

Herm Kramer

by Pat Murphy

Entering the Boatworks door, I expected to see a dark, dingy warehouse. I stopped short. A beautiful wooden sign identifying the Ruark Boatworks, est. 2003, greeted me on the wall just ahead. New flooring and separate doors to the interior gave this foyer a professional look. “Paul L. Slacum Model Shop,” read the colorful sign on the next door.

“What?” I wondered. This room, too, was decked out with a new floor, as well as shelves and a couple of sturdy work benches. Herm Kramer quipped, “It looks different, doesn’t it?” He went on to explain that, because of changes at the Museum, the model shop had been lost. So he and half a dozen other volunteers spent two months transforming part of this building into a clean model shop, complete with finished off entryway.

Growing up in Cleveland, Herman Kramer’s love for boats surfaced early when, at 15, he joined the crew of a 19-foot racing sailboat. “Crewing also meant you helped keep it working,” Herm explained. Thus began his education in boat maintenance.

Herm’s passion for boats and the water was temporarily harbored while he pursued another love—softball. He was an “avid player” until an injury benched him at the age of 40. It was his wife, Carole, who steered him back to the water, and weekends found them racing a 25-foot boat on Lake Erie. After a career move to Baltimore, they upscaled to a 32-foot cruiser.

By the time the Kramers moved to Cambridge in 1994, Herm had years of experience on the water and some well developed skills. These he has generously shared, first as a crew member on the skipjack *Nathan of Dorchester*, then joining the ranks of volunteers here at the Richardson Maritime Museum. We’ve been delighted to have this “student of history” and experienced modeler on board and credit him with numerous accomplishments over the past seven years.

At the Museum, he designed a new display layout and then led other volunteers in the hours of labor necessary to complete these improvements. Over at the Boatworks, he again joined with others to clean away years of dust and debris from the upper floor, transforming it into a clean environment suitable for archives. On the main floor, he has

exacted a “labor of love,” taking part in the restoration of a 1952 Dovetail, “...or Draketail, as they say on Hoopers Island,” he adds.

Herm’s career experience in management has also been utilized. He is currently acting as docent coordinator. If Herm is on hand as docent, you can often find Carole running the Gift Shop. She also participates in Museum events by baking and setting up.

What are Herm’s dreams for the Museum’s future? He has quite a list: a larger Gift Shop to help cover operating costs; reinstate



Herm Kramer is a multi-talented volunteer, equally at home in the Museum as docent, teaching kids about maritime history, and at the Boatworks, passing on his woodworking skills.

model building classes and races on the pond; expansion of the Museum’s displays by building some models they don’t yet own.

Herm Kramer’s desire has been to bring history to people in a way that they can see, feel and experience it. “I think it’s tremendously important that you get some idea of where you are living and why.” But he is quick to remind us, “It’s not feasible to have a museum or to maintain a skipjack without volunteers.” And volunteering, he says, “puts something back into the community and keeps you mentally fit.” Thanks for your shining example, Herm. Now, all hands on deck! ☀