

Dan Cada

by Pat Murphy

What makes a farm boy from Nebraska a perfect volunteer for the Richardson Maritime Museum and Boatworks? Well, for starters, farming and hard work are synonymous. So Dan Cada is not one to shrink from the task at hand, be it removing years of stored “junk” from the Museum’s top floor, spraying weeds or joining a Saturday morning cleanup crew.

His younger years cultivated in Dan both resourcefulness and a lifelong love for woodworking, to our gain. In the bright, inviting woodworking shop that he built for himself, he has made exhibit stands for the Museum as well as the big sliding doors at the Boatworks.

Dan has also made many administrative contributions to the Museum, chairing the first Board of Trustees and helping with a major revision of the Bylaws. How did he come to be qualified for such diverse roles?

For Dan Cada, it has been a journey rich in experience and aided by mentors. With an engineering degree from the University of Nebraska, he joined the Navy Mine Defense Laboratory in Panama City, Florida. This was hands-on engineering, with a soldering gun close by. Two years later, a mentor encouraged him to move ahead by moving north to Washington, DC. He and his wife, Marcia, did just that and for ten years, his focus was defense equipment procurement.

Then came a new opportunity. Would he join a team charged with designing a new class of naval cruisers? Dan entered the field of project management and he loved it. No doubt, that experience aided him years later when he, Frank Newton and others designed governing documents for the James B. Richardson Foundation, providing structure and momentum to our founders’ vision.

Dan’s next promotion was to an office in the AEGIS Ship Building Program, which would oversee construction and delivery of the ships he had helped design. As a designated project, Dan says it “enjoyed a certain autonomy,”

but that also increased his responsibility and accountability. Dan established bonus incentives, regular meetings with contractors and an open accounting system, building trust and respect for all parties. Consequently, he was a natural choice to coordinate the project when the Museum’s High Street building underwent remodeling in 2004.



A valued volunteer at the Museum and Boatworks, Dan Cada also volunteers with the Dorchester Skipjack Committee, where he serves as a First Mate on the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester*.

Dan’s final assignment as the Program’s Chief Information Officer was to help design information systems for exchanging drawings between users, coordinating a group with participants from the Army, Navy and Air Force. Access to accurate documents was essential for maintenance of the ships. This info-trafficking prepared him for handling details on zoning and environmental issues for the Boatworks property.

Upon retirement in 1995, Dan and his family settled on the Eastern Shore where, during earlier visits, he had watched the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester* take shape at Generation III boatyard. Marcia fit in perfectly with local quilting groups.

Initially, Dan joined the Neck District Volunteer Fire Department, serving for nine years. During that time, he began his affiliation with the Museum. He is also active in the Cambridge Sail & Power Squadron. His latest achievement is earning a General Class Ham Radio License. Reception comes through a wire tossed up into a tree. “At 60 feet, I could reach Europe,” he laughs. Dan’s story proves it is the same with our lives. The higher you set your sights, the further you will go. His prospects for the Museum? More opportunities for visitors to watch and participate in small boat construction. Perhaps even sailing lessons on one of our own vessels someday.

Sound inviting? Maybe you have been feeling an urge to volunteer at the Richardson Maritime Museum & Boatworks. Opportunities are here. In addition, you will meet skilled and interesting people—people like Dan Cada. They make good mentors themselves. ☀