

Herb Zorn 2/15/26 -11/18/2002

How He Changed My Life

By Howard P. Johnson Jr.

When I attended Herb Zorn's memorial service I found out that his accomplishments in life were much more than founding the Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society. The church was filled to overflowing and many loving testimonials were made about him and wonderful songs that he had chosen were played. Everyone shared the memories of his life. Here is one of mine.

It was 1994 and although I had been attending ACBS-CBC events, I was still getting to know the members. Chuck and Linda Warner-Nagle asked me if I would like to join a group organized by Herb, to go up and stay on an island, in the St. Lawrence River and go to Race Boat Regatta, for a week. Boy, would I ever! Herb had rented a cottage on Grindstone Island and a reliable boat with a top from Remar Rentals at the end of Mary St. near the Antique Boat Museum. I had never heard of any of these places. It sure sounded exciting to me. I had an outboard boat that was easy to tow and when the time came, we piled my gear in with Chuck and Linda's and took off. We loved driving all those miles up Rt. 81 and seeing our beautiful country. Ten hours later, it was a thrill to see all the places they promised. After we all met we picked up the rental boat, put mine in the water and explored our way across the scenic river to our own A-frame cottage on the water. And what a great place it was, the Remar family's own summer cottage, fixed up with everything, even snowmobiles in the garage and our own pier and boat slips! Jim Holler and I stayed in our own private bunkhouse away from the main house. We commuted back and forth to the museum every morning and evening, I decided to volunteer at the museum and they put me to work. Soon I had the run of the whole place. I decided to video tape our adventures, the museum and the boat racing. I got to know the museum staff, all great people, Bill Danforth included. We hiked around the island and found Johnny Johnson Road, Corvettes in a junkyard and abandoned boats. Steen Melby took us to

his island for a barbecue in his fabulous, Sterling Petrol powered 28' Hackercraft. Sitting in the back, we got soaked and loved it. The water was crystal clear, you could see to the bottom at 25 feet - rocks everywhere! And those trips across the river, morning and evening, dense fog, enormous chop, huge fast moving ships, islands everywhere and they all looked the same! What's more, they always picked me to be the skipper!

By Wednesday the race boats began to arrive from all over the United States, put in, get to know everyone and rev their engines. Herb and I walked all through the museum, he would tell about a boat and I would video tape him. I learned constantly all about fascinating vessels and people I had never known. When the sun came out the rumble of engines lured us outside and the race boats came to life. As they were zooming around I saw that the tower on the end of the bulkhead would be a great vantagepoint. After an hour or so Karine Rodengen, renowned marine photographer came up and introduced herself to me. She took action photos for her upcoming calendar, while I tried to capture every boat at speed. Never had I had such a wonderful opportunity. She said the shots were some of the best she had ever seen and I was getting the full action and sound! At sunset she suggested we meet back there at 6 for the morning shoot. I never wanted to do anything, so much, in my life!

At dawn our eyes popped open like little kids at Christmas. After wolfing down breakfast, the early crew looked across the river with disappointment; it was completely socked in. We wanted to go so we could be there for the early action. We sat in the boat straining our eyes for the far shore. Suddenly I saw the point on the far side and got my bearings, so we took off. Never had I had such a challenge; immediately the fog rolled back in. I held my course... What if a ship was out there? Doubts crept in, are you sure that's the right way? I held my course. Everyone seemed to think we should be going a different direction. I held my course, but now I had my

doubts, too. What about the tide, how do I know the boat is going straight? Then, just like magic, there was the point straight ahead. Everyone shut up. I headed over to the museum. Whew!

And what an incredible day it was, all the greatest boats in America running at full throttle just for Karine) (and me. Since the course wasn't set up until Friday, they were going real fast. I kept at it for hours, until my arm, my batteries and my tape had all run out. I knew I had plenty of the greatest footage I had ever taken. The rest of the day I filled, with shots of everything else that someone would like to see if they couldn't come. People kept stopping me to say, "Can I buy one of those tapes you're making, from you?" I would get their name and address. Soon I had a whole pile and I decided to have the footage professionally edited and copied. That fall I put ads in the Brass Bell, The Rudder and Classic Boating. I sold 180 copies and got to know people from all over the United States, that love old boats. Many wrote me to say that they felt like they had really been there and showed it to all their friends. It turned out to be the only video of the event. Bill Danforth said the video made the raceboats come alive with the throaty roar of the engines.

By his vision, forethought, planning and generosity, Herb had changed my life and enriched me in ways he could never have imagined. All these treasured experiences carry on into my present life and for this I will never forget him and I will always feel thankful. For this and the many other great things he did, Herb will live on in my thoughts, forever. And yes Herb, If I get the chance to sit one out or dance, I will dance. I will always dance.

All these memories led me to get out my original tapes and re-watch the footage of Raceboat Regatta '94. I discovered large segments that were left out of the edited version, the complete tour of the museum with Herb, and many of our side adventures, as well as the popular Race Boat '94, boats galore with roaring engines. The video shows an amazing number of familiar young looking faces. These have been duplicated and are available to those who want them for \$25.00 from Old Time World, 15200 Mt. Calvert Rd. Upper Marlboro, Md. 20772. See our Web Site at oldtimeworld.com.