patterned the same way. That's over thirty years old. That structure over there is where our original bandstand was, that went out on the Point. That was picked up by a guy with a crane, and we strapped it down, and it's been there since about fifteen years or more. This is basically how the structures in Florida were built years and years ago, and it's been kept low key. The place is nautical. We have these pilings cut-offs out there to delineate where the cars can park, and stuff like that, but that's about it as far I'm concerned.

**Schueler:** Just moving beyond architecture, you'd say the clubhouse has a feel or spirit out of Old Florida as well?

**Murphy:** Oh yeah. It was done cheap. This structure right here was not cheap. The renovation was much more expensive. It's not as expensive as it would be to build it today because they require greater

wind speeds and things like that. Anyway, this is not air conditioned for one thing. The only thing that's air conditioned is the office, and the kitchens, and the restrooms, which is only used on Labor Day. It gets real hot here at the time, and we have a big regatta, probably fifteen hundred people here. It's nice to have a place that they don't have to sweat in. Generally, there's enough wind coming through here and ventilation, it's nice. Even in the summer it can be nice.

**Schueler:** Would you say the character among the membership has an Old Florida sort of feel?

**Murphy:** Oh yeah. Yes it does. I mean that's why your docks look so rickety. That one out there dates to 1965. The concrete piling underneath is ready to go. The green piling on the side we'll probably keep in place for another five to ten years, no problem. In fact, there supposed to be replaced next year, which is probably the way to go.

**Schueler:** So, going back to a couple of previous questions. You said for a big regatta, like Labor Day, you get fifteen hundred people out here. What's it like for that?

**Murphy:** There's people all over the place. All the areas outside on both sides down to Mote Marine are full of cars and trailers and things like that. We used to bring Porta-Potties when we didn't have restrooms. We don't do that anymore. Haven't done that in quite awhile. We had phone banks out here so people could make telephone calls and now they all got cell phones. We do have a pay phone out here on the wall, which they maintain in case somebody doesn't have a cell phone. Most people have a cell phone now, so you don't have to worry about it.

**Schueler:** I know we went over this earlier, you said that's there a wide variety of people in the Sailing Squadron. Racers, cruisers, Luffing Lassies. Could you go over that and sort of explain what they do?

**Murphy:** Okay. As I said, the club originally started as a racing club. When it was started back on the other side of the Bay back in the late '40's and the early '50's, they raced in a class known as the penguin. That was the first dinghy that was popular that they raced in. Before that, they had a small boat called a moth, which was built at home. All these boats were built in their backyards. When it got to penguin, you had boat builders that started building those things because they had certain specifications. They had molds or jigs that they would build the hull on, and then the put the rest of it together. And then, by the time you got to the '60s, fiberglass came along. We got even larger boats that were built. That's when your small cruisers started. During the '60s and '70s, a lot of these early designs were built, especially up in St. Pete and Tampa, they built a whole bunch. The Morgans, The Erwins all those things came from there. They did it elsewhere, too. That's when sailing became even more affordable. Before then, everything had to be hand built.

**Schueler:** Were you involved at all in hand-building boats?

**Murphy:** Not really. I worked for a boat builder here by the name of Stan Lowe when I was a kid about 1949 or '50. I worked one summer. He'd pick me up on Central Avenue, and take me to his shop out at the old airport. This was after....after the war, there was a bunch of barracks out there. It was an army airport or army air corps, or whatever you want to call it. The barracks were leased to various people around the town for small businesses. And, he had one where he set up a boat shop. I worked building penguins and small fishing boats and things like that with him. That's all I did. These other guys they built their boats in their back yard and they did a great job. They even made their own sails in many cases. Some of these guys who started making sails in their backyards or in their houses, they started opening lofts. Most of the ones were opened up in Tampa or St. Pete, but they're still in production. They've gone through a variety of changes. We've got several here in Sarasota too that do that.

**Schueler:** One point from the previous question. You said they made their own sails. Is that a hard task to do?

**Murphy:** Oh, I think it is. I wouldn't know where to start. Most of the ones who are in the sail-making business today have various computer programs that allow them to design the sails better than what they did back then. Sails, when I was a kid, were made of Egyptian cotton. You had to go through a process of breaking it in. If you didn't break it in right, you would have baggy sail when you needed one that was a littler flatter and would weather better. Then they went to nylon, and then they went to Dacron. Once you got to Dacron, the sail would hold its shape much better. They've gone various materials since then that are even better.

**Schueler:** You said the Sailing Squadron started on the other side of the Bay. Where was it located before it came to City Island?

**Murphy:** Basically, around where Marina Jack is. That's the old city pier. As I think I told you last time, they launched their boats on City Island because it was right across the bay front. You didn't have any storage in the Marina Jack's area, nothing but just a pier, a place for powerboats and sailboats to tie up.

**Schueler:** One of things you said about the advent of fiberglass is that made sailing more available to the masses...

**Murphy:** Oh yeah. According to a friend of mine, Walter Fox, who basically started, he was the founder of the Sarasota Sailing Squadron, back in the late '30s, early '40s said that fiberglass boat building ruined sailing in terms of one designs. All these guys went to small cruisers. They had a hodgepodge of different kinds. So, they had to race under a handicap system in order to equalize the outcome. The classes that you had at the time: penguins, moths, thistles, and whatnot did not become very popular for while. They fell out of vogue shall we say. It hasn't been until the last thirty years that you started to get another class back, that's very the popular, which is called the Laser. That's because it's used primarily right now for training kids how to sail once they leave the Optimus Dinghy, which is the pram. It is what was called the Clearwater Pram because it was designed in Clearwater by a guy by the name of Clark Wilson. I bet there is a hundred thousand boats in the class right now worldwide. The same is true of the Laser. Very popular.

**Schueler:** So, when there are regattas now, do you still do handicap racing?

**Murphy:** They started out with Portsmouth at first, which is basically a rating system for very small classes of sailboats. Then they went to PHRF [Performance Handicap Racing Fleet], which is the one for the cruiser type boats. They've got various other rating systems they use for even larger, but PHRF is the most popular now. They had a CCA rule, Cruising Club of America rule, one time back in the '50s, '60s, and '70s which I don't know if they use anymore. It's basically PHRF, which is the Pacific Handicap Racing System, I think it's called. It works pretty good.

**Schueler:** But you still say it takes something out of the race...

**Murphy:** Oh yeah. It does. A lot of this stuff followed the improvement in computing power. You had big calculators like this, you'd have to use an adding machine to do the results, to do the division and whatnot. Eventually, it went to small hand held calculators, and now you've got programs on your computers that take care of this stuff and eliminate a lot of problems.

**Schueler:** You said that fiberglass aren't as affordable now, it's very expensive to get a new boat.

**Murphy:** Oh, yeah. Right now they are. Unless you got money or a lot of time to pay it off. I got a boat called a Marshall 18, which is a cat boat [catamaran]. I've had it for twenty-five years, at one time you could buy it for five to ten thousand dollars. Now, you've got to pay at least twenty-five if not thirty-five with everything on it. I mean, it has gotten much more expensive and they used to be cheaper. It's only an eighteen-foot boat, but it's a big eighteen.

**Schueler:** Would you say this as decreased access and availability to sailing to some people?

**Murphy:** Squadron always been open to everybody. Every kind of person as long as they got an interest in sailing and don't mind a few rudimentary rules about behavior and things like that. The squadron's very affordable, not as affordable as it used to be, but it is still affordable.

**Schueler:** You said there is some basic rules. Could you just say what they are?

**Murphy:** Well, for one thing you don't take a lot of time in the launching ramp. You put your boat in, move it out on the dock, and move your car, so somebody else can do the something. We do the same thing over at the hoist. You don't spend a lot of time under it. You know, very basic rules. You help other people when they need people, and there are people that need help all the time. You don't get drunk, you know. With sailors that are attracted to the sport, who do drink a little too much, and they get out of hand. I would say it's a no-no in most walks of life, most sports, or whatever.

**Schueler:** Would you say these rules came up as result of incidents?

**Murphy:** Oh yeah. We had a few people out here who gone overboard, and if they don't comply, they get drummed of the club. They just can't handle themselves. They make asses out of themselves, which is really easy once you start drinking.

**Schueler:** I don't think I ever got you talking about the Luffing Lassies and their history. Could you talk a bit about their history and how they operate?

**Murphy:** Well, I will repeat. Lily Kagen was the person who brought the concept of the Luffing Lassies down here from the Davis Island Yacht club. I forget what name they were called up there. I think in Clearwater, they were called the Broad Reachers. She brought the concept down here in the very, very early '70s, and it's evolved since then. It's become quite a large group of people. There was like fifteen to twenty at one time. Now, I bet there's thirty-five to forty, and they get new classes every year. They start the new girls out and teach them how to sail in the prams, and eventually, if they become really good, they start sailing Sunfish. Sunfish is a very popular boat with women because it's easy to handle. The Sunfish has a lateen rig, a triangular. Well anyway, the Laser has a Marconi rig. It's more difficult because it requires somewhat of a more heft and skill to sail, and that's what the kids sail. They also sails 420s and things like that. The Luffing Lassies basically stick to Sunfish, mostly. They go to all sorts of regattas, all over the state, and sometimes they even go to national regattas up in Connecticut. We've had people that have gone to Europe to compete in the sport over there in various classes for that matter.

**Schueler:** Is that common thing for people to do? To go to other places to compete?

**Murphy:** Oh, yeah. They do that all the time. They do it locally in this area, regionally. There are various national championships that are held elsewhere in the country. Especially the younger ones, go

up there to sail. Every now and then, you get a world championship. They go over to Europe or Thailand or wherever it happens to be to compete. They normally have to be finalists. We have a system that has grown up in the squadron called the Corinthian Fund. That's basically to give aspiring sailors a monetary form of support. It doesn't pay all of their expenses, it pays some of them. We've had here at Sailing Squadron...We've had various world championships. We had the mini 12s over here back in about 1995, I think it was or something like that. Most of those boats came from Europe. They brought them over here on container ships. They would dock on the East Coast, and they brought the containers over here, and offloaded them, and raced the boats here. Most of the boats were sailed by handicapped people. Mini 12 is a small...it's like a 12 meter, except that they sit inside of it, it's got a keel. For people that have limited mobility, they can sail it since it's rigged so they can sail it. We've had people from Sarasota who won the regatta while it was here. I forget what the guy's name was, but he was pretty good at one time. One time, we had flags in our foyer from around the world. When these people come to the club for a regatta like that, they always bring their club flag, and you trade 'em. I'd give them one of our squadron burgees for one of their burgees. A lot of the burgees came from Italy were made of silk, which is very unusual. Normally, they make it of cotton or Dacron, which can withstand the elements much more than nylon can. It deteriorates much more rapidly. We've had various classes they they've done that. We've also had some big Laser races down here. Particularly up until about 1990, we had several Laser mid-winters in February. We'd get two to three hundred lasers out in the Bay that raced. Sailors camp a lot. When we had the Yingling World Championship, which is another world championship. They came basically from Europe, and they had tents all over the place out there. I mean, they had a kitchen tent. Out there around the trees, you couldn't walk without stepping on a tent there was so many of them. Tenting is a big thing over in Europe, and it's definitely big as far as small boat sailing around the country, not so much with the big boat sailing because they sleep on the boat.

**Schueler:** You mentioned especially among young sailors, they've gone to particular regional, national competitions. Has there been a lot of success?

**Murphy:** Some of these people have done real well. To really find out who, you need to talk to somebody who's over at the YSP [Youth Sailing Program] much more than I am right now.

**Schueler:** I'm not really looking for specifics.

**Murphy:** I understand.

**Schueler:** Going on a bit of a different tack, you've been in Sarasota a long time. Can you comment a bit on how it has changed and grown up as a city?

**Murphy:** Well, I can sit here and I can see all sorts of big houses and see all sorts of big houses on the other side of the Bay. Two, three, four story houses over there, mansions. They're all over the place. The city of Sarasota has become a much more expensive place to live then when I was a kid. The sewer system is better. It has removed a lot of pollution from the Bay that used to be rampant at one time. When I was a kid, we did a lot of diving down at the old city pier. This was back in the early 1950s. The water was clear down there. I mean, very clear. It was remarkably so, even though the sewer system in Sarasota was not very good. Eventually in about 1952, they redid all the sewer systems in Sarasota. Spent a lot of money. It was so popular with the city commissioners that they decided they would come down to the city pier and go swimming to show that the Bay was now clean. They jumped in the water and went swimming. The city hall, where the city commissioners would meet, was in a building on the city pier. It was on the second story. They had one toilet up there. It dumped right into

the water. There was a small pipe that went out of the wall and it went right into the water. As kids, you think that's very humorous when you see these guys out there swimming as they're dumping sewage into it. The water has cleaned up considerably. We spent a lot of time out on the water. Never found manatees. There were no manatees around here. In the early '80s, it was the first time I've seen a manatee in the bay. I've asked some people even earlier than I who were members of the club, Billy Johnson and Stan Lowe. They'd never seen one before. They spent also a lot of time on the water. Didn't see one. I found out from a person over at Mote Marine that the manatees didn't really start coming back in force until they started building the power plants, where the warm water discharge. That's where they would go in the winter to warm up because they couldn't take the cold weather. There was some cold weather. That water... The last few days it's really dropped. It would freeze your feet if you put your feet in. Pretty cold.

**Schueler:** When you were a kid, you mentioned you spent a lot of time on the water. You said you would go diving. What else would you do?

**Murphy:** We'd sail our prams. We would play around in a small motorboat that the squadron owned at the time called Stinky. It had a four and half horsepower Briggs and Stratton engine in it. Basically, it was a small fishing type boat that they used for race committee work, and things like that. Us kids had the privilege of using it. We'd go up to Mar Vista, you know where Beer Can Island is. We'd camp up there. We'd camp on Jew Fish Key. You can't do that now because it's all privately owned. We'd do things like that. We'd go up and down the Bay at night, nearly get hit by a mullet boat. We didn't have lights. Coming down the Bay, you'd basically head to the Florida Power and Light generating plant, which was across by Centennial Park at the time. You could see that....It was lit up like Fifth Avenue. That's what you would use to tell you where everything was. You know, no compass. Fortunately because of the lights, you really didn't need it. And, no life jackets. That's something we didn't do.

**Schueler:** You mentioned going to Beer Can Island. Was it always called that? How did it get its name?

**Murphy:** It wasn't called Beer Can Island then. It was called Beer Can Island later back in the '70s and '80s stuff like that. At the time, it was just a beach that you would take your sleeping bag and curl up in your sleeping bag. Most of the time when we went up there, it was like in March or April when it was cooler. I remember one time when we were up there, the mosquitoes about drove us wild. Just unbelievable.

**Schueler:** So, today if you're looking to go sailing out and go camp somewhere, would you say there are as much opportunities as there were back then? Is it harder?

**Murphy:** I think you could still find places to stay. Probably not as many places that you could go now that you could go then. There's a lot of places with more facilities, which you can use if you have a boat you can sleep on, small cruisers something like that. There's a lot of places you can find amenities.

**Schueler:** I think just one more question. It's pretty cold out. Could you give me a quick update where the Sailing Squadron's negotiations with the city commission are going on the lease?

**Murphy:** Okay. As of last Monday, our Commodore-to-be, David Jennings, I watched it on TV, I didn't go down there because I didn't think there was any point in it. There were a bunch of Squadron members down there. They were under the impression that the city was going to handle the lease and they had some the indications from the city manager and from the staff of the city that they would going to require that they only be granted a sixty day extension. The Squadron rejected that sixty-day extension. They had done that before this meeting. It's been two years since the lease was up, and they

granted us a year extension each year since. They didn't feel that it was a good idea for us to keep extending this thing. They wanted to have our mission statement, which basically says that we're in business to teach sailing in all its various sailing... It's a very broad statement. They wanted it itemized, so they could quantify it. How do you quantify what we do? I don't know. Particularly the kind of terms that these guys are looking for like you do with Benderson Park. They talk about how many rooms these people when they come to town are going to rent. How much income it would be, etc. No way you do could that with sailing. Anyway, they told they didn't want to do a sixty-day extension, and Jennings reiterated this to them, and found out that the city had in a workshop that afternoon had basically decided to grant the squadron a twenty-five year lease without requiring the mission statement be quantified. So that's what they're supposed to do about the 14th. They're supposed to handle it officially. So, we'll see. Other than that, I would say they are on the way.

**Schueler:** Thank you for taking your time.

**Murphy:** Sure. I'm sorry I'm shaking.

**Schueler:** It's a cold morning, I understand. So, thank you and I think that will be about it.