

SAN DIEGO YACHT CLUB

Oral History Program

An Interview with Alexander “Bud” Caldwell 1924-

November 2, 2007

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Friday, November 2nd 2007. SDYC Library
Bud Caldwell (BC) “Man of the Sea” [Interviewee](#)
Oliver Peter (OP) and Bob Kyle (BK) [Interviewers](#)

OP: We’re here in the Library Board Room conducting an interview with SDYC member Bud Caldwell on Friday, November 2nd at 9:30 in the morning. Also present is Bob Kyle. Oliver Peter, and Bob are conducting the interview of long time member Bud Alex Caldwell, sometimes referred to as the man of the sea.

Start 00:48

OP: Ok, Bud, would you state your full name.

BC: Alexander Swank Caldwell

OP: And where were you born?

BC: San Diego, Mercy Hospital.

OP: And the date of your birth?

BC: 10-13-24

OP: And name your parents.

BC: My parents were Alex and Zora Caldwell.

OP: And they lived in San Diego for some time?

BC: 1923 they came.

OP: 1923. So you showed up pretty soon afterwards.

BC: Yes

OP: So were your parents involved with boating?

BC: No

OP: And what did your father do?

BC: He was a structural steel engineer.

OP: Now did he work in San Diego or did he travel?

BC: Well he, came out and kind of semi retired. He came out from Pittsburgh; Johnstone, Pennsylvania. Then he went back and forth maybe six months at a time sometimes to do a special project.

OP: But when they came to San Diego in '23 it was basically...

BC: Yeah, they stayed.

OP: They retired, ok. And you have brothers or sisters?

BC: Yes, a sister.

OP: And her name?

BC: Her name is Jean. She lives in Miami, Florida. But she was born here too.

OP: And did she have any interest in the water? Or was she involved in the water?

BC: No, not as far as boats go.

OP: Ok, where did you live when you were growing up?

BC: Lived in Mission Hills, on Arden Way.

OP: Now did you have friends there that drew you to the water?

BC: We had a whole group of boys...

OP: Who were they?

BC: Like Morgan Miller, who is a member of the club now, and Steve Hall, who was one of my friends. We did a lot of fishing and he bought a Starlet I crewed for him and we worked on the boat together.

OP: Now was he part of the Hall family, the one that had the ferry boats?

BC: No, he was stock broker with Morgan Miller's dad. He and Morgan Miller's dad were partners. And the Starlet, -- that's how I got started sailing.

OP: Was it the Hall family or another Hall family that was involved with the ferry?

BC: Right, a different Hall. No relation

OP: And what schools did you attend?

BC: Well I attended a bunch of grammar schools, because my father moved back and forth some. Went to Florence Grammar school first and I went to back East for six months and I can't even remember that school. And then I came out and went to Benjamin Franklin and Jefferson and then I finished up at Grant Middle School in Mission Hills, through the sixth grade.

OP: and then in High School?

BC: I went to Horace Mann junior high, which was up on Park Boulevard in El Cajon and then went to San Diego High.

OP: Was Horace Mann involved with more mechanical?

BC: It was a regular junior high, we had Horace Mann up on Park Boulevard and then they had Roosevelt. They were the two junior highs.

OP: Ok, so that was junior high, then high school

BC: Right, we went to ninth grade and then tenth through twelfth at San Diego High

OP: So what did you do after that? After graduation...And what year did you graduate?

BC: Oh, it was February of '43 I graduated from San Diego High and during my last semester I signed up for V5 Navy Aviation, with the government.

OP: Ok and then were you called shortly there after?

BC: No, I wasn't called, I went out to State College for one semester in February of '43 and then I worked at the boat yard after school.

OP: Was that Kettenburg's boat yard?

BC: Yes, I worked there until August and then I was called up. Morgan Miller and I were called together. Of all things, I don't know how that would ever happen, but it was wonderful because we've been lifetime friends, pretty nice.

OP: And then you went off to train? Where?

BC: I went off to boot camp in Norman, Oklahoma.

OP: Alright, tell me about the service. Did you move around a little bit?

BC: Oh a lot -- the whole time. I went to boot camp there and then worked on the flight line till there was room to go to Monmouth, Illinois. At Monmouth College we went half a day to ground school and half a day athletics, for three months Then I left there and went to Helena, Montana -- flew T crafts and Veronicas for three months and went to ground school and athletics half a day for another three months. Then, talk about training, then I went to St. Mary's preflight which was out in Moraga Hills behind Oakland, California -- St. Mary's College. I went there for five months, half a day ground school, half a day athletics.

OP: What kind of athletics, what were you involved in?

BC: All the different sports. I swam two hours a day for five months and had played soccer, football, wrestled and track

OP: Was that all part of the physical conditioning?

BC: All part of the physical conditioning. We had Olympic coaches and competition with the battalion competition. I mean it was an athlete's paradise.

OP: How many, how large, how many people?

BC: Our platoons were 150 people, no not our platoons, our battalion was 150.

Start 09:13

BC: In my group we had 50 Californians, 50 people from New Mexico and the South and then we had 50 from up in Pennsylvania area.

OP: And they were all in the training program, flight training?

BC: All in our battalion, yes.

OP: And St. Mary's is the place where they had a really good football team, they competed with the colleges?

BC: Right, they had a good basketball team too.

OP: Were you on any of those teams?

BC: Well I couldn't play on the base team, when I was there because they had All-American guys that were coaches and were playing on the team at St. Mary's but I played on the basketball team at Norman, Oklahoma and Monmouth and up at Helena -- but not at St. Mary's.

OP: That was a time when we shorter fellas could play basketball?

BC: Yes, I mean, like I was probably the last of the short guys. Well you know, when I was playing, the tallest guy in college was a guy named Kirkland who played for the University of Oklahoma at Norman, where I took my boot camp, and he used to just stand there and hold the ball up there until he threw it to somebody. There weren't any tall guys until after the war. I always said that everybody ate better, with more prosperity there were more big, coordinated people. Through the athletics programs they learned to make tall kids that weren't clumsy anymore. They were coordinated because they developed them. Before a little guy could run around and make a fool out of the tall guy sometimes when they grown too fast and were clumsy.

OP: Well then, tell me, from St. Mary's in terms of your service experience?

BC: Well, then I went to Texas and went to Corpus Christi, to Cabisus Field and flew the SNB, called the Vulture Viberator. It was a low-winged 450-horsepower, training plane. Flew some hours in that and then I went to Brownsville, which is a few miles southwest of Corpus Christi, and flew SNJs, which were a 550-horsepower low-winged, more advanced, trainer. Flew a lot of hours in those. To get used to a heavier plane, we flew the old SBD dauntless dive bomber for a few hours. Then we got our wings after that. In Brownsville, Texas we got our wings.

BK: About what date would that have been?

BC: I got out in September 1946.

BK: So just after you got your wings, the war was over

BC: I could have my choice; I could get out before I got my wings, or stay and finish. I was going to stay and finish what I started out to do and then I could get out. So that's what I did.

OP: Now, do you have any exciting experiences when you were down there flying?

BC: Well, that was one thing that really impressed me, all the hours we flew in those airplanes and I never had a problem and I never knew of one that my flight, or guys that I knew did. That they kept all those planes going, unbelievable -- hundreds of them. But I did have to bail out once. I had an engine fire. I was flying formation and we had an instructor for our final formation flights and so he could see better than I could. The smoke coming out the exhaust, so he flew wing on me and told me to bail out. And I was about to bail out anyway because I couldn't see too good. Got tangled up in my chute,

just lucky I had good altitude. Had about 4500 feet. I must have gone over 3000 feet before I got it untangled, I was hanging upside down and I pulled myself up and I unwrapped like a kid in a swing and got the chute open. I was glad it was open and I was going sideways, because it was about 25 knots of wind. I went right through the fork of a giant mesquite tree and hit my legs at the knees. Lucky it didn't break my legs but then I was hanging in this mesquite tree not too far off the ground. Took the harness off and dropped down.

OP: Were you fortunate that there was a tree there?

BC: Well, no I would have been better off it was just land. It was on King's Ranch, and of course the guys kidded me -- said I hit the only tree in Texas. But it was this giant mesquite, it grows pretty good, it gets about 20-25 feet tall.

OP: So you were one of the early experimenters in free falling, before your chute opened.

BC: The guys didn't think I made it because they followed me down quite a ways but then they never really knew whether my chute opened.

OP: So you'd consider that a close call?

BC: Boy, I'll say. My instructor and all these guys came out in their little cub and the doctors and the emergency guys flew cub airplane. They wouldn't land because there were some plowed fields. Well, my instructor put the SNJ down and landed with the wheels down in the furrows -- to pick me up. So I hop in the back cockpit and he fires it up and we get an exhaust fire. I had to get out and beat the fire out with the cushion -- got back in the plane, and he took off down those furrows...

OP: You mean an exhaust fire?

BC: It was a fire coming out of the exhaust, a bunch of fuel, so I got out and took a cushion and put it over it and smothered it and got back in and then he started down the furrows to take off. You know he was having a hard time getting enough speed to get the plane off the ground because the furrows were plowed and the wheels were having to try and drive through that soft stuff. He just pulled it over the barbed wire fence at the end of the field and I said, wheewww! This is my lucky day!

OP: That's a really hedge hopping, or fence hopping!

BC: Right

BK: OK, go back before you went into the service, in your high school days and so forth. Is that the time in which you did a lot of Starlet sailing?

BC: Yes, I crewed for my friend Steve Hall -- he had Starlet #27.

BK: And was he a member of the Yacht Club at that time?

BC: Yes. Then I joined as a Junior member for \$18 a year, which was very expensive. My folks didn't have any money, so that's how I got started. We raced in the summer. We raced every Saturday and had a skipper's race in the morning and a crew's race in the afternoon -- where the skipper crewed for the crew. This was nice because it let a whole other set of kids learn how to skipper the boat.

BK: And who were some of the other people that were sailing Starlets at that time?

BC: Well, when I was there, Gene Trepte, Tommy Scripps, Bob...no, Billy Phillips, young Bill Phillips, Kim Fletcher, Steve Hall of course, and Morgan Miller. Trepte had the Skeezecks, I remember that. Can't remember the number right now.

OP: I was looking at some of the minutes, there was a Paul Conner?

BC: Paul Conner, right. He sailed...

OP: Any relationship to Dennis?

BC: Yes, his Dad. He sailed and they sold the boats when we got out of high school, for the next generation. The generation before us, had Paul Conner and Bill Barker, who was a big swimmer, and Art O'Keefe -- he belongs to Coronado now but belonged here then. They were a group before our group.

BK: What kind of course would you sail or where would you sail?

BC: They had a race committee and starting sequence up on top of the club. We started in front of the club, went straight down the bay and then we came back up and finished in front of the club.

BK: And were the Starlets all kept in the water at that point?

BC: They kept them in the water and wet sanded the bottom once a week. Yes, we raced on Sunday and sanded the boat on Saturday. You know they had a narrow cockpit, so we'd take the jib halyard and pull the boat over on it's side and tie the mast down to the dock with the keel sticking straight out and had a bollard for the keel and then we could stand on the keel and wet sand the bottom. So we had just undercoat on the bottom and we'd sand that every week for the race on Sunday. Then we let it up, turn it around and pull the mast over the way and do the other half. We'd do that for the summer.

Time 22: 06

OP: So you did that in water that was deep enough, you didn't do it on the beach...

BC: Oh no, we did it right in the water. We had that long finger dock that we could pull the mast over and tie it down to the dock.

BK: At the high point, how many Starlets were there in the fleet, do you guess?

BC: Well I think I raced with as many as 20-something.

BK: And were those all built locally?

BC: Yes, they were all built at Kettenburgs. Gerald Driscoll and Harlan, they sailed Starlets, a lot of the young guys, and the Burnham boys.

OP: I noticed in the meeting and the minutes, and in '36 there were 15 and in minutes in '38 there 18 Starlets, so it was really an active group that grew and you had some from Coronado too?

BC: There were several down there, Danny Royce had one down there His Dad ran the hotel and then there was #7 called the "Argall". I'm trying to think who sailed that. He was a good sailor too. Bud Ingle crewed for him. Gosh, I can't think of his name.

OP: And also in the minutes, it showed 22 races, in 1938, so it was a very active fleet, wasn't it.

BC: Yes, we raced every week during the summer.

BK: During that time you were growing up, what was the status or condition of Mission Bay, and did you spend time in Mission Bay fishing or swimming?

BC: We went over there to go fishing a lot. You had to do boating at high tide because at low tide there were lots of mud flats. They had the Mission Bay bridge across, that the street car went across Mission Bay Channel and that was shallow. And we would spear fish off the pier or off the bridge because the incoming tide and boy it got really nice fish.

BK: And so it was mostly fishing and swimming and not much boating?

BC: Well they had Mission Bay Yacht Club though, and they had Skimmers with center boards. They still have a few of those over there. But that was the only class I remember because they pulled the center board up and they have a very flat bottom, so they could run and you had to know where to go -- a lot of the sand.

OP: Was there another name for those Flatties or was that a different boat?

BC: Well Flatty was a different boat, and they had those. I think they had those after the Skimmers. They came along after the skimmers, and they were flat bottom and had a center board. Right.

BK: Did you do any sailing again in high school before you went into the service, did you do any sailing on any other boats at the yacht club?

BC: Well I crewed for John Washington a few times and I crewed for Milt Wegeforth on his PC. He had #27.

BK: So you started to get familiar with PCs, even at that point?

BC: Right, we had lots of those here and there.

OP: And also Stars?

BC: I crewed for Gerry Driscoll in his Star boat. He had a Star boat called the "Far Lap". We used to work on it over on the side of the building over at Kettenburgs. I can't remember whether I sailed two seasons with Gerry or just one, can't remember.

BK: So this was all still when you were a Junior member at the club at that time, before you went into the service?

BC: Right. Then I gave it up during the war and then I wasn't a member until a few years after I got out and worked at the boat yard. Then I joined the club again.

OP: When you were a Junior, did you sail on any bigger boats or cruise on any bigger boats that Gene Trepte's father had?

BC: Yes, Gene Trepte's family always had big boats and he had a double-ended 8 meter, called the "Angelita", that he took all the kids on. We sailed a lot on that.

BK: Was that just out cruising or were you crewing and racing with him as well?

BC: Well we kind of did both. He did race that, but more often just group going out. But we did race. He always raced and then he had a big boat called the "Evening Star", a yawl that we all sailed on with them. And he owned the 10 meter "Sally" before that. Kohler has that boat now. So Trepte had quite a few.

OP: And again, during the Junior period, did you sail on any other big boats? Was the PCC around at that time or was that later?

BC: No, they were designed and built that right after the war. And we had about 10 of those here at the club and then I sailed with George Kettenburg on #1 the "Eulalie". Morgan Miller and I and Bill Kettenburg crewed with George and we sailed every ocean race around here.

OP: What was the name of that boat?

BC: That was named the "Eulalie" after his wife and we sailed all the ocean races, the island races and the Pacific Coast regattas up and down the coast, San Francisco, Santa Barbara and then he shipped a PCC to Canada, Victoria and took it off the ship and rigged it and raced the Pacific Coast Regatta up there.

Time 29: 19

BK: And that was after the war?

BC: After the war, I was working at the yard then.

BK: Did you first starting working at the Kettenburg yard before the war, a part-time?

BC: Yes, I just worked there until I got called into the service -- that one summer, from June till August.

BK: And what kind of work did you start out with?

BC: Morgan Miller and I stacked lumber and anything they asked to do. We dragged cables and worked in the yard some -- just whatever, for the day.

BK: There was a job for you then right away, when you came back from the service? You went right to work with Kettenburg?

BC: Well I went to work ribbing a PC every Saturday. I'd steam bend the frames on the PC while I was going to State College. And then at the end of the school year, they said well heck, you might as well come and work full time. And I could see I wasn't going to be an office guy for sure. So I stayed there all that time.

BK: And how long then did you end up working for Kettenburg?

BC: Worked there 31 years.

BK: Which would take you out to, what, almost the '80s?

BC: Oh no, well yes, I think I left there in the late '70s. Then I went to work for my friend Joe Gann. He sold his tuna boats and he had small boat in which he wanted to fish albacore and swordfish. So I went to work for him because they'd sold the boat works.

BK: Kettenburg Boatworks?

BC: Yes, they sold the Boatworks to Whittaker Corporation. And we had some shift around of things and I was carrying a good load there at that time -- foreman in the repair yard. We were in modern times then. Foremen didn't work, they run the thing. But in our time, we were the small yard, everybody worked. I got the guys going and then I worked just like they worked. So boy, I spent a lot of hours scheduling stuff so when I went to work, I had everything planned out so I could work too.

BK: What then changed when Whittaker came in, how did things change?

BC: They didn't really bother us that much, they were pretty good. But I was a foreman for the repair yard. New construction faded out because of high labor costs and we weren't building too much. My boss, who was one of the owners, Bill Kearns, retired. The foreman in the new construction was put in charge of the commercial end of the yard. He took my boss's place. He wasn't a partner but he was going to be the yard manager. He was the greatest craftsman that you'd ever want to know, but he was terrible with personnel. I could handle him. But pretty soon it got so he always had somebody he was picking on till he drove them to quit. You know, how can a guy do that? I used to tell my customers, I'll go get your bill. Don't go in there -- you'll have an unpleasant experience. And so when Joe Gann offered to pay me what I was making in the yard to go with him. He was really one of my lifetime friends....

OP: Did Whittaker continue to build boats? Did they build the Kettenburg boats?

BC: Well they built those K 41s under Whittaker and they built that big fish boat out in Santee. When they were owned by Whittaker we still had the same people in charge, the same partners. You see we built some little commercial boats and then they were trying to build a 55 footer out of foam and glass. It was good boat, but it was just kind of the wrong time, the wrong size for the times. Because it was going bigger, bigger with the purse seiners and the albacore fishing was kind of dropping off.

OP: And during the time that you were at Kettenburgs, a lot of people could bring their own boats in and work on them in the yard?

BC: Oh yes, yes.

OP: And did that continue with Whittaker or ?

BC: We did the same thing, right. We had a little railway that we could run boats up and down, much quicker than the travel lift and we just kept that going. Those guys, well I worked on the ways for a while and then my brother-in-law ran the ways, and heck, they could do 26 boats in and out of the water in one day with that little railway.

BK: When you say brother-in-law, that implies you were married. When did you get married?

BC: In '46, December of '46. And we married sisters, and he was my friend that grew up across the street from me, Fred Hopkins. And he sailed with us, he didn't belong to the club but he crewed with us.

OP: Your wife's name is?

BC: Mary Jane

OP: Mary Jane and does she sail?

BC: She sails, right. She sailed with the girls in the Sabots.

OP: Did she crew with you?

BC: Our wives crewed with us in the PCs for a long time, till they got tired of our elbows.

BK: How did you get into the PCs? When did that start?

BC: I don't know just what year. Mort Carlile and I bought #40 up at Newport Beach. It was in bad shape and we sailed it down with our two 12 year olds. We had that boat together for a few years.

Time 37:18

BK: And what was the name on #40?

BC: It was called the "Panic"

BK: So you said 12 year olds. So let's back off, how many kids did you have?

BC: Well I just had a boy and a girl. And Mort had three boys and a girl.

BK: And what, where are your daughter and son now?

BC: My daughter lives here and my son lives up in the San Joaquin Valley up in Tulare, California. He's a family practice doctor up there, he went up there to pay his loans back and then he got started in a practice and just stayed there. It's good gliding in the summer, he likes to fly the gliders.

OP: But he, continued with your interest in sailing?

BC: Oh yes, he sails whenever he comes down.

OP: So he crews for you on the PC?

BC: Now he's skippering it and I'm crewing for him!

OP: But he was also a collegiate sailor?

BC: Yes, he sailed out at San Diego State with and in the Carl Eichenlaub era -- when Carl was working with the state college sailing team. They did very well but I get a kick out of it because all emulated Carl. You see a picture of the State sailing team and they all have turned up shoes and overalls, you know.

BK: The Carl Eichenlaub look?

BC: Yeah, Carl EichelauB, they thought he was pretty neat. That guy is a genius, a practical genius.

OP: So he taught the students sailing.

BC: Yes he helped the sailing team, out at State.

OP: Well they certainly had a first class coach, didn't they.

BC: Yes, they won the National Championship out there.

BK: Did your daughter do much sailing when she was growing up?

BC: Well she sailed with us, but she wasn't competitive sailor.

OP: And her name is? Your daughter's name?

BC: Oh my daughter's name is Jane

OP: Ok, and your son is?

BC: My son is Alex junior.

BK: When you and Mort were sailing together, who were some of the other major PC competitors of that era and how did you fare in your racing?

BC: Mort was very good and he won a lot of our series. He crewed with Lowell, Lowell North and a lot of the top sailors. Mort was a good 110 sailor too, he sailed 110s before we got the PC and he did very well.

OP: Did you sail 110s?

BC: No.

BK: What other crewing did you do in that era? Who else did you sail with?

BC: Well when George Kettenburg died, I crewed at different times, just once in a while, for different people. George Kettenburg passed away at 44, which was so sad. Then I sailed with Ash Bown and Mort Carlile and Jim Reynolds.

BK: And Malin Burnham?

BC: Malin and I and Ash -- we raced a lot of ocean racing on Ash's Owens cutter, did very well That was a good rating boat.

OP: Were some of those Mexican races?

BC: We did a lot of those -- all the island races around here.

BK: And that was the boat named "Carousel" ?

BC: "Carousel" did the Acapulco race and then I sailed with Ash and Malin when we raced to Hawaii on a 59 foot mast-head sloop, called the Roland Von Breman,

BK: Now was that a boat that at one time was owned by Trepte?

BC: I think way, way back he did own that.

BK: But at the time you did the Transpac, it was owned by someone else?

BC: Yes, it was owned by a developer who wasn't really a sailor, really. But he bought the boat and wanted Ash and Malin to take him in the Hawaii race. So they re-rigged the boat from the yawl to the mast-head sloop, to get the rating they thought they'd be best at, just for the Hawaii race.

OP: And did you do work on the conversion?

BC: Yes, over at the yard, we shortened the mast and re-rigged it. We had a good race. We got a couple of light days and that shot us down so I think we ended up third in Class B. But outside of those two light days, we had lots of wind. Those guys were so good, we never broke a line or tore a sail or anything in the whole race. And Malin is the best heavy sailing weather guy I've ever sailed with, he's unbelievable.

OP: Was he the helmsman quite a bit?

BC: Well, we all steered on our watches but in the heavy, hairy weather, Ash and Malin were the best. But Malin was THE best. Because we had that old Edston steering, you know, and that's not positive like it is nowadays. So boy were you whipping that wheel back and forth and touching it and whipping it back the other way. Now they have it direct with a big wheel.

OP: But that was a pretty fun group to sail with?

BC: Oh, it was wonderful. I was so lucky to be part of that group. Great fun to be with but they sailed hard.

OP: Now in the race with Ash on "Carousel", you sailed to Acapulco.

BC: Yes, and that's when Dennis Conner was just a kid when he sailed with us. That's about when Mort Carlile's mother died. Dennis had been hanging around wanting to go,

so Ash finally said ok, you can go but you call me Mr. Bown because he knew he was a kind of a wise guy. Dennis got part of Ash's kidding. You know he really kids pretty hard, and that's because Ash and Malin were always just kidding each other, all the time, needling and so they meant it in fun...

OP: So Dennis learned more than just sailing, he learned how to kid? How did you do in that race?

BC: We won.

BK: Did you have any other sailing experiences with Dennis over the years?

BC: Well he sailed my PCs several times. Let's see what else. No I didn't sail a lot with Dennis because he got into the heavy, high tech. He started sailing with Rafi, in the Lightnings. And they were sailing Lightnings all over and won the championship. Then he got in the ... what was the Olympic class?

BK: Dragons?

BC: No, the one with the T on it... Tempest.

BK: Oh, the Tempest.

BC: I don't think it's Olympic anymore, is it?

BK: No.

BC: Yes, he sailed in that and he was off into the Stars. Dennis won -- he went five straight in the championship races.

BK: Did you do any Star boat sailing or crewing?

BC: Only early, I crewed for Gerald Driscoll, for a year I think

BK: Was that while you were still in high school or was that after you came back?

BC: It was after the war. Let's see, no, it wasn't after the war, That was while I was in high school. Gerald went into the Stars and that's before everybody got into having the heavy guys. You know pretty soon they narrowed it down, like they do now. They have weight requirements for the class boats, because of the wise people who get an advantage. But back then they didn't get up to that level as much. Usually the skipper was fairly heavy and then we didn't always have to have a real heavy crew.

Time 48:42.

BK: How did you get from PC #40 to PC 21?

BC: Well, you see, the Hopes used to own PC 21 and they traded it in on a K43 and the PC ended up down at the Navy sailing. And I knew that Dick Dever had owned it for most of its life till the Hopes got it; and it had been well sealed and didn't have any symptoms. So I told the Navy guy that if he ever wanted to sell it to call me, I'd buy it right away and sell 40 because 40 was pretty soft. He called me one day and I sold 40 and got 21, Morgan Miller and I got 21.

OP: What was the basic differences between say 40 and 21? Was the teak different?

BC: No, for the boats after the war we couldn't get the Philippine mahogany. They'd blown all the islands up to smithereens. So we got Honduras mahogany which was beautiful wood but it wasn't as strong and took in a little more water than the Philippine. So the Philippine boats stayed stiffer. You know since we have gone to epoxy, it doesn't matter which they are. They all end up the same because we dry them out. They all weigh about the same now.

OP: Now, you talk about epoxy Was there somebody that came up with a type of rope that you could use to redo the old boats and make them water tight?

BC: A fellow in Marina Del Rey called one time and said why don't we put rope in the seams -- fiberglass rope. He knew where to get it. Some filter company was making their own rope, for gaskets and making it out of fiberglass and it would make the boat much stiffer than wood splines. So I said that sounds like a good idea to me. I ordered some and did PC #27 -- it belonged to Beckham at that time. I redid it and it just worked out great. We re-fastened it, sealed it inside and out with epoxy and the boat ended up being about 225 pounds lighter, in spite of being soaked up with resin. We lost that much, 225 lbs of water.

OP: What did you have to do? How did you dry it out?

BC: Well we stripped them, inside and out and let them dry.

OP: And then you did the sealing with the rope?

BC: Right. We skill-sawed the seams, almost all the way through, the diameter of the 3/16th diameter rope. And soaked the rope in the epoxy and then rolled it in there with a screen roller, then flushed it off with a strength filler and boy we had never fixed a seam since.

Time: 52: 41

BK: Over the years, how many different PC do you think you have done the epoxy treatment on, or supervised ?

BC: Let's see, I did 9 and 21 and 27 and 48 myself and on 23 I told them how to do that. I told the Carlile kids how to do 18, they redid 18.

OP: Actually my son Jeff was the one that did that for the Carliles.

BC: Right, right. And Troy Sears did the 23 by himself. That's the ones I've been involved with. In LA, they did one with the rope and then they did some splining, Some Swedish guys splined a few boats up there. And works pretty good, but you don't as good as bond with a wood wedge, soaked with epoxy, because you just have a film and it can soak into the wood You don't get as good a bond as when you have a big piece of rope that is completely saturated because of a super wet lay up to bond. So the boats were stiffer with the rope than they are with the spline.

BK: After you got the Onion Truck and you said that was with Morgan Miller?

BC: Yes, and Pete Peckham.

BK: Ok, so you had both of them as partners.

BC: Right.

BK: You still have Onion Truck and you're still racing it?

BC: Right, yes.

BK: And how many years has that been then? With Onion Truck?

BC: Oh, with that boat probably about 25 years. 20 years....

OP: I noticed in the records that you were the fleet champion in '66 and you're still sailing those things, those PCs, that's a few years.

BC: And the classes got all sooped up and all the boats have new sails and good rigs and so it's much more competitive now.

BK: Do you have partners in Onion Truck now?

BC: And because Pete Peckham passed away his son Bruce is a partner.

BK: Ok, so Morgan is still a partner, does he sail much with you?

BC: He day sails but he has had trouble with his hip and balance and so he doesn't race anymore. But my son is skippering the boat now and I'm crewing for him.

BK: You're sailing Sabots? Or when did you start doing that?

BC: Well we sailed them off and on over the years. When we'd go cruising, we'd take Sabots with us to sail around.

BK: That's with your family? Mary Jane and...?

BC: Right, right. Then Mary Jane started racing them and she wanted a faster boat. We didn't sell the slower boats, so I would sail the slower boat and she'd sail the faster boat. So I got sailing but I didn't sail ardently with their Sabot group, but, off and on, I sailed the regattas and stuff. I 'm sailing now, when I can, on Tuesdays.

BK: And how about surfboarding -- when did you get into surfboarding and what's been your career with that?

BC: Well that was right after the war. My friend Joe Gann surfed. We always body surfed at old Mission Bay. So Joe got me working at the yard and I'd glue up a board. Nobody around here made surfboards, so I could get the balsa wood and redwood and glue it up at the yard. I made myself an 80 pound surfboard. Started surfing with Joe, and right after I was married, in the late '40s, '47 really. I started making my friends their boards. Nobody built boards, so I could glue up the blanks at the yards. I made a lot of boards for the junior high kids. As I learned surfing, they were learning. We have been surfing together all these years. I made them their boards. Probably I should have gotten into the surfing business instead of the boat yard at one time because I would have been early enough to had done well at it. But I didn't. Then it got into the fiberglass -- that's not fun working with. So I made a few glass boards, but not a lot.

OP: Why did you not make a lot of glass boards?

BC: Well because I was working at the yard and I was just doing that in my spare time. We experimented with a lot of different foam when we were making the change from wood to glass.

OP: In the last couple years one of the big surfboard blank makers, went out of business didn't he?

BC: Yes, that was Clark foam. He was getting scared to death of the lawsuits and stuff. You know that's pretty nasty stuff you're working with -- chemicals and stuff. I think he made enough money and he just folded the whole thing.

OP: The environmental folks...

BC: Yes. And people were trying to buy his tooling He had a tremendous amount of tooling for making blanks but he just destroyed the whole thing. When they first invented foam it was styrene foam and they didn't have the epoxies. And polyester resin would melt that foam, so you had to seal it with something before you could use the polyester resin. That was early. And you could buy a block of foam, that they made for docks They first made that foam to float docks. And I'd get a log of foam, 9 foot long and 36 inches in diameter, sort of a oblong log. It was made to float docks. Then I made a hot nine chrome wire to cut it, so it took a heater element. Hooked up a nine chrome wire and then I could slice off a 3 inch blank or a 4 inch blank and then shape it with a skilled plane and then a regular skill plane.

Time 60:53

OP: How did you learn to do all this?

BC: Well we just fooled with it. We did all kinds of things, I made a mold when some big guys couldn't get boards thick enough to float them. So I made a mold and made the board's two halves and put stringers in it and then glassed it together and then had a

squirt gun plug to drain it, if they cracked a rail or something and it leaked. We did all kinds of stuff.

OP: Now at your 70th birthday party, you had quite a few of your boards there. What did you think, there were maybe a dozen or so?

BC: I think that was the most. I added up the ones I made for my grandkids and the others. It was only a couple of boards I didn't make. So I counted all of those, I think it was about a dozen.

OP: And that was kind of a surprise, that birthday party?

BC: Sure was. They went and arranged for me to take the girl's trailer full of Sabots up to a regatta, so then when I was at the regatta, they came down and put that whole thing together. When I drove in with the trailer, I said "what's going on around here?" And they had all the palm frawns and things.

OP: And they had a song there for you, King of Surfers?

BC: Lori Dotson, wrote a song to Davy Crockett. That's cute. My son-in-law has a copy of it, I can't remember. But I know, once in a while I drive into the Termalean over at Pacific Beach and some of them sing, "Buddy Caldwell king of the surfer boys..." That was Lori's song.

OP: They still jazz you a little bit.

BC: They jazzed me a little about that.

OP: Tell me, Bud, in the early days, can you go back and think of some names of the real old timers that influenced you in sailing, that were key to the development of this yacht club and other young sailors.

BC: Oh yes, well, course the group in the Starlet group You figure how many world champions came out of that Starlet fleet, Just Star boats, Gold star guys out of the Starlet fleet. Like Gerald and Malin, and who else is in there. There were a lot of good sailors that came out of that. But you know the Frosts, the Jessops, I mean they were all city fathers besides being yachtsmen. They supported all the city projects, very active in making this city what it is.

OP: Bert Daniels, one of those early ?

BC: Bert Daniels had a boat called the "Norseman" And it was a big heavy, kind of a ketch. And I'll never forget, we had the tail end of a hurricane come through here, just part of it, it got up to about 60 knots, and I remember a corner of the yacht club roof was blowing up and down, blowing gravel off the roof, Like hitting you with BBs. They all ran up and nailed the roof down. And the docks were going out. We were running lines back and forth because water just came over and around Shelter Island. The boats were going up on the beach. And who's out sailing? Bert Daniels had the best sail of his career, with that old heavy boat. It was tarrying around out there having a ball. I'll never forget that. Just before the winds started blowing really hard and the docks were bouncing around, I remember it was the day of the father-son race in the Starlets. I had forgotten about that, and here come the Peckhams. They kept his Starlet over at his dock, in front of his house -- you know the big house with the big front lawn. Here comes Peckham and his dad to the Father's Day race -- coming down to the dock and the dock is about to break loose! They got the sails down and got that thing lashed in.

OP: Did the race take place?

BC: No. It was just getting bad, you know. And they had time enough to get things put away but I'll never forget that day.

OP: George Kettenburg was one of those?

BC: George was a very special person, it's a shame he got that darn cancer at 44. Oh, he was in the prime of life. And he loved the boats. He would have kept designing and keep up with the times, you know.

OP: Were you sailing when Alonzo Jessop was in the club?

BC: Yeah, he had the "Comber" it's still over there on B dock. It's still over there, Lonny Jessop.

OP: What boat was that?

BC: Called the "Comber" It's a bow sprit type boat.

OP: One of a kind?

BC: Yes, a little faster than the "Norseman" that Daniels had. Then the other boat like that was Dr. McClintock called the "Explorer" that was real heavy like that and they used to race against each other all the time.

BK: Do you know who owns the "Comber" now?

BC: Lonny Lynch has the boat. His mother was a Jessop.

OP: His son?

BC: That's his mothers, what is it, she was a Jessop and she married Lynch, he has since passed away, they're both gone now, I just can't think of his name, her married name. But they had the boat forever and I think Lonny still has it over there, her son. It's kind of in bad shape.

OP: And Milt Wegeforth, we talked about him before, but he was one that had an impact on you in the old days?

BC: Oh sure, because I lived next door to him when he was building a boat. Before we went up to Mission Hills, we lived next door to the Wegeforths on Second Street. Milt built a speed boat and then he built his own Star boat there and won the World Championship with the boat he built. His brother and I used to run around down to Dutch's Flat, before Lindbergh Field was dredged up, and got in that mud flat to get old parts and stuff.

OP: Parts for what?

BC: Oh, he would find any old car parts. It was more for him than me. I went for the fun of messing around but he went around to get that stuff and he'd throw it down the basement stairs. Then when he got time he would clean it up and fool around, he was a real mechanical guy.

OP: So he wasn't the real sailor but he was the car enthusiast?

BC: He liked cars, he had a steam car for a long time that he used to run around with.

TIME 70:12

OP: Can you think of any other names that we haven't discussed here that were key to the old days in the club?

BC: Well the Giddings, all the Giddings brothers, they sailed PCs

OP: How many Gidding brothers were there?

BC: Well let's see, there was Don and Doug, and then they had one that was a real hell raiser, I'm trying to think of his name. He used to go to regattas and get partying and throw furniture out of the hotel windows.

BK: And you and Mort were racing PCs, was that in the era when the Giddings were still racing too?

BC: No, they were done by then. Wally Springstead or course. He sailed, he was a many time champion in the PCs. I was trying to think of who else.

OP: Wally hasn't been sailing for quite a while, has he?

BC: I took him out last Sunday, and he's what, 88 I think now. He's gotten a little slowed up, but he wanted to go out, so I took him out and, gosh, we went out beyond the Point. He wanted to go outside and it was when those two air masses had gotten blowing about 25. We turned around to come in, and pulled the head stay out, and God, the mast was flapping around, that jib. He shoved it up in the wind right away or we would have lost the mast.

OP: This was just recently?

BC: Yes, last Sunday

OP: So he can still sail? At 88?

BC: Yes, yes.

BK: How did you get back?

BC: Well, boy, I, he kept it up in the wind. I got the spinnaker halyard and put it on a cleat on the bow and saved mast. Then we came in on the main and then when we got inside the harbor the wind just shut off like that and we had a long slow time, because it was a big high tide going out. Took us a long time to get in but then I figured it was good that the wind did go down because we still could have lost the mast. So now I'm getting a new mast head fitting, not a mast, but a deck fitting. Six bolts finally gave way.

BK: At the deck?

BC: Yes, who knows how old those bolts were. I probably should have had sense enough to take one out and check it.

BK: Yes, you are lucky you kept the mast. What have been your experiences with Jack Sutphen? Racing against him, racing with him in the PC world or other things?

BC: Well Jack is a first class guy. He sailed trial horse for Dennis, you know he's good. Dennis says Jack is the most consistent sailor, that's why he tested against him because Jack could get the most out of something and sail consistently. So they really knew when they were doing better, you know. Yes, he doesn't miss that, he lives it. He's got to be on that water.

OP: Does Jack sail in the ocean much anymore, in the PCs?

BC: Oh yes, he goes. Bruce, his nephew, has bought into the boat and Jack is not going to sail that much now, but he sails -- he sailed the last race.

BK: Now, you've got a, what is it, a Defever? A power boat as well?

BC: Well Jim Reynolds and I have a 99 year old friend and I've been involved with that boat for probably 25 years, taking it back and forth to Mexico with the last two owners. When the owner before this owner called me and said he was going to sell the boat and if I wanted it, I could have the first chance at it. And I said, well John, I can't afford to pay the slip rent, so he sold it to his other friend, who was a friend of all of us, at 96 he bought the boat from him.

OP: What was his name?

BC: Chuck Haines

OP: Chuck Haines. And he was a member of this club and a member, an early member of L.A. yacht club He is a fabulous person. His family should have written a book about the guy's life and he was just a wonderful guy, both those guys. The first guy, John MacGuire, was from Texas and he had a sailboat and it got too much for him so he

bought the Defever. And he let us all use that boat down in Baja and then he would come down. I mean he used it hardly at all. He had more fun having his friends use it. He was just that kind of guy, you know. So then he sold it to Chuck Haines, and when Chuck was getting down on his health and everything, he said....

OP: At 99?

BC: At 99 he still had his driver's license and was driving back and forth to Mexico because he had the boat down there. And I said Chuck, maybe we better bring that boat back up here where you can be close to it. And he agreed, so he and I and Joe brought the boat back up here and had it at the club. Then when his health was failing, he said, well do you have any interest in the boat? He said nobody in my family is interested in it, and he said, I'll give it to you. I said, well Chuck if anyone in the family complains about you doing that, you give them the boat, I said I don't want to cause any family problems over the boat, it isn't worth it. So they all agreed it was fine with them I guess there was enough there that they could divide it up and everybody was happy and so he gave me the boat.

OP: Now was Chuck Haines, the one who has sailed in Mexico for years and cruised in Mexico and drew charts by hand places where you anchor on each?

BC: Right, right, he knew every rock down there, he was amazing. All those pictures in the early books on Baja, the professional books, are all pictures he donated that he and his wife took. They flew his own little plane back and forth to Mexico and there weren't any airports, hardly. They flew back and forth down there and he took all these pictures of the different bays and he gave them to the publishers, so those are his pictures. He is a fabulous person.

OP: And the name of that boat is, "Southwester"?

BC: "Southwester".

OP: I had the privilege of cruising on that a couple of times and using those charts that Chuck Haines made and they are incredible, accurate.

BC: Yes.

BK: And what size boat is that?

BC: About a 52 foot, Defever Trawler

BK: And where is it now?

BC: It's on the end of I Dock.

OP: Well, Bud, let's see, about the only other thing we haven't talked about much is the fishing, but you went fishing with?

BC: Joe Gann

OP: Joe Gann and that boat. And you did that for how long?

BC: Nine years

OP: And you enjoyed that?

BC: Had a wonderful time, because I worked on all those albacore boats in the boat yard and I got to know all those, the Italians guys and the Portuguese fishermen Their life was fishing and they were really a fabulous bunch of people, So going out in that albacore fleet and seeing how they did it and everything, after work, was a pretty wonderful experience.

OP: That kind of team work, that albacore crew?

BC: It was a small boat, up to 45 feet. And those guys would run those boat by themselves and keep all the machinery going and pull the fish and do the whole thing and

a lot of them fished by themselves. A lot of boats fished with two guys and then bait boats fished with three guys. Up to about 40-45 feet and they'd all go on the sea anchor at night and try and stay on the fish, In the morning they put all the jigs out and started fishing and then when somebody got a strike, they'd start getting more strikes then they would get in that area for the day.

OP: And they would share there where they got a strike, they'd share that with the other albacore boats?

BC: Share their information, right

OP: Wonderful, well Bud thank you very much for taking the time to visit with us and it's been very interesting and informative and we may come up with some more questions later and if so well, we will chat with you again.

BK: Thank you

BC: Can't say enough, my life at the club has been pretty fantastic. All the neat people and wonderful relationships

OP: It has been part of your life, hasn't it?

BC: Yes, I'm down here all the time.

END TIME 83:02