INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW

The Reminiscences of

Carolina Salguero

PREFACE

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with Carolina Salguero conducted by Interviewer Sarah Dziedzic on August 13, 2021. This interview is part of the New York Preservation Archive's Project's collection of individual oral history interviews.

The reader is asked to bear in mind that they are reading a verbatim transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose. The views expressed in this oral history interview do not necessarily reflect the views of the New York Preservation Archive Project.

Carolina Salguero is originally from New York, and developed a connection to the New York Harbor when she returned to the city after a successful career as a traveling photojournalist. While she tried to become a beat reporter covering the harbor, there was little media interest—and so she became an advocate.

Joining a small group of individuals and non-profits advocating for harbor issues, she founded PortSide NewYork to advocate for changes in city policy that would support the use of waterways by boats of any kind, from recreational to industrial. This work has been in sharp contrast to the development of the city's formerly-industrial waterfronts that started under Mayor Michael Bloomberg, in which the harbor was treated only as a luxury view. In addition to applying policy pressure, PortSide, which operates from the retired oil tanker and historic ship, the *Mary A. Whalen*, also engages actively in education, economic development, and community response where it is based in Red Hook, Brooklyn.

In this interview, Salguero shares the history of the *Mary A. Whalen* and its physical restoration, and details the challenges that boat owners face in the harbor, particularly around docking—including her own saga with the *Mary A. Whalen*. She also describes in detail the impact of Hurricane Sandy on Red Hook, including PortSide's contribution to the clean-up and its post-Sandy leadership in flood prevention, which ultimately earned it a Champions of Change award from the White House. Salguero is joined in this interview by the *Mary A. Whalen*'s famous ship cat, Chiclet.

Transcriptionist: Matthew Geesey	Session: 1
Interviewee: Carolina Salguero	Location: video call
Interviewer: Sarah Dziedzic	Date: August 13, 2021

Salguero: Hi, I'm Carolina Salguero and I'm the founder and executive director of the maritime non-profit PortSide NewYork. And I'm really excited to be here being interviewed by NYPAP, the New York Preservation Archive Project, out of respect for what they do. And actually they're really intelligent and fantastic questions that were sent over in advance.

So we're going to do a quick walkthrough on our historic ship, our flagship, retired oil tanker, *Mary A. Whalen*, but I'm just going to state upfront—for people who get impatient with long interviews—that PortSide is actually much more than this ship. We're also much more than what we are doing presently. We have a long sixteen-year real estate struggle. So, there's the vision and the present, and we're also about the past. Obviously, this is a historic ship, but I just wanted to establish that right up front. PortSide NewYork is more than a ship preservation project. And what you can't see here is we've been joined by our famous little ship cat, Chiclet. Yeah, Chiclet, you've got to get out of the way now, we're going. Okay, let's go up the gangway. Chicles (her nickname), you stay here. [Salguero and interviewer walk up the gangway to board the ship]

So welcome aboard. So this is the *Mary A. Whalen*, rechristened that 1958. In 1938, when she was launched, she was the *S.T. Kiddoo* or *Solomon Thomas Kiddoo*. So I sometimes joke she's trans. She started with a man's name and then moved to a woman's name. She was launched in

1938 as I said. She's 172 feet long, and she's the last of her kind in this country. Some of these oil tankers went down in the [19]80s to the Caribbean, Mexico, and some may still be in existence but not here in the USA.

So, she's not exactly in her original configuration for a number of reasons. The work boat industry is so competitive in New York, here in New York, that boats like this were usually sent overseas or scrapped or sunk. And it's really a miracle that she survived. But what happened is she goes out of service in 1994 because her engine is damaged. The company running her Eklof [Marine Corporation]—that's the sound of a ferry coming in behind us—Eklof cannibalizes the engine, so that the companies that buy her can't put her in competitive service, and they made them sign a one-sentence, what they called a covenant, "You will not use the *Mary Whalen* for fuel delivery." But, the pipes that would have went up and down the deck have been removed. Parts of the forward engine room are removed. In addition, the engine being cannibalized, parts of the steering gear, so a bunch of things that pertain to making the boat go and being an oil tanker were removed. Also, some domestic things like two of the toilets, called heads on boats, were removed, things like that. So there are a few differences.

But her job was delivering fuel along the coast. That's what a coastal oil tanker does. It does not import it from overseas. So let's come on down the deck. She has a long Red Hook, Brooklyn pedigree. She was built for a very nationally significant company, which no longer exists, Ira S. Bushey & Sons, but she was built in New Jersey. Bushey's, as it was known, was banging out tankers on spec in 1938, in that period of time as American fuel consumption soared; so they were actually building in their own shipyard, and they had two other shipyards building, that's

part of the story.

Be careful, we got to step up then step down, and watch you don't whack your head. We're now entering a very narrow hall called a companionway on a boat. That's the tankerman's cabin here. You gotta step up over these. So this is the fidley, the odd maritime name for a space over an engine or a boiler, so both were down there. There is the cannibalized engine. Just last year in the depths of the pandemic, we scored a replacement, not exactly the same but compatible engine from a Missouri power plant that was being demolished. So this ship is 1938. That's the year 1942. It has very low engine hours. So we will be doing a mashup or a Frankenstein to combine the two. We're not going to walk through there now.

But for people who want to see what the *Mary Whalen* looks like, we have a virtual museum using Red Hook as a way to tell New York City's maritime story in microcosm. It's a virtual museum. It's called Red Hook WaterStories.org. And in there, there's an entry for the *Mary Whalen* and it's a growing museum—we're not done—as we get more information. There you can find historic photos, documents, oral histories and things like that.

Just a quick spin into the galley. That's the honking of the ferry to signal that they're backing out so kayakers or anybody else is startled so they can get out of the way. So here's the galley which is a pretty fantastic space. The *Mary Whalen* has a round stern, so this is a half-circle space. We presume that's the original stove. It's a classic Webb Perfection stove, burns diesel, so uses the same fuel as the ship would use for her propulsion. It was patented in 1918, so it was a twenty-year old concept at the point the boat was built. We haven't yet researched the plaque on the

wood panel fridge and freezer to know if this is original. It's not, we think, in the original location which would be according to that tile pattern on the deck, floor there. Anyway, this is a special space. Everybody always loves it.

Now we're heading up to the boat deck. It's called that because that's where the lifeboats were. We don't have lifeboats at present. The engine doesn't work so we're not tootling around the harbor. We're going to go around the stern of the boat, stepping over part of the steering gear, avoiding the rain puddle.

This here is one of our adaptations. The fiddley had no insulation, surely because in the summer, they didn't want to trap in the heat and in the winter, they would have had surplus heat given the tremendous heat the engine would be generating. Effectively, the cabins at that level, which is where most of them are, would have had radiant floor heating with the engine underneath it. And in the summer, you obviously wanted to let it out. Well, our problem is, without a working engine, a couple years ago when the polar vortex hit, our furnace going full-bore couldn't get that fidley above sixty degrees. So the people, the crew working at PortSide, we had been used to working hot summer temperatures in the offices of over ninety degrees in the office and fifty to fifty-five in the winter. But we couldn't have elementary school kids come here at under sixty degrees; so we cancelled one class, and then we installed this exterior installation. If we had done it interior, we would have masked the historic look of the fidley; plus, it would have had to be Coast Guard-compliant in all sorts of ways. So that's what this kind of unusual situation is here.

Okay we're going up an exterior ladder to the wheelhouse now [sound of footsteps and truck

engine]. Here's the sound of a truck running through the industrial neighborhood, mixed-use neighborhood. And we're entering the wheelhouse where we have just, within the week, completed a big restoration project. It's not all of the work. I would say it's about seventy-five percent of the work that needs to be done in here, and then we've got final bits and bobs, like hardware to reinstall. So, let's go over here. Let me get you a chair.

Q: Can you explain some of the details, Carolina, about what you guys were working on?

Salguero: Oh, yes, so what we were working on here—if you hear a slight thumping, that's the sound of the sash weights thumping in their boxes. So, there are five rectangular windows on the front side, all with sash weights. There are two rectangular windows here on the aft end. We concentrated all of our work here on the forward part of the boat. So, what happened when she wasn't being used as a tanker, she was really only being lightly maintained. So, Eklof sells her. The people who run the Erie Basin Bargeport **(**which is the fuel delivery company, marine fuel Reinauer Transportation and Hughes Marine**)** and Hughes uses her as a floating office for three years. But they're not up here, and so the heat—[changing train of thought] and then they get off the boat, they stopped using it as an office, they told me, because they froze their asses off in the winter, which is what told me that the engine had to have been a significant part of the heating plant because the furnace alone wasn't doing it.

So with no heat on up here, what we think happened—and this is like the *This Old Boat* version of *This Old House* because you can't interview the boat, you have to deduce and analyze and look—is that, these wooden windows drop down into boxes and those boxes were not,

unfortunately as in some old boats, copper-lined. They were just steel. So as the weather stripping failed and whatever else, water got down in there; and by the looks of it, we think it froze, and then it burst through. So, first it did a lot of rusting, you know there's probably years of that, and it burst through. And then unfortunately, it went dribbling or cascading down multiple layers through the boat. So, there's damage. It punched through the ceiling, called the overhead in the captain's cabin below us, the head or the bathroom in the captain's cabin below us. It punched down and went into the entry companionway. It went to the deck or the floor of the entry companionway. It went all the way down to the engine.

So, the boat is effectively—if you were to compare it to a building, four stories high, with the engine room being like the basement, where the super or the engineer would be, everything else. Then, there's the main accommodations level on top of that, which is a large floor or a level, and then above it are two squares, the same size stacked up, much smaller, and that's the captain's cabin, and directly above it the wheelhouse. So, the water went bing, bing, bing down the whole front.

So, we didn't have the funds or the welder to actually tear this all apart and rebuild the window boxes, so we did an interim arrangement where we inserted some steel, covered it all with rubber paint, and then we dealt with the wood. No one had been varnishing the wood, and it was really, really badly—all the varnish was pretty much off. The wood was really eroded. It was gray. It looked really terrible. So, we had to physically remove the windows, which means from the outside, you remove all these vertical frames. We took the doors off, and everything had to be incredibly—all the wood scraped, varnished. We had to take all the window hardware also off.

We just this week tested a soda blaster, a baking soda blaster. This is a fun new toy here at PortSide, and it's less abrasive than sand blasting—and eco-, it's baking soda. I'm about to later today buy the blasting cabinet, the box, so we can put all this little hardware in there. Then you just reuse the material, the soda. And it will take off the varnish and paint that was on the hardware.

One of the odd things I have to say is, as we've worked here, I was doing some of the painting for example, and I'm putting masking tape around so we don't get paint on the fine, old cabinetry; and you can see generations of crew members who didn't take that kind of care. So once you're dealing with a ship as a museum piece, there's all of this super kind of care. And we are pretty sure she was impeccably maintained—and this was generally the rule—in the '30s, '40s, '50s. It's when you hit about the '70s, people just did not take the same care. So, they started doing things like painting the brass. So, we haven't taken the paint off of here. We've taken it off of that one. They painted brass so then they didn't have to polish it all the time. They painted—another metal we have is Monel. They painted the Monel. There were some bad maintenance things that happened.

So here we touched up the overhead. We've repainted it, the overhead, the ceiling before. We repainted all of this. We installed new paneling. Most of the woodwork has been done. The wheel was stripped and sanded. Here, there was a balancing act. I have these debates with our Historian and Curator, Peter Rothenberg. My introduction to boats was the shipyard that my uncle and business partner run, Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway, where they take historic vessels, some of them are museum pieces but usually they are boats that people are actually

using, and they actually restore them, which means they get them back to looking new. They also design and build new ones. So, I would like to take all of this kind of damaged wood or weathered wood off; and then Peter is like, but then you take the history off. So there's this balancing act; we have these debates and sometimes arguments as to how far do we go to—what's safe? What is history? Like at what point—is this piece of masking tape that someone should have taken off decades ago, is that history or is that annoying? I mean, I'm going to go take that off.

So, this is the kind of thing that goes on here in terms of renovating or restoring the *Mary Whalen*. Oh, yeah, the decks, the floors, have been painted too. Now the saddles, we don't have saddles here yet. So, someone's working on that; so there are going to be more pieces that come into this story. So when I say seventy-five percent of it, because we've focused on the forward part. We didn't do the full steel rebuilding of the window boxes; and then the same problem happened with these windows here [referring to the two aft windows], so I just had them caulked shut so no more water could possibly get in and down on the boat. And at some other point—because getting it is even harder. You would have to remove all of this historic cabinetry. That's a fun project. So, there we are.

Q: All right, excellent.

Salguero: Let's sit down. Let me grab a chair.

Q: I'm just going to pause, and we'll get ourselves settled.

[END OF RECORDING A, BEGINNING OF RECORDING B]

Q: Okay, so this is picking back up the interview with Carolina Salguero on the *Mary A. Whalen*. We just finished our brief walking tour and I wanted to ask, Carolina, about—let's actually start the story of PortSide, and then we'll see how that intersects with the *Mary A. Whalen*.

Salguero: Okay, got it. So, the story of PortSide. First, the context, I had gotten fascinated with New York harbor when I moved back to New York City, 1997, I knew that there really wasn't a market for more freelance photojournalism unless I was only going to do really heavy war, genocide, whatever stuff all the time, which I was not going to do all the time. So, I thought, okay, I'm here now; I've got to change my life and I'm kind of stuck; and so I didn't get wanderlust since I wouldn't be traveling, I brought the same nondescript little sailboat I had learned to sail on up in Martha's Vineyard. My uncle and his business partner had started Gannon & Benjamin Marine Railway and when I was in probably high school. I had worked there in college, hung around the scene, had learned to sail there, was inspired by the whole thing; and our uncle had given us kind of a basketcase boat. They're like the ASPCA of boats. People would dump off boats that are really kind of falling apart, that they can't handle.

So, this was a really modest little nineteen-foot day sailer. So, I brought it to New York thinking that would allow me the feeling of travel, now that I'm not a globe-trotting photojournalist. And though I am originally from New York, my family moved away when my parents divorced when I was about twelve, I had not had any connection with the harbor like so many New Yorkers. I

said wow, this is incredible! My first reaction was “this is an amazing story.” I did not end up using this sailboat very much. I got really interested in the harbor as a topic, and I wanted to become New York City’s waterfront beat reporter in photos. I also wrote. Photos, picture, that that was the beginning of multimedia—I’m going to really sound old—that was the beginning of multimedia journalism, collecting sound and doing oral history and things like that. But there was no client. None of the media in town had any real interest in the harbor. There was no longer a shipping news department, maritime reporting, and there wasn’t even general waterfront stuff. There were all these other sections. *The New York Times* had a section on meals under twenty-five dollars, but they didn’t have anything about the harbor. So, there wasn’t really a client.

I think this was probably early onset of middle life sort of thing, wanting to do something to give back to not just document things; and I became an advocate for the harbor, and joined—following people who had been at this years already—helped two other harbor non-profits get started but felt there was sort of a gap in the offerings and in the advocacy. There were a whole pack of people in the environmental thing, meaning we have to clean up the waterways. But there really weren’t strong visible voices on advocating for the maritime use—sustainable, let me clarify—use of the waterways, meaning boats, boats, boats of any type, from the recreational up to the industrial. There was definitely a growing core of kayaks, passionate, manically passionate, kayak advocates, but beyond that, there really wasn’t anything.

So that was my idea, was that I would create this non-profit, PortSide NewYork, that would try and change policy; because what I saw was, I definitely have wonky tendencies and I was going to all these conferences and doing all this reading and learning all this stuff, I felt there was a real

policy problem. Flash forward to a great turn of phrase that I think Dan Goncharoff came up with, he worked at PortSide for many years; as he put it, New York City had once been fluent in the maritime language and had lost that. So what happens is boat people, for short, when we start talking about what we do or how the city would be better with more boats or whatever, it's like we're speaking a foreign language. It's like completely unintelligible. It's actually a very hard advocacy because people don't know what you're talking about. You mean, yachts? What do you mean? So how do you start to talk this talk? And the forces of real estate are very strong in New York, real estate development; and I thought really what I was looking at was very much like manifest destiny in this country, where one group of people who wants the property just comes up with this rhetorical construct to justify their taking of property.

So, in manifest destiny, there were no Native Americans, it's like [briefly sings portion of *William Tell Overture* by Gioachino Rossini to signify military horses charging]. It's like the God-given right to roll across the continent and develop. And what I was seeing was the real estate industry was saying "there's all this vacant, under-utilized, industrial land." That was the term, "vacant, under-utilized, industrial land"; and we've got to do something with it; we have the solution. And they have a lot of influence in this city. So, they were doing these; and they did not have anything to do with the waterways except the idea that the water, the harbor, was a view.

And so, I sought to change that; and really the PortSide goal is changing city policy. Because I had learned following, as I said, the lead of people who had been at this many years already, I learned about testifying at community boards and City Council hearings and all the rest of it. The

talk was doing nothing. It was like pouring, as I put it, water into sand. And I can talk! And I've been told I'm articulate; and I've been told I can be persuasive; and I watched people who have been at this for years, articulate, but no one was persuading anything. Nothing was changing.

So, my notion was that I would create a place called PortSide NewYork, which would be an example; and so we wouldn't be an advocacy organization that spent most of its time issuing policy papers and talking. We were going to walk the talk. We were going to be a do-tank, a think-tank and a do-tank. And this place, PortSide NewYork, would show the city how to do a bunch of things. And then I have to laugh at my life, which frankly has been dark and difficult for a lot of those sixteen years at PortSide, instead of becoming the founder of a place, I became the mother of a homeless ship. And on top of that, a historic ship. So then people presume, oh, you're a historic ship project? You're the *Mary Whalen* preservation project? I'm like no, no, no, no that really isn't it. There's like a constellation of things that we have intended to do that we have not gotten to because we have yet to get a place that gives us the space to do those things and/or the permission to do those things. Because in theory, even with the limited space that PortSide has where we currently are, in Atlantic Basin, we could do some things, but site rules prohibit them.

Now, there was a great and positive breakthrough this week, a fantastic conversation with the amazing Beth Rooney of the Port Authority, we are now green-lighted to do some things. It's taken twelve years to get permission to have retail here; and I'm not going to get into the weeds of that—how that happened, what the impediments were—but in terms of what PortSide intended to do, it was to be a modern, as I learned it's called social entrepreneurship non-profit,

where we would have a lot of revenue generators. And we've been blocked from having every single revenue generator. We just had a bunch green-lighted on Wednesday. It's 2021 and PortSide's first business plan was completed in May 2005.

Now I used to read, before founding PortSide, probably even before photo journalism, these articles in *The New York Times* about real estate developers and how it took them fifteen and twenty years to assemble the property for the development. I was always like, what's going on there? Fifteen years?! Are you kidding me?! Well, okay, PortSide's at sixteen.

Q: Can you talk a little bit more about the boat people community? Was there a mobilization in response to not using the waterways and just seeing the water as a view? You said you had been speaking up a lot, so who were the other people that were speaking and was there a kind of movement to push back?

Salguero: There was. I have to say I think there's a little bit of an "us and them" thing between the maritime community and I'm just going to call them the landlubbers of New York, the non-maritime people. But then there's also a lot of divisions, and sometimes in-fighting within what is the maritime community; because the boat community, if that's what we're going to call it, is incredibly diverse. It will range from a kayak to a cruise ship, right? So not everybody gets along here. A lot of the ferry and tugboat captains think of kayakers—they call them "speed bumps," "river lice"—they're these little kind of annoying things in the way. The maritime community in this harbor at least also—by that, I need to clarify which part of the maritime community when I say that of course—the non-recreational, non-historic, non-advocacy part of the maritime

community tends to not get involved in civic life. It is very silent, it is not involved. When I have tried to, after my years of being a photo journalist, covering the stories, and founding PortSide, I have the confidence of a lot of senior people in maritime businesses; and they generally don't want to talk. I think it's part of the culture. Also, I think they have found—I don't think, they've told me this—is, "They only cover us if there's an accident or a problem. So we would just rather be quiet and not say anything."

They have a couple of representatives, like the Maritime Association of New York, the American Waterways Operators, which represents the tug and barge industry. They had a very strong advocate, Linda O'Leary who, very unfortunately in my opinion, she got taken out. She retired and got cancer and died. She was really willing to enter the fray and talk to the media and City Council. But otherwise, it's a conversation that they're having, I think, in certain corridors, like elected officials, Washington, federal policy; but they're not dealing with local grassroots. They're not at City Council hearings—the individual business members. So it's just kind of not visible. It's kind of understandable, because it really has been a losing game. So what's happened is a lot of the non-profit advocate groups—and I'm going to call my cohort of people who were sort of all starting let's say within a ten-year span—a bunch of us are just burnt out.

The Department of City Planning completed the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan earlier this year, delayed by the pandemic. It was supposed to be done last year. And I called around the harbor to kind of take the pulse of people before writing PortSide's statement, and I heard multiple times "we're not even going to bother—nothing changes—nothing happened after Vision 2020." That was the last plan crafted in 2010 to be in effect until 2020. Other comments

were like "blech, this administration doesn't care about the waterfront. We're just going to sit it out. Maybe the next one will be different." There was a lot of that, and I understand it. I will credit—blame—Hurricane Sandy for taking the focus off of Vision 2020, the main thrust was very exciting to me, aligning with the PortSide vision of embracing the potential of the waterways in every way, not just creating access to it but means to get on it and to use it. It was talking about a blue highway, which was another way of talking about using maritime transportation to move people and freight. Otherwise in maritime circles, it's known usually as a marine highway or short sea shipping. All of that ethos was in there, so aligned with PortSide's goals; and a year and a half after they finished it [Vision 2020], Hurricane Sandy comes in; and so embracing the waterways, which has just proven to be an incredibly destructive—

—Is that ship supposed to be leaving with a gigantic fender attached? [Points out boat leaving a nearby dock.] That doesn't look right. That looks really not right. Where are you guys going with that? [Laughs] I'm going to take a picture, excuse me. Maybe they're moving their fender. They're going on a harbor cruise with a ginormous fender.

So yes, Sandy did come in and so water was clearly a destructive force; but I think also money talks. So, New York was devastated, and people and businesses were hurt; but then a flood of federal money came in, not for the building of ports or maritime development in any form. It was for protection from water. Suddenly, the talk was resiliency, which yes, I'm not denying that Sandy resiliency is important; but the money was for protecting us from water. Frankly, also, I think the FEMA [Federal Emergency Management Agency] money is very conventionally minded, so resiliency was very much framed as walls. You have one form or another, whether

it's an elevation, a berm, a permanent hard other sort of substance wall. There was a little bit of a more modern eco-version of "let's have more oyster reefs, that will save us all," which personally I think has gotten a big exaggerated and sacred cow-ish, because it won't do all, but people like it because it aligns with other sorts of green kinds of things. And we are making progress; we're making progress cleaning the harbor and that's good. But MARAD which is the federal Maritime Administration within the federal DOT, Department of Transportation, it just doesn't have the money and the reach and the involvement that the FEMA funds did.

So, as I said it at one talk at the American Institute of Architects in New York, resiliency was walls, and ports are apertures. And FEMA came in with money for walls; and MARAD didn't show up with money to convince people to include apertures in whatever form. So the whole maritime community lost out there. Yeah, we are kind of burnt out and disappointed.

Q: Can you talk about the business plan from 2005? PortSide's original vision and points of advocacy?

Salguero: I was going to say, so you asked the question of how much we've done, you want me to talk about the advocacy or you want me to talk about the things that were in the plan?

Q: The things that were in the plan.

Salguero: Okay, so the original idea is we would have been located not where we are now, which is very complicated property: public sector, owned by the Port Authority, rented to the New

York City Economic Development Corporation with another overlay of management, the dock master, DockNYC program. We would have been on private property owned by Greg O'Connell, with the newly opened Fairway and having actually a synergistic relationship to a supermarket. So that's PortSide thinking, the goal is to do at least three things at once. Are we doing education, economic development, and advocacy? Are we doing preservation, arts and [unclear]? Always at least three things, right? So the plan was this synergistic relationship to Fairway.

The *Mary Whalen* was purchased, not to be an office or a program center of any significance, nor frankly, a museum ship or a celebrated object; she was going to be a spud barge, which is—that's a really bad name but sometimes maritime jargon is really confusing. A spud is not a potato in this instance. A spud is when a boat has its own piling, either internal or external. So if you know the NYC Ferry docks, people call them docks, they're actually spud barges. So if you look at them the gray box is bouncing up and down, pinned in place by these black vertical things, and those are spuds. So the *Mary Whalen* was going to be spudded, right behind the Fairway, where there's now a corroding former New York Water Taxi dock, and we were going to have 8,500 square feet of space in what's known as the Beard Street Pier building, a wonderful long brick warehouse that stretches out over the water and lies in between the Upper Bay, with a view of the Statue of Liberty on one side, and Erie Basin behind it. At that point of the business plan, there was still the magnificent remains of the sugar refinery, now gone, about to become an Amazon e-commerce warehouse. What a metaphor for our times!

The idea of PortSide there—part of what we were advocating for was "boats, boats, boats," as

John Krevey used to put it, but also to show how maritime activity could be used for economic and community development. Because it was really treated by people whenever they discussed it at all—again going back, it was "vacant, under-utilized, industrial" stuff, as a has-been—like it reached its glory in the era of Marlon Brando's *On the Waterfront*, and then it died. So for those people, it's not here anymore. It's not relevant. It doesn't do anything. How could it contribute? It's just not part of our language, our toolkit for urban development, in New York City, which I thought was fundamentally wrong. Now, I lost my thread. I got distracted by something. What did I get distracted by?

So that was it. We were going to show how maritime was going to do this economic and community development, how it also could be an attraction; because there was a lot of discussion about how do you revitalize—that's a complicated term—revitalize a neighborhood that's hit the skids, which Red Hook had very much had that experience. Attractions, which in New York City were often the arts. And if you want to be real and even cynical about it, the pattern was you bring in a bunch of arts and artists, or the artists come in looking for cheap real estate; they make the place hip and groovy, then you rezone it, and you put in luxury condos; and then you've completed a cycle, which is a successful cycle in some people's opinion, not mine. So that could have been a recipe for Red Hook, right.

The other thing I wanted to demonstrate was it is possible—should be possible and is possible but was not happening in New York—to combine what was called the working waterfront, which is a more industrial end of maritime, with public access. Because in the jargon, the rhetoric which I likened to manifest destiny, of—and I'm doing air quotes always—"waterfront

revitalization" in New York City, the language was "public access." We've got to get "access to the water." And I was one of those people who actually fought that term in the late '90s and the 2000s, not because I didn't want the public to get to the water, it doesn't use the water. And I remember Pam Hepburn who was running the Tug Pegasus Preservation Project, a former captain of real working tugs, she and I both were some of those voices, "no, we want use of the water." But we lost out. So the goal, the term became "access to the water" with no use of the water implied. And I think that's a monumental failure of the city's trajectory; though some people are heralding, "We've got access now! We've got access!"

And what I wanted to show—this was a way to defend the working waterfront, not to displace it. Because normally public access was actually displacing the working waterfront. So honestly, I think a lot of it is this term that wasn't around then, at least that I was aware, "greenwashing." We've given the world a park, so it's better than having an industrial maritime facility. And I don't think that's necessarily so. So, I wanted to show that you could actually have public access in proximity to real work boats or working waterfronts. That's a fundamental thing. I do not want PortSide to be in a park, not a New York City park. These things, there we would be like what I would call a floating gazebo, like a precious historic object, which all of these new city parks here, they make it impossible to maintain your boat because they don't want anything real. You can't be sandblasting here. There's no means for truck delivery. You can't have cans of lube oil or be running your generator. You're supposed to be this perfectly preserved object. How are you going to do that without having any maintenance things going on? It's not real. It's not real. And I, from journalism to PortSide, am about reality, even if it's gritty. And I love gritty.

So, what was going to happen at PortSide, there's the *Mary Whalen* spudded behind the Fairway and because I had done this long-running project for *National Geographic* on tugboats in New York harbor which, big asterisk, they foolishly never published; I learned a lot, however, about the working waterfront, because tugs go everywhere doing all sorts of kind of work. And I knew how hard it was for them to get groceries. With the demise of working waterfront piers all over the city and piers you could just tie up to, and as I'd say walk up the street to, both the bar and the supermarket and the bodega, it was really hard to get "grub" as they put it. So we would allow for tugboat dock and shop. That would help that industry. It would help the Fairway, and it was going to help PortSide; because the Fairway was going to give us ten percent of all gross receipts, which I remember being something like $150,000 a year; we figured, which would go toward maintaining the *Mary Whalen*. Because I understood the towing industry well enough, they really weren't going to pay for this thing that would actually make their life easier. They are kind of cheap that way, as much as I love them. So yes, we were going to earn money from that. And that was going to provide this living museum of real boats. For some reason—we need to talk to a psychiatrist or something about why are people obsessed with tugs, but they are. They're this universally beloved thing. And I'm like, terrific! I'm going to have a pack of changing tugs! And people are going to love to see this! And they're going to sit there at the Fairway Café and watch tugs come and go, and how cool is that going to be! And that was the boats we didn't have to maintain. Initially, I had said, "we will not have a historic ship because they are money pits," but here we are.

So, initially we were looking at spud barges. I spoke to John Krevey, who has since passed. He's the founder of what's now Pier 66 Maritime—I'm sorry, it was Pier 63 Maritime—and he was

using an old rail float. That means a barge that the railroad companies, in the era when they were moving train cars across the harbor, were using. Those were running $300,000 to $350,000 at the time of the last stage of our business plan, like spring of 2005. And the *Mary Whalen* ultimately was purchased for like $16,500. She wasn't as big. They were about three hundred feet. She's 172, but she's flat sided along the cargo tanks. I was like, "eh! You know, she's better-looking. A little bit more interesting. Kinda historic. Cheaper, a lot cheaper. And there we go, we're in business, right?" That was as much as what we really thought about the *Mary Whalen*, honestly, as part of the plan. Everything else was about the other boats coming and going. So one side of the *Mary Whalen* was going to be work boats—

There they go with their fender. That's the *Liberty Belle*. I don't know. Maybe they're taking it to the shipyard? I don't know what they're going to do.

So the work boats on one side, which was going to be the side with more wakes, facing the Statue of Liberty, and the other side would be boats that the public could get on. Some of those commercial. The idea, again, bringing boat experiences to people. By the way, every sector of the maritime industry has been straining to grow. And by commercial boats, I mean dinner boats, party boats, boats giving you a harbor tour, boats taking you out fishing, like we have at Sheepshead Bay. Why in a harbor like this is there really kind of almost only one area called Sheepshead Bay, where there are a handful of boats to do this? It's just really nuts.

We did all the market research. We contacted all these things, and then there would be a related fishing club, fishing education for kids, all this sort of stuff. People were so excited. Oh, my

God, there could be a place where we could do all this stuff! And then other boats that are educational and cultural, those tend to be historic ships, not only. And they're usually non-profit, overwhelmingly, but not only. But also government ships. Every government agency will make their boats available. There's usually a non-profit host; because, in other words, they don't generally set up some program to come stare at our boats kind of thing. I can imagine and working with consultants and everything else, this incredible dynamic array of changing boats; and the commercial ones were going to give us money, landing fees. We had the money coming from the commercial boats. We had money from Fairway for the tugboat dock and shop. We even polled the towing industry, "do you want the food brought out to you by another boat? Do you want to fax in orders?" There wasn't email then. There wasn't email on boats, just faxes. All that stuff.

Then the primary, what I would say, other educational and cultural activity was in building space, which we have had yet to get. There, it was 8,500 square feet. So going down my list, I'm going to say here, of the things I rattled off, tugboat dock and shop, no, it hasn't happened. Commercial boats, no, it hasn't happened. Educational and historic ships, very few. There was one massive event that we organized, the Dutch flat-bottom ships here, but once we got the *Mary Whalen* out of the container port in 2015 after being stuck there for almost a decade, we didn't have the permission to have visiting vessels right away. This site is like so limiting and so controlling.

Anyway, in the building, there would have been—and I hope to get and I expect to get and I will get!—building space so we can do the following, a build and row program, which can be youth

or adults. We were going to focus on youth, building large rowing boats that they row with several gigs. It's the boat type. There's some person steering, like an adult coaching, directing, and they row as a collective. There have been a number of programs in town over the course of PortSide's life, Rocking the Boat in the Bronx was founded—actually their founder spent time up at Gannon & Benjamin, another inspiration there. I think they're the best model I've ever seen. So, if we got this space, I have spoken to Adam Green and would seek his advice. They have a great slogan and it's a youth development program. They're not just building boats. How does it go exactly now? I should have looked this up before-hand. "Kids don't [just] build boats, boats build kids" is essentially what it says.

What I had designed—that tends to be teens—for younger kids, I had come up with an idea, a program that was called the Flotsam Project. Just because of where Red Hook is located, incredibly large timbers float up here onto the beach; and the Army Corps also collects them as a hazard. Now back in the day, things were different, the Army Corps was willing to give us flotsam. Now, I'm not sure they would do this for all sorts of reasons I won't get into, red tape-ish. But the idea was the Flotsam Project would clean Red Hook's beaches and rip rap and everything else of these things (which could become hazards again if they start floating) and build simple outdoor furniture. So that's for younger kids who don't—it's hard to get like an eight to twelve-year-old to spend the amount of time it takes to be building a boat; and, so this was a way to get them into the same carpentry shop doing something, technically simpler, rustic stuff; but then selling it, so then it gets them into a small business model. It teaches them business skills. You have to present your project, you sell it. It helps fund the program.

And subsequently, like in Red Hook, Added Value—at about that time was formed, the urban farm, which is now called the Red Hook Farms; and that's an example too where the kids are, yes, and they're farming and they're selling it; but what you're also teaching them is this whole trajectory of a long-term project, of business skills, of presentation skills; and then you make them document the work, everything else. So, we would have had "build and row" and Flotsam Project.

Education for people to get licenses and then also marine/Coast Guard licenses to enter the trade or to move up in the industry. And also safety classes for recreational boaters because recreational boating is increasing despite the impediments. But that requires, particularly for the licenses, the Coast Guard inspects the classroom, the size, the lighting, the desks, the spacing of the desks, the toilets and the parking. So, we could never actually offer those classes, for example, on the deck at the *Mary Whalen*. It takes very precise building space. We don't have that yet. Exhibits were planned, conferences, screening of films, that kind of cultural activity. We have never been able to do a conference. We don't have enough space. We've done kind of one major exhibit about the mariners' response to 9/11 on another historic ship that has a different configuration, the *Lilac*. We did some film screening. It's pretty hard.

School education programs, yes, that we have been able to do; but we're reaching where, now, I would say, the pandemic obviously interrupted in-person stuff. As our programming with a local school in particular, PS 676 picked up, the *Mary Whalen* does not have enough interior space to make this easy to do. We were able to do the impactful programs with 676 we did; because it was a school with declining enrollment. So, their first grade class, for example, small kids, was

showing up with six to nine kids at a time. The DOE, Department of Education has actually shut down the school because of declining enrollment; and it's morphing into a maritime middle school, which is exciting; but we're going to have a hard time working with a maritime middle school; because it's going to have a normal class size. The *Mary Whalen* interior spaces, we can't handle twenty to thirty kids in a visit, sitting down. Walking through a tour, yes; but anything else, there's not enough interior space here. And middle school kids are way bigger than first graders. So, we did this incredible work with 676; and that was the first school that we were really doing recurrent programming with. Prior to that, it was really special event field trips. We might see one school on recurrent visits, but once a year. Sadly, it's because the Board of Education is not using the harbor for teaching. Anyways, that's going to be a challenge for how we go ahead.

Office, we never planned to have our offices in the ship. Everyone thinks it's romantic; let me tell you, it's a nightmare, okay. Low tide, your head is barely above ground level. Cell phone service has gotten better. The first year, we're running around like crazy looking for sweet spots. Internet, we couldn't get it into the boat for years. We went through crazy sort of things like that. The interior, like I said, it gets over ninety degrees in the summer. There's no central air conditioning. It's very hard to air condition. The insulation is eighty-three years old; and it's an eighty-three year old concept of insulation. It's a hot metal box. There's not enough space. We have office supplies—I mean, also, once the pandemic—it's not big enough to socially distance people. We lost funding and staff so we weren't in the position of having the same amount of people. There's no way. We used to have five people working in a space that Hughes Marine, when they used the *Mary Whalen* as an office, they took down a bulkhead or a wall, so two

cabins became an office; but we had five people in there. We had people at an old metal desk, sitting at one that has wells, like file cabinets on either side and your knee goes in the hole. We had two people using the same desk, knee to knee facing the hole with their monitors back-to-back in there, really jammed. Those were the working conditions before the pandemic. There's no space in here.

So anyway, down that list, no "build and row," no Flotsam Project, no Coast Guard-approved education thing—which, by the way, we wouldn't teach, we had all these partners identified. Exhibits rarely, conferences never, films occasionally, school things. So, PortSide has succeeded continually in winning awards, doing what we call "Harbor Firsts," the first time something's been done in the harbor. We break things open for other people. We inspire other people; but it's just been—we're doing a fraction of the intentions under gruelingly difficult conditions; and why, why? Because the harbor's stupidly run. Why won't the New York City Economic Development Corporation give us what they promised? Which was just 6,500 square feet approximately. They manage over 64 million square feet for the city, 64 million! Start counting the zeros, people, in comparison to 6,500. They had actually promised us more than that. Initially it was going to be half of this pier, six hundred feet of pier to program that would be revenue, ka-ching, ka-ching, ka-ching. And this whole parking lot south of the Pier 11 shed—it's called a shed, folks, but it's an enormous warehouse, like four blocks long and all of that. And now I can't get those things. I'm just trying to get the building space; I've upped the amount; 6,500 was always too small. We're now asking for more, what I call "right-sizing PortSide," and you can consider it a penalty tax for having jerked us around for so many years.

But—all we do is win awards and do incredible stuff, and you won't actually make 6,500 square feet of space available, New York City Economic Development Corporation? That was a very long answer to the question, I'm sorry.

Q: Well, I was going to ask—I'm glad you got to it because I was going to ask: simple terms, what has been the impediment? And you mentioned before also that the media isn't interested—

Salguero: Well, we haven't talked about the back story of the media. So, I'm not going to put any of this on the media; because the conventional non-profit thing—that's the backing ferry, *Starlight*, beepity beep—the non-profit advice playbook is you talk about your successes. It's really cheerleading language, "Ooh! We did this, we did that, the metrics of our impact matches our success." You don't actually write things, like, "Well, screwed again year four! What does that tell us about how the city is being managed?" And I honestly didn't know how to manage this. As a journalist, the award-winning journalist in me wants to tell the reality story. But as I said, that's not what non-profits—and you don't finger-point. Also, as a quasi-homeless organization—I didn't answer that actually. That was left out of here.

So, I ended up purchasing the boat for PortSide; because she actually has to be acquired, otherwise she's in the way. And Greg O'Connell is not giving us a definite no on the space. He's clearly not signaling "yes" after years of talking to him about this idea; and frankly, it was conversations with him that inspired, really, the whole PortSide idea. He had an important role in the genesis of this nightmare. But then he did what I call the fade away and radiate. He honestly did not man up and say I'm not doing this. He was just kind of stalling, kicking the can, making

himself unavailable. And so, I was in contract to get the *Mary Whalen* for like fifteen months. She had to be gotten. And this is where, I'm going to say, this is Carolina as determined, obstinate, in denial: I know the city is not maritime-friendly and it's incredibly hard to find a place for a boat; but I get the boat anyway. I basically don't want to lose, right? So, to some extent, I did it to myself. I suppose, and all of us, at PortSide. But I'm like, "eh! We'll work this out. It's a moveable asset." I know you can't find a place for a boat—so I get a 172-foot boat! What an idiot.

Before getting the boat, I call over to the operators of the Red Hook Container Terminal, a container port. At the time, it was the company American Stevedoring. And I knew them because I had worked with Allison Prete, the award-winning filmmaker. She and I had launched a website, Waterfront Matters, which was to manage, rebut, present the real truth in the face of a study, which was obviously a gentrification setup, that the EDC, the Economic Development Corporation, was primarily running. It was a joint EDC/Port Authority study but I think that's because the Port Authority owned the property. It was called the Pier 6-12 Study, Pier 6 being Atlantic Avenue and 12 being the pier right opposite us here in Atlantic Basin, which became the cruise terminal. It was a clear setup for gentrification, views, tall towers, whatever else. And Allison and I both felt that, not only was that a bad vision, they were spinning. to use a term. Nobody uses the term the same way now. That is a very '80s term, lying, manipulation. She and I both as documentarians had a hard time with spin.

So, we make this website. That's how I come to know American Stevedoring. I called them up and said "hey, have you got a space for the *Mary Whalen*?" I can't remember now how long I

said it was going to be but I wasn't talking years. I said months. Ha! Well, before I get it out of the shipyard. But we ended up being stuck in there for almost ten years, most of that time. It was a nightmare, and the Port Authority hated it. Though we advocate for maritime activity—we explain it for the public, the jargon, we interpret it, we make it intelligible, we say what it does—despite all of that, you would think that would align with the Port Authority's maritime port commerce department mission. [Blows raspberry] I mean, I might as well have been an unwanted cockroach. They did everything to make our lives difficult. The actual port workers, they were highly supportive and really helpful. But it was a really difficult thing. I mean, apart from the Port Authority as an institution not wanting us in there, the rules and everything were not set up in such a way that we could really easily do any kind of public programming.

So, it became a place for the boat to exist with occasional programs, and then because of 9/11, which prompts many things; but the Homeland Security Department is invented; and then this TWIC Card, the Transportation Worker Identification Credential, is invented and it goes into effect March two-thousand—whew, watch this, time has passed. I remember the year, was it 2008 or 2009? It was implemented.

Q: 2008.

Salguero: 2008? Good for you for knowing! Making our lives very difficult; because it was very hard to get in there. That drove PortSide to go into virtual programming deeply, well before other people, which is ironic; because initially I had language in our first business plan because people were already getting excited about virtual reality. I said, "No, we're going to be grounded in

actual reality!" Anti-computer, real experiences, the things that I—this is what I love as a photojournalist, really being in the world. I was a bookish kid, teen, nerd through college; but what I learned as a photojournalist in the world was learning from living history, first sources. I don't hate books or history; but it was different, really in the present. So I wanted to bring that to people. I felt it was life-changing.

So there we were, cornered into virtual reality, using Facebook as a messaging tool. It's not the only reason why we have a virtual museum; that was always intended; and we haven't got it yet to an app. I want an app—what's the term now? I have forgotten. It's called push notifications; but as you go around the neighborhood, bink! It signals you that there's some item. We haven't gotten it to that level. It was always intended to have a virtual component; but it became really important, because we don't have building space for a physical exhibit. And we would have been—I learned more jargon from the museum designers—an interpretive center, not based on collections "like here's the old wrench." I want to clarify for all you preservationists, we love old things; but for reasons of space and budget, but also impact, we didn't want to be frozen talking about a static collection. We wanted to be able to be talking about current issues, future topics, changing topics; and so that's an interpretive center, not based on talking about your collection and exhibiting your own collection. It also takes less space. So that also drove us into the virtual realm; and I've lost the thread. How did we get here?

Q: Well, I want to now ask about the challenges of balancing. You have this historic vessel that's ideally an interpretive center. And then you have PortSide, which is extremely based in the present and future, hands-on. I mean, you've talked about this before, how do you actually get

them to work together instead of working against—

Salguero: Actually, here's the thing, I feel no inherent conflict between the two. The issue really centered around the fact, I think, we never got the building space and the permission to be an active landing that would have allowed us to have that other stuff going on. So, what happens is, for a number of years, we kept talking about PortSide, blah, blah, the whole thing. I personally, this is me, felt uncomfortable talking about things that we weren't doing. I felt like sort of unfulfilled promises besides any advice they tell you about non-profits only talking about what you're accomplishing. So we dropped that; so then, we're not even talking about those other things. But also it's just a perception issue; so people see an old boat; and even if they're not in the maritime culture or space, the notion of a historic ship is not that foreign. So, "Oh, right, you're a historic ship project," so it's just presumption. There would be no problem celebrating our historic ship if we had all the other stuff going on that made it kind of really clear; but the other stuff, even when we're doing it, is just not visible.

Also, a lot of advocacy work and the means that we've been able to use for community economic development are also not visible. When you're networking and you're introducing people or when you're doing planning work or whatever, it just doesn't have a kind of physicality. Maybe also in our case, for limited bandwidth, which is the consequence of this horrible real estate story, it has had such a pop-up nature. We've essentially functioned as a pop-up so much, popping up with the ship. We get permission to go somewhere with this ship.

Okay, now we have great beeping noises. Who's beeping? How long is this going to go on?

Hang on. He's beeping, backing out of the pier.

So, I just think it's a perception thing. There is, to my mind, at least in the case of PortSide, no inherent conflict between talking about history, having a historic ship, and also having a future focus. But in our particular case, it got really confusing. So, we even tried avoiding using the term "historic ship" for many years. One of our things was to call the *Mary Whalen* a "repurposed oil tanker." Also trying to focus on repurpose, reuse, sustainability. And then I learned that most people thought the oil tanker was the truck that delivers the home heating oil to buildings. So, it's funny, like, okay folks, stop trying to buck the tide and just go with the flow.

So, we accepted "historic ship;" and honestly it became important—and I'm noting one of your questions here—the whole National Register designation. The Port Authority evicted American Stevedoring from the Red Hook Container Terminal. Those two entities had a really, long, fraught relationship; and I'm sure that didn't help PortSide. American Stevedoring, ASI for short, really didn't follow the Port Authority rules. They were busy suing the Port Authority often. Their CEO was a real kind of rule-breaking cowboy type. So, we were guests of this difficult tenant. So, as the Port Authority evicted American Stevedoring, they came after us. They wanted to evict us. They came up with a clever ploy, which was to say to Sal Catucci, the CEO, you don't get your signing money until you get that non-profit out of there. Whoever came up with that, that was a really good chess move. And we had a Council person who—I'm just going to say it—ineffective at the time, Sara Gonzalez. So, I called Councilman Brad Lander out of our district, presented the scenario to him, and he called the Port Authority. Don't know what he said or who he said it to; but they didn't evict us and they backed off that thing with Sal

Catucci.

But what they did do then was tighten the screws on the TWIC card. So only my TWIC card had what's called "escort privileges," which sounds naughty but it's not. Escort privileges means you can escort, walk or drive with someone who doesn't have a TWIC card into the TWIC zone. So that meant the ship was six blocks from the gate. So for us to get visitors who don't have this Homeland Security ID, someone from the PortSide crew had to go out and meet them. And I usually sent one of the two guys with the car. Well, the Port Authority didn't allow anyone else's card to have those privileges. So, I learned to ride two bicycles at a time. I would ride a bicycle, push the handlebars on the other one. So that if someone wasn't in a car, they could then—otherwise, I'm walking six blocks out, six blocks in. There was one Monday, I did this ten times in a day. It was nuts. We finally got the boat—the office—out of there.

Actually, the reason why we put it on the National Register—again, preservationists, we love history and preservation; but it kind of wasn't front and center—I thought we'll be harder to mess with if she's on the National Register. It gives her, I hope, some protective status, honestly. So that's why we did it. We thought that the Supreme Court decision that she was involved in is super important. We don't feel, we know it's super important nationally and even internationally; but the criteria for National Register has to be things that are fifty years or older and that is not fifty years old. That was 1975. And then putting in a special request which involved some committee meetings, etc, which wasn't going to convene for multiple months, would delay the process. I was like "they're trying to evict us. We've got to do this now."

So, in her National Register designation, the Supreme Court thing isn't in there because of that. I think it's mentioned but it's not considered a criterion. So, this is how preservation works under duress. Ha! That's what made it happen.

Q: Yes, in these interviews that we do, we often ask about what has it meant to have a physical space to showcase this meaning, to connect people to the past? Given that the boat was locked up basically—

Salguero: The invisible asset.

Q: You've mentioned the difficulty but was there a way that it was also fueling the other work that you were doing?

Salguero: What do you mean by that?

Q: Or was it draining this physical connection to the past?

Salguero: Well, here's the one thing. I had said from the beginning, "don't have a historic ship because they're a lot of work." The problem was we suddenly had a historic object, a historic ship that we couldn't really use physically with the public because of the limitations of access to the Red Hook Container Terminal, which had to be maintained. She had to be brought back. She was quite rundown. So then, there's a whole bunch of effort that has to go into that. And that was draining; and it was also hard to do because what kind of grant are you going to get to restore a

ship that nobody can get to? It doesn't work. And frankly, a lot of funding is also attached to programs. So what programs are we delivering if our base or our object, our thing, is not only largely inaccessible, it's even invisible?

So this is what the EDC has never understood: they're like, "Yeah, your budget's small." Listen, if I cut off your legs, are you going to dance? I mean it's just crazy. So, we had no source of revenue. We couldn't do many programs or maybe even worse, we couldn't predictably do it, because what funders want is you're going to tell them in advance, yes—for those of you who don't know non-profits who are listening—"a year from now, we're going to do these four things for this group of people; and these are the success metrics and we know, we know who the people are, what age they are, what the demographics are, how often it's going to happen, how fabulous this is going to be for everybody." They don't fund you like just take $50,000 and make something fabulous and report back. And you have to have this predictable thing, and our life wasn't predictable. We negotiated for permits. It was so ridiculous getting a permit to do anything with the boat in the city. We never got a permit on more than twenty days notice for years. One time it was even nine. I challenge anybody out there in the non-profit business: what do you think if someone says to you, "you've got twenty days to design the program, recruit the partners and get an audience? Go." That's what we were doing.

Q: The other component there is that you show that you've done programming in the past that's been successful but you're also hindered in being able to do that as well.

Salguero: Yes, so it just wasn't predictable. So, the funders—the fact that we did a Harbor First

that blew everybody away, like the opera in 2007, that's not really impactful on a grant application by 2010. It's "what did you do last year? Do you know when you're going to do the next one?" So, we accumulated this resume of astounding, innovative Harbor Firsts and all sorts of stuff; but there wasn't every year the same thing. There would be years that we couldn't get the boat—it was very pop-up and inconsistent.

What happened over time is, I have to say, I guess maybe I grew up. I stopped gnashing my teeth over a bunch of things and fighting the fact that the *Mary Whalen* is a historic ship and we don't want to attach to her. It's undeniable the boat has something. People just fall in love with the boat, even when she was bedraggled. The boat has a something and it's an unknown category. People are not falling in love with oil tankers. She's not a tugboat. There is no precedent for this. Not just for this type of oil tanker, there's not oil tankers elsewhere. I think there's one out in the Midwest and then there's the one in Germany. Actually, the one in Germany is still mothballed. They haven't done anything with it yet. It's not a tall ship. There's a whole culture and expectation and kind of recipe for how to deal with certain categories of ships. Well, there isn't for coastal oil tankers, right? So, I love running this slogan, "New York City's Favorite Oil Tanker." Well, we happen to be the only one, so of course, we're the favorite. But the *Mary Whalen* is the favorite. She's amazing.

Then, we've got the ship cat Chiclet. I remember our IT guy, this was 2009 or 2010, said, "You should promote Chiclet." I'm like, "Come on." He's said "No, there was this cat that washed up on Governors Island, and they had a naming competition and ten thousand people answered!" "It's Governors Island. How many thousands of people do they have going in the summer?" I

was totally Debbie Downer on this. “Okay, we’ll try it, we’ll try it.” We started talking about Chiclet. Chiclet’s world famous now. We’ve had visitors come to visit us who followed us on Facebook for years. Here’s how it goes, “Hey! It’s really great to meet you and see the *Mary Whalen*. Where’s Chiclet?” Cats do rule the Internet. Just don’t fight it. She happens to be an extraordinary cat.

So, we have a historic ship and a famous cat; and it’s not what I intended. It’s impactful, it’s eccentric. We have a park. It’s PortSide Park, thanks to the pandemic. We called it Pandemic Pop-up Park last year; and people were tired of the pandemic label, so we took that off. It’s now grandly named the “PortSide Park Puddle and Library” because when the sprinkler goes on, these puddles form and the kids all want to go in there. So, we declare it a feature. It’s there. Don’t pretend the puddles aren’t there; and we’re going to try to make them cleaner. We bought pool paint; and we’re going to power wash—we were getting ready to do it, but the disruptive Formula E car race showed up this year. It was cancelled last year to COVID. And we just power washed, we spray painted the outlines of the water, and then spray paint that clean, and then put pool paint. We can actually hose it off, and it will look cleaner, and we hope we can manage the mud because right down by the sewer drain where it really pools, it gets really muddy. And of course, any kid under age five is in there all the time.

And the library, I would like to have a proper library. That was an idea that entered our business plans after 2005. The Red Hook Library had hired a consultant of the Brooklyn Public Library to do this whole revisioning thing, “what would the library be?” And they were asking all these questions. And I kept—typical me—suggesting, “there should be a maritime section in a

maritime neighborhood!" Nobody was listening. "Why would I give this idea to the Red Hook Library? We should do this." This was after Hurricane Sandy, so I felt this should really have information about flooding and flood preparedness and all that kind of related stuff. But we don't have building space. Now what we have is a free library, used books, kids' books only, in the cruise terminal guard house that's not being used. That's an example of how PortSide pivots. Many people pivoted during the pandemic. Honey, we've been pivoting since 2005. And it's clever, and it's cute and whatever. It's not the library I would like. This is the constant sort of pivot tap dance we're doing.

Q: You mentioned the pandemic pivot. Can you also talk about Hurricane Sandy?

Salguero: There was a pivot. Ha!

Q: Yes, right, a surprise.

Salguero: Some expletives occur to me, but we won't do that in the interview. Well, it was a good thing we had Hurricane Irene the year before, which didn't hit us hard; but that was the first time I had to prepare for a hurricane with a boat. I use "boat," which is an informal thing. She's a ship. She's a small ship.

I really wasn't prepared. I had almost no notice. I had been busy. I hadn't been watching the weather, because I'm not going anywhere. I was like oh, my God! It was sort of forty-eight hours' notice. A good friend, a real character, Jan Andrusky, a woman, Jan, had a very senior

position in a major maritime firm, Weeks Marine. They have a fleet. They do marine construction, crane barges, tugs, big heavy [makes loud machine noise] machinery, all around the Eastern Seaboard, the Gulf of Mexico, and I called her up. Her advice to me was, "Car"—she has this gravelly voice, "Car, if your ship breaks free, the Coast Guard is coming after you and you're fucked," she said. I said, "Ooh!" I actually wasn't afraid of the storm. I thought oh, my God, the Coast Guard. I just imagined the whole legal ramifications.

So, I had to come up with a storm plan on almost no notice. She got me this crew member—this was an amazing thing—she shows up with this short guy. I'm barely five foot six. I don't know if he's much taller than me. And I'm looking at him. I didn't have a crew who could stay on the boat. They aren't really available for hurricanes. And she shows up with this guy. He has this really thick Irish brogue. I said, "So, you know something about ships?" I can't do a brogue, he said, "Yes, I fished the North Sea for ten years." I'm like "great, come onboard." So that was my crew. We assembled the whole thing in forty-eight hours noticed. She put me on their fleet weather alert, so I didn't have to be looking for weather information. And basically, Irene didn't happen. But we had done this whole fire drill.

Hurricane Sandy, at that point, I was really much more prepared. We worked for four and a half days, like everyone else maritime. And I will leap ahead to say—I always cry here—it was heartbreaking to me to see the non-maritime people in my community of Red Hook who didn't know to prepare. So, when I got off the boat, Peter and I and Chiclet stayed on the boat during the storm, we come into Red Hook; and there was all this damage. A lot of it was preventable, and they just didn't know. They didn't know. Whereas, maritime people were working four to

five days on this. So, there's all these provisions.

The Port Authority, the complicated Port Authority, so Sandy is October 2012. We've not been evicted by the Port Authority, August-September 2011. They did impose the TWIC card limitation on me February 2012. But things had lightened up a bit. Somebody, I think, moved on at a senior position. The local port manager who was more favorably disposed, it was still—so they sent the wonderful Ed Woods, this towering, tall Port Authority police officer. He was like six three or four. And he said, "They sent me to talk to you, Carolina. I think they know I have a good relationship with you, and they're asking you to get the boat out of the port." I'm like, "for fuck's sakes! Where am I going to go?! I've been working to get out of the port for years!" I said, "All right, Ed. I don't know as if I can find anywhere, but I'll make some phone calls."

So, I called over to Erie Basin, the folks I had bought the boat from, and they're said, "hey, that's really funny. By the time this is over, there's going to be so many boats in here, you're going to be able to walk right across Erie Basin. We don't have room. Sorry, good luck". I was like "all right, okay, good, yup." Then I called over to GMD Shipyard in the Brooklyn Navy Yard. We hauled the *Mary Whalen* out in 2007. They did the work and then gave us a home for four months after that until they needed the pier back. They're like, you know, "Carolina"—I'm talking to the president—he mentioned when Irene came through here, blah, blah, bah, he describes how the water came in, what was flooded, what was damaged. "We're still trying to fix that, so I'm not sure you want to be here." I'm like "okay, I made the two phone calls I think I can make. Since the engine doesn't work, I can't run away." I'm watching from the container port, I can see ships going up the East River fleeing Sandy. There goes the Army Corps fleet.

There go tugs and barges. There's stuff in their boats. I'm sitting here, I'm a target. What can we do?

So, I called the Port Authority and said, "I'm terribly sorry. There's nowhere for me to go. I've made my best effort." And then it's like what can we do? So we got a tug—my calculation was to—so the boat at that time, the *Mary Whalen* was on the south side of Pier 9B. If you look at maps, Pier 9B almost aligns with Degraw Street, and it's what's called a finger pier. It's perpendicular to the stream, the East River. So, it's sticking out into the stream. To the south of us is a rocky shore, because that's where the original Hamilton Avenue ferry was. It's not a bulkhead. I'm thinking, "wow, if the dock lines break free, I have no engine, she hits those rocks, it's really a mess." And/or, what's bad, if she shoots down the Buttermilk Channel with these incredibly fast currents, there I am, the wheel is not even attached to the rudder. I can't even turn my rudder. [Makes squealing sound] I'm headed—bang!—until I hit the North Shore of Staten Island. That's not a good scenario.

So, I had the *Mary Whalen* moved around to the north side of the pier, thinking if she broke free, I'm in between two piers which might give us some time to throw some dock lines out, to call a tug, to just bash around in there maybe if the current, the tide wouldn't sweeping us out south. I was more worried about going south, I guess. I don't know why I wasn't worried about going north; but that's bad too. And also, there was a big stack of containers at the in-shore end of the pier. So I thought that's a little bit of protection from the wind, and then there's the height of the hill of Brooklyn Heights.

So, we move the boat, we're putting out additional storm lines; and they come along, the port operators, they completely move the stack of containers astern of us. Okay, so there goes that wall, which is probably just as well because the containers ended up floating. So, what you do for a storm like that, is you put out additional dock lines. So, for non-mariners, normally there would be from each point on the boat a cleat or a bit—a line by the way is a rope—a dock line would go out to what you tie to a shore, a cleat or a bollard. So, for the storms, you might double part it. In other words, it would be a loop. We triple parted it, and they were extra long. So as the surge came in, we could float up without the lines being tight and tipping the boat. So, Jan Andrusky was there again, sending weather reports. Amazingly, the internet did not go down and watching it. I remember seeing the news that the tall ship *Bounty* sank in the morning. I'm like "this is bad. This is really bad. The *Bounty*'s down. It's coming up the coast. Here she comes, Sandy." So that was the thing, for mariners, it really wasn't a surprise, the level of the surge. About four hours before, I heard—there was an estimation that was within a few feet of what it ultimately ended up being at its peak, down here at the Battery and Red Hook and this area. So, Peter and I would go out and lengthen dock lines. We would just make them longer, make them longer.

Then, around four hours before, we heard what was coming. I was like "all right, I don't want the *Mary Whalen* to come up and float over the pier." She would damage the pier, and then I really have an issue with the Port Authority. She could possibly land on a bollard and puncture the hull. She's not going to sink readily because of all the compartments being an oil tanker; but I don't want a hole in the hull. So, okay, then the idea was to tie like a restraining line from the midpoint of the boat, the bits there, all the way to that pier that was to the north of us. That's 265 feet. So,

we had all these extra dock lines. It's raining and blowing or whatever. And we're outside. I'm tying them together. The proper mariner verb is I'm "bending the lines together" to make this ginormous thing, it's over 265 feet long to get over there. And then we tie together—and these dock lines by the way, folks, are three to four inches in diameter. And then I'm tying together lighter line, meaning like smaller rope, so that we can throw with a heaving line that has a weighted monkey's fist at the end. I throw that to Peter who's on the bulkhead ashore, astern, behind the *Mary Whalen*; and then the two of us drag all of that line off the boat, into the water and then start walking up the shoreline, dragging that whole agglomeration of dock lines to the pier to the north of us. And as I'm making it off, tying it to a cleat, the surge comes in. Literally at that point, glug, glug, glug, up it comes, and I skedaddle and the water is starting to seep into the container port, meaning the asphalt part of the parking lot.

So, I continue walking inland to avoid the puddle. Peter for whatever reason of his own decides to go across the jersey barriers on the bulkhead. I mean that's really kind of precarious. And so, at the point, when he reaches our Pier 9B, he has to drop down into water, up to his mid-thigh. Fortunately, the pier actually sloped up from the parking lot level, probably a total of almost four feet which gave us a few minutes to go unplug our shore power cord, throw it up onto the ship, throw the road cones up, get up the ladder and pull the ladder up. And then glug, glug, glug, we watched it just come up.

And one of the weird things about this was the shed, the warehouse of similar length—three to four blocks long—next to the *Mary Whalen*, has these, they call them "man doors," the size of a man, a human, that you would open as opposed to the big rollup doors. They each have a square

window in them. There were 24/7 overhead lights on in there. They didn't go out. So, I was looking at an inland sea. I looked at water inside the building, illuminated by these lights; and then we looked at Manhattan. There were these big orange explosions illuminating in the sky. We decided those were probably transformers exploding which it turns out it was, because then you would see that chunk of Manhattan go dark. And we watched basically with this astounding view, large parts of Manhattan go dark.

And then I remember looking up the pier, meaning away from the shore, and thinking, what am I looking at? It looks like the Loch Ness Monster. What are all those humps? And then I realized these ginormous tires that are used as fenders the protection —non-mariners call them bumpers, they're between the ship and the pier. They're huge tires. They're like four and a half feet high. They are floating, and they have flipped up to the amount of their tether. So, they probably have four feet hanging down, plus they have all of that height. And there's just little crescents of them sticking up like the Loch Ness Monster. These little crescents as I look up the pier, as if Nessie were suddenly a thousand feet long or something. I'm like "oh, right, that's what that is." Then I took a nap. Once the water started subsiding, I took a very short nap, so I would be awake for the next high tide.

So, the following day, I started to get these phone calls. "Are you aground?!" No, why? "Are you sure you're not aground?!" Yes, yes, I'm actually quite sure I'm not aground, and why are you asking me that question?" And that was because there was another old oil tanker that went aground in Staten Island, and people thought it was us. That was the *John B. Caddell*. Then Peter and I spent hours the next day pulling the *Mary Whalen* back to the pier, because she has no

working winch or capstan or anything. So, the wind at that point was on the other side of the pier; so we would wait for when it would subside. There would be a little lull in the action, and the lines again were triple-parted so we have incredible amounts of line. It took us three and a half hours to get the boat back to the pier. We'd get two feet of line in, and then another gust would come in. We had to do that with multiple things.

And Peter was justifiably, as the Historian and Curator, angry at me. I was so focused on the ship and everything else. Our floating dock, it's still on Greg O'Connell's property, a bunch of other things. I had forgotten about the historic books that were in the warehouse, and they were all flooded. He was angry, as well he should be. Then, we went into historic book remediation efforts. I kicked in the door of the Stevedore's Lounge, which is up on the second floor, and we dragged all these folding plastic tables up there. He had been the Curator at the Fire Museum at the time of 9/11 and knew a lot about water damage, with fires, water pouring on stuff and what happened after 9/11. So, we interleaved all of this stuff with towels, bedsheets, paper towels, wax paper, kind of everything. For days, he was there, turning leaves. We still have two historic books in the freezer that are probably shot. They are port history books from 1850.

So yes, no damage to the ship at all. Everything else that PortSide had off the pier was damaged, destroyed or floated away. And then we came ashore. The Red Hook restaurants and bars that served food, God bless them, teamed up. Rather than having the food spoil, they announced that there was going to be a free community barbecue at the corner right up the street here from where we are now, the corner of Van Brunt and Pioneer, "bring charcoal if you have it." And they cooked their remaining food supplies, so it wouldn't spoil, and they gave it away. And as a

photojournalist, I had covered disasters before, including 9/11, things overseas. As we approached, before we got to the intersection, I was like "oh, my God, Peter, this is really bad." And we got there and there were these just—welcome to the Red Hook helicopter scene [indicating present sounds of helicopters overhead]—there were these muddy, exhausted people and the sound of generators and pumps pumping muddy water to the street. And broken and lost souls because this was Wednesday evening now. So, the surge here was 8:00 PM Monday, October 29, 2012; and the barbecue was something like three to 3:00–9:00 PM on Wednesday. So, this was two days later. Already berms of garbage, black garbage bags along the street. As Peter commented—Peter's got this dry, sometimes dark sense of humor—it was like a macabre Christmas because people who have cellars, that's where you put your holiday decorations, so there were all these muddy Santas. There were a lot of muddy Santas. We have some pictures of muddy Santas perched atop of all of this stuff. It was heartbreaking.

And from that, we changed our programming. And it actually kept PortSide alive because we had announced—after the Port Authority's efforts to evict us from the container port—we had announced February 28, 2012 that PortSide needs a home by April 30 or we will close. And we hadn't found the home; but announcing that got coverage in *The New York Times*, CBS, a lot of prominent places. The phone was ringing. The City Council President of Yonkers, God bless him, Chuck Lesnick, wanted to recruit us to go there, which wouldn't have helped me work on changing NYC policy, but it would have kept the ship alive and made a different kind of PortSide. And other people, there was a local property owner who approached us. So, we were in these promising negotiations. So, we didn't shut down. And then Sandy came, and I guess being me wanting to help people, it gave us a new mission. We set up a Sandy recovery center, which

we ran for the rest of the month, and then a virtual recovery center.

And I'm talking slowly; because I'm trying not to cry, people. For some reason, this part of the story always undoes me, watching people so damaged. And it was also particularly difficult—I couldn't say this then, and I've rarely said it, I didn't say it for years—but so much of the damage here was actually preventable. And they didn't know. So, we had discussions—I can't tell you how many, so many days of talk here at PortSide—on how to help non-maritime people living in a coastal community understand marine weather and prepare for storms. It became an obsession. I remember saying "we have to give this information" and Dan Goncharoff, a non-mariner, would say to me, "Carolina, they don't understand the information or the need for the information." We're workshopping this all the time. We came up with a bunch of ideas. But it made us change our programming, because the founding principle was embracing the potential of the waterways and connecting New Yorkers to their benefits and using the waterways. And the water was undeniably destructive. We needed to talk about that.

So, resiliency in the sense of flood preparation became a really strong part of our mission for quite a while. We're not on it all the time now; but yes, it was a really big deal. PortSide did win a White House award, a "Champions of Change" award, for our Sandy recovery work, which actually also includes the preparation of saving the, now, on the National Register of Historic Places—that was helpful that we didn't just save a boat, we saved an object on the National Register of Historic Places. And I have to say the Obama administration was really clever. Their award ceremony was just so they could pick the brains of people who had done this incredible stuff. So, they gave this award, you go to Washington, and the point was they had these panel

discussions. So they would seat like six to seven awardees at a time. I forget now how many rounds of this there were, two, I think, at least two. I think it was just two. And they had an auditorium with about 125 federal employees plus whatever guests you wanted to invite. I think each winner could have ten. And the point was to have the interviewer ask questions of everyone they were awarding, so the federal employees could get the ideas of these people who were on the ground. I mean "honestly, how smart is that?" We're going to call it an award, but you have a White House award, and then we're going to learn from all the crazy stuff you people did in the middle of that mess.

That also intensified our resiliency work, because what happened was I went there with these ideas. Dan Goncharoff, a car driver, I thought had a really great one, which I think City Planning finally did do something about this; but I don't know whether it came from our idea. It has not been that visible. All of the coastal evacuation focus was about getting the people out. So here we are located in a container port in a mixed-use neighborhood, meaning—for people that don't know zoning, mixed-use means that we've got industry along with residents. New York City parking regulations do not allow commercial vehicles to be parked overnight on the street. So therefore, it's not legal for all your vehicles that are essential for businesses, commercial and industrial, to get out of the flood zone and park on the street. So, we watched. The container port has an incredible number of vehicles. Because they don't leave the port—it's not New York City, it's Port Authority property—they don't have license plates, so they wouldn't even be allowed on the street. They had to replace the ball bearings in every one of the hustlers. Those are the chassis and trucks that move the containers around the port, all this kind of thing, incredible amounts of work. So, one of the ideas, we said there should be an evacuation plan for

vehicles, which means you have to come up with a parking solution. We actually workshopped it all out, these are the criteria you have to look at it. Probably something you have to take an inventory as to how many vehicles you have, where in Red Hook are they going to go, which avenue. Probably big avenues, you allow for the period of the surge, all this kind of stuff.

We proposed a high-water mark signage thing to memorialize in the community—where people can forget and people die and new people come in—where the flood had reached. So, FEMA actually came up with the high water mark thing. So, what happened was the senior delegation of Federal Emergency Response came to little PortSide to meet with us. They met with us for three and a half hours on the *Mary Whalen* in the container port. I mean, this is classic PortSide. We have the award from the White House. We're talking to senior federal people, and our local entities like the public sector—well, the EDC, I need to clarify for people. The Economic Development Corporation behaves like its government. It's actually a non-profit doing the business of the government; and the fact that it's not actually government means that it doesn't offer the same type of transparency and accountability, and they get away with this nonsense. But the EDC won't give us 6,500 square feet of space; but we had the Feds talking to us to get our ideas about flood preparation; and they actually implemented a bunch of them. I mean I really can't think of anything more quintessentially PortSide and the stupidity of New York City waterfront management. Give the kid 6,500 square feet of space and watch the incredible stuff they do! Instead of saying well, your budget's really small, have you noticed the incredible shit we do with no money? Pardon the expletive. I work on the docks. Unbelievable.

Q: And it's interesting because I hadn't thought about this before but it sounds like a lot of

PortSide's immediate response to what was happening in Red Hook a day or two later is about giving people information. I think so much of the response was about NYCHA [New York City Housing Authority] needs to do this and the MTA [Metropolitan Transportation Authority] needs to be doing this, the department—whoever is in charge of the roads and so on and so forth, these big kinds of structural planning. But you've seen that those places don't always have the capacity or interest and so what's next is giving information directly to people—

Salguero: But what we did also—generally, at PortSide idea is "don't compete or be duplicative." That's why, at founding, we didn't have a big environmental program; because I felt there was the Riverkeeper, [Hudson River Sloop] *Clearwater*, a lot of organizations. Not that the waters are clean; but they are on this and they are on this for decades. So, we will invite those organizations to partner with us to do environmental programs. Admittedly, that's changed because the schools kept asking for environmental things; so we began to add them. But at the point that PortSide gets off the boat, goes to that barbecue, we spent two days on our own stuff. I started asking around, so there's already some other things going on.

Initially, what I thought we were going to do was, I went over to Red Hook Initiative where they were overwhelmed with this volunteer program which was actually being run by Occupy Sandy, not RHI, at that time, I said, "how can I help? Would you like this taken out of here?" Yes. So I was actually looking for a place to do the volunteer dispatch. I called Victoria Hagman—now, Victoria Alexander—who's the founder of the real estate firm, Realty Collective. This is so Red Hook, right? Only in Red Hook do you have a maritime organization talking to a realtor about using her office for an aid station, which she's also using as an art gallery. The art gallery! We

had the best dressed aid center.

So, she said yes. And we could occupy Friday morning. So at the point we're starting Friday morning, some of the people are already doing food and PPE and whatever else. The volunteer dispatch ends up being handled by, what was then called the Southwest Brooklyn Industrial Development Corporation. Now it's South Brooklyn, SBIDC. So, they have that piece. I'm like "okay, then what are we going to do?" So, it became—I just want to clarify, we didn't necessarily have this vision where we were just going to give information to people. That was sort of a missing piece. But it's very PortSide in that we're always giving information, which is part of the advocacy section or piece of our programming, and it's also education. And I've learned, I guess former journalist, photojournalist, that's what I do. You're sharing information.

Do you want to move? Are you getting hot? The sun is on you.

Q: I'm going to have to move pretty soon. Actually, yes.

Salguero: So, what ended up happening is we were then helping residents, not primarily public housing. They were going over to Red Hook Initiative, RHI and IKEA, I think mainly in the park. So, it was mainly homeowners and tenants and private housing, and then small businesses. So, we were effectively the first small business recovery center in Red Hook before it moved to IKEA. Yes, IKEA is so amazing, I have to say.

I have some feelings for the media, I need to put this in there. The media never did a story that I

could ever find at the time about how IKEA turns their cafeteria into an aid center. I mean how many big box stores do that kind of thing? And they're so Swedish, they're so modest, there was no press release. There was nothing. And I kept hearing in the neighborhood all of this stuff that IKEA was doing like "They came to our business and they said what do you need?" Like a restaurant or something, "what do you need?" They gave them furniture. They gave furniture to people, all this kind of stuff. So, finally I called up. I said, "Can I talk to you about all this stuff that you've done?" I essentially interviewed them and documented it all. We asked them if we could honor them at our fundraiser. We had a Sandy-themed fundraiser. I think it was 2014, and they said no. So, then we just sprung a surprise Good Neighbor award on them. And I wanted to do that, not just because I wanted to thank or commend people who do good things, but I thought this was really instructive. They'd even designed their building to be floodproof—before Sandy. And the ways that they served, I thought it was important to understand what recovery really looks like. They were doing all this stuff that wasn't mentioned.

Somehow in the eyes of the media, and even the mayor, the reopening of Fairway became this metric for Red Hook's recovery, which is really not apt. That was the store they focused on; and in focusing on that store, that really ignored the plight of the NYCHA people, the residents and everything else. But anyway, whatever, we're done with Sandy for now. I can go on about this for a long time, but I talk too much.

Q: Yes, it's important also, I think, to emphasize that Red Hook was affected so much more profoundly than many other neighborhoods in terms of people not having power, not being able to access their homes, because the elevators were broken, and so on and so forth.

Salguero: Yes, and the damage to Red Hook NYCHA, because generally NYCHA was put in low lying lands of fill. So, it flooded incredibly. I mean, the city policy was to put poor people in undesirable property. And it was undesirable, because it was a flood plain. That wasn't necessarily the calculation, but that's what happened; it flooded. The only upside I can find of the whole story is I feel like NYCHA residents and public housing advocates had been hammering away for years at the fact that NYCHA was not maintaining places, was a terrible landlord, and that was not getting enough visibility. And with Sandy, my feeling is that all these outsiders came in as volunteers—health people, Medical Matt [Matthew Kraushar] here in Red Hook did medical, all this kind of stuff—and suddenly, all these people saw how horrible the conditions were even before Sandy. I have this feeling it helped bust that story wide open because NYCHA has just been unbelievably abusive.

Yes, so we had every form of damage here. Red Hook wasn't all solid land. If you look at Red Hook WaterStories, the old maps there, it's a peninsula that had interior saltwater ponds and a lot of marsh. It was filled over time. So, it's low-lying, it's spongy. So not only did the saltwater come in, we're at the bottom of the hill so to speak; so the water came running down Park Slope. It also came running down through the storm drains and surging up. So, we had storm drains just with geysers coming out of them, and sewage coming up people's toilets into the house. And then ground water, there's actually a lot of underground springs here. So, we had all this water, salt, sewage, ground water. In our aid center, PortSide's Sandy Recovery Center, I talked to a man who lived on Dikeman Street, owned a building and worked for maintenance at Red Hook NYCHA public housing, and he said the ground water came up for four days after the storm.

Q: Would you like to talk about the shift from maybe like environmental consciousness or something like that, when PortSide was first getting started, to where things are at now, with reconciling climate change or acknowledging climate change and the reality of these superstorms? I guess I'm asking kind of a future-looking question.

Salguero: Well, here's the thing. We decided, we actually did not jump on the climate change bandwagon. There's so much work to do just to get the city to use the waterways, I'm leaving that for others. I also honestly feel like some organizations talking about that, you're not going to change national and global policy. There's been such little progress on the maritime sort of thing. So kind of not going there—we will share articles and issues related to flooding that, yes, it's going to be intensified in severe storms by climate change, but we haven't added a climate change piece, to be honest.

I think if I think about environmental stuff, right now in Red Hook and in Sunset Park and some other neighborhoods, but very intensely here, there's an intersection with another environmental issue and maritime potential; and that is the arrival of the—and there are two terms used—the last mile or e-commerce warehouses. So, Red Hook is looking at what people have dubbed the "truckpocalypse" because so many of these warehouses—enormous ones, particularly huge ones—are being planned or have actually been built already in the neighborhood. How are the trucks going to fit coming in and out? This is a peninsula. There are very few roads in. It's like small roads. Red Hook, the grid was laid out in I think it was 1841; but it wasn't even all built out until the 1930s. These are narrow roads. Because of it having been a marsh, subsidence—

sinking—with the trucks is a concern, plus all the other stuff about traffic, diesel exhaust, fatalities, whatever else.

So, I have found—it's gratifying, I just wish it hadn't taken so long—people who are not in the maritime community or maritime advocacy community are now like to eager to hear if maritime can actually solve this by bringing the freight in by water, maybe even distributing it somewhat by water, to reduce the truck impact. So that's an environmental justice, EJ, issue in terms of the impacts of heavy trucking to these places. So PortSide is part of a working group and doing what we can, but I just wish we had more bandwidth right now.

So, we've been underfunded for years. As I mentioned earlier, denied any form of revenue generation until Wednesday of this week. And the pandemic cut our budget further and also our capacity. We also had a lot of unpaid people who worked here regularly, not just for events, and they became unavailable for reasons of the pandemic. So, we're on a skeleton crew right now. It's kind of frustrating and heartbreaking. Here are suddenly people asking for maritime activity, and I just don't have the team to dedicate completely to researching stuff where I'm sure the answer lies. I'm doing whatever networking that I can. I'm on Zoom calls; but for several weeks, I haven't been able to create the Excel spreadsheet for the non-mariners in one of the working groups I said that I would do to help people figure out.

And we've promised—I've promised—to make a web page, probably a blog post for people to comment on it, a jumpingoff web page. I don't know exactly to call it yet. We can't call it "Maritime For Dummies" because the "For Dummies" brand is trademarked, but essentially that.

Because what I'm learning is really smart people, wonky people, policy people who are researching this, are not maritime literate. Going back to Dan Goncharoff, they don't have the maritime language. They understand the concepts, but they can't really understand at a deeper level; because this stuff has to be translated and unpacked for them. And it's not just language like a bulkhead is a wall. It's how it all sort of works and what kind of boats do what and what are the rules for doing that, what are the costs, all this sort of stuff. I kind of want to pull that out of my head, I don't know when it's going to happen, in the next couple of weeks.

But maybe e-commerce is going to lead to a maritime revival. I think it will actually. Put it this way, I think it can and it should; and the normal city obstructionists, I hope they just get out of the way.

Q: Can you talk about why words like development and revitalization are challenging and difficult and sometimes problematic when you're thinking about future activities?

Salguero: Okay, let me think what's a simple way to put this. So, the "waterfront revitalization," that term I always use doing air quotes with my fingers. I think there's the term "greenwashing," and "greenwashing" is also used in some of this stuff, which is to make some sound eco, sustainable, whatever as a way to Trojan horse or bring in something that's more destructive. I think "revitalization" is one of those words that suggests it's all positive. So, for people who aren't maritime people, there's another big discussion that's been going on for a long time in the city, intensified by the pandemic: what is neighborhood revitalization as compared to gentrification? What I said years ago was, I think the term neighborhood revitalization is

problematic in that neighborhood to me implies people and culture and what we really do in this city is building revitalization or replacement. So that if a neighborhood is "improved," it means gentrification, basically means new people coming in, things getting better, and they get the benefit of it. Whether that's fixing old buildings or putting in new buildings, getting better city services, improving the transportation, picking up the garbage more, improving the school, all that kind of stuff, it's not really community revitalization in New York; because the community that was there has been pushed out, largely.

And so with the waterfront revitalization, I really felt that it was being packaged, honestly, as public access to the waterfront and parks. You get a park and things are better. By the way, I love parks. I'm not opposed to parks. All people need parks. We need more parks. There needs to be better park equity in New York City, meaning communities that don't have a lot of parks, which, like the communities that really suffering most from the pandemic, are low-income communities of color. The system is not fair in New York. It's not fair. It's also not competent, often. So, these waterfront parks, I have generally found them really disappointing; because they're not really using the waterways. The waterfront word is tricky, it's the front. The waterfront is basically what you're doing with the land that abuts the water. You're not interacting with the water except to look at it.

In fact, at one point, when we were desperately looking for a home after the Port Authority tried to evict us from the container port in 2011, I contacted Marty Maher who's the current Commissioner of Brooklyn Parks now, he was the Chief of Staff for the Commissioner of Brooklyn Parks at that point, former Coast Guard guy. He was all excited about having PortSide

somewhere on a park pier. Oh, to clarify for people who don't know, many waterfront parks are actually not run by the Parks Department. That is actually one of the problematic features, to my mind, of this "waterfront revitalization." These really big new parks have generally been done—some of them were joint city-state projects, some of them were EDC, Economic Development projects—and they end up being run often by their own authority, not by the Parks Department. So, Marty Maher looked at his portfolio of parks up in North Brooklyn and then in Sheepshead Bay; and in Sheepshead Bay, it turned out that the *Mary Whalen* was too big and in North Brooklyn, he said actually there's this concept "that boats block the view." So, a boat can't go there. That so epitomizes that. I'm like, by the way, if you get on the *Mary Whalen*, you can get the view.

But the notion that boats are view-blocking, not that they're actually amenities—anywhere else in the world, yes, we all understand that it's wonderful to have natural areas where there is no boat or sign of human presence; but in most port cities, boats aren't considered view-blockers. They're part of the whole story.

Q: As opposed to being part of the view.

Salguero: It's just nuts, really nuts. So, this revitalization thing, I finally dubbed a number of these big new waterfront parks, like Brooklyn Bridge Park and Hudson River Park, as "condo lawns." That their function actually is to support, trigger, trigger, support, the inland development adjacent to them, which is luxury condos. Throw in a hotel in the case of Brooklyn Bridge Park. So, in Hudson River Park, in this case, that was abutting the park, across West

Street. In Brooklyn Bridge Park, they got so audacious, they argued that they had to have a luxury development within the park to pay for the park. That was peak New York City kind of stuff.

And so, I don't like the term because there are other ways to revitalize. You can also revitalize by putting more little parks, park equity in lower income communities. Your parks could be differently run. And again, I don't want to sound like—I'm a creative person. I'm an award-winning photographer. But I feel like they develop this culture of high-design architects doing all this kind of sort of groovy sort of stuff, competing with one another to have custom design fences and architectural follies. I remember one *New York Times* reviewer talking about the "clam shack for whimsy" that was proposed for Pier 15 near the South Street Seaport as opposed to using programs, as opposed to using culture, education, interpretation. There are other things that you could do, and those were not their priorities. It became design and, honestly, real estate development. And that's not community development. PortSide is about community and economic development.

Now yes, real estate development is a form of economic development; but it is not the only form and luxury condos is a very narrow, small subset for the privileged few of economic development. The only thing—just to pull back for a second, what the city was also doing before the luxury condo thing, our first stage was a retail or big box development. So, if you look at the Brooklyn shore, there used to be a Toys R Us. They closed. I forget what's out there now, Target. Home Depot, Jethro, these kinds of places. Those had been shipyards. IKEA comes to Red Hook, the Gateway Mall. So, these big industrial plots. I have to say, my father—he's dead

now—founded and ran a small design, design-build, manufacturing company in Connecticut and Rhode Island. Like widgets, they designed and manufactured displays for high-end watch companies. After he died, the company was basically killed by China. The major clients took the production off to China. My sister went there, and she came back and said, "I'm not doing this. I stepped up to be president"—she had worked for the company as well—"of a small family firm with 35-50 employees, and this is basically slave labor they're doing in China; and I don't want to be part of it." We all supported her.

It was my prediction that the Chinese aren't going to work for a pittance forever. They're going to rebuild their economy in the totalitarian way, and they're going to come eat our lunch in twenty years. That was my prediction. And I just felt like it was wrong that we thought that we weren't going to manufacture anything anymore, that we were just going to have a service economy. I remember listening to the Department of Small Business Services and all this kind of talk about city planning, that we weren't a manufacturing nation, and people were going to have service jobs. Where, we now understand, those who weren't understanding before—I was one who always understood—the pandemic taught us, those service jobs are low-paying, no benefits, of course, high COVID risk and everything else. We decided—I shouldn't say we—the players in the city decided that big box stores and luxury real estate were going to be what was going to go on, with these condo lawn parks, on the waterfront. And it's neither equitable nor fair nor complicated. And I think it's really problematic. Maybe it took a pandemic, which intensified the development of e-commerce, to make some of these people rethink some of this. We'll see. Luxury real estate developers have a lot of clout in this town.

Q: For sure, for sure. As a long-time former resident of Greenpoint—

Salguero: Oh, yes, okay [blows raspberry].

Q: Yes, they won. I want to ask if there's anything else that you had written down in your notes that you want to make sure to mention. I think we covered the things that I have—

Salguero: Yes, I wanted to make sure that I had the list that was in the 2005 [business plan] so I didn't forget it. I'm looking at your own list, really great list of questions. Hats off to you.

I'm going to say one thing, your question for the future of Waterfront and Waterways Statement for the Comprehensive Waterfront Plan. So, PortSide took a very different tack this time, and that was, in the past, more like conventional advocates, we said what we thought something should be, which reminds me of that kind of cheerleader language that non-profits use: this should happen; this should happen; we affirm; you affirm. I kind of went back to journalism, and I outed; because such little had changed since Vision 2020. As I said, after calling around the harbor to see what other people were saying, and I found so much dismay and disengagement—that's the problem—when you get disengagement, the advocates and operators are leaving the scene. I just felt it has to be said. And this is also part of PortSide's own pivot, new pivot right now, which is we still don't have the space, not only to do what we would like to do, to be comfortably sustainable. We need actually space to do things.

So here is a maritime middle school coming to Red Hook, and we don't have enough space to

actually work with them. We inspired PS 676 to become Brooklyn's first maritime-themed elementary school. It's now morphing into the middle school. The DOE people and the district have been very impressed with the impact and quality of our programs. Right-size our space finally, right? And we have tried working within the system for years to get space. Mind you, whenever there's the possibility of possibly moving to private property, we jump on it, we investigate, we research. We've looked at over twenty places in New York harbor; but right now we're stuck right here.

We've made actually a lot of progress with the Port Authority. I want to commend Beth Rooney for this**.** But the EDC is just resistant, recalcitrant and, honestly, corrupt and lying. They asked us to do this—and we have lots of political support, <u>incredible</u> amounts of political support. Elected officials even outside our own district saying that PortSide merits a home, that this is a good idea, whatever else. And our councilman, Carlos Menchaca, working with others, he got the president at the time, of the EDC, to come over here to the *Mary Whalen*, in the galley—pouring rain that afternoon—to see about getting this building space they previously promised. We cannot have the six hundred feet of pier, that's already rented out. The asphalt south of the shed has already been rented out to someone else. We're just asking, again, for 6,500 square feet of space out of 64 million square feet in your portfolio, right? It's a big ask, kids [said with sarcasm].

And he says something, which I'm going to be honest now, it's a flaming lie! He says, "Well, we've spoke to legal, and we can't give you the space based on your prior RFP; because it's too long ago." You people can do whatever you want. You do it all the time. You do it all the time!

But I didn't feel it was politic to say "that's a flaming lie." I said "okay, all right." So he said "what we're going to ask you to do is do this business plan." So 2018—and by the way, the EDC's terms for a business plan is really robust. So, a small organization that, as I said earlier, you've cut our legs off for years, so we can't dance readily. We don't have much of a budget or whatever else. We have to do this enormous scope of work the way they want, dah dah dah, then they're going to send us questions, which we have to answer in thirty days. Thirty days later they send the questions. Thirty days after that, we have to answer them, and then we have to present thirty days after that. It's this whole dog and pony show.

The senior vice president—they send over the lead guy who loves to hear himself talk, clearly—he doesn't even know we've been promised a home here. Okay? So that's blowing off all of our work. I tell you, I was so caught by surprise by that. I didn't actually just out this as a big piece of theater at the time. I was flabbergasted. Because the second slide, again trying to be optimistic in that chirpy cheerleader non-profit kind of way, the slide says something like "because we were promised a home here from 2008 to 2011, we have lots of ideas and partners that are ready to go." And I just banged right through that slide really fast, because I figured that's a known, that's a given. Also, I don't read all the text on a slide in PowerPoint. The guy's name was Matthew Kwatinetz. He's no longer with them. It's typical. They cycle out every two to four years. So, there's no continuity. Try to develop any relationship with them.

He goes "wait, wait. What do you mean you were promised a home here? Can you back up?" At that point, honestly, I thought this whole thing was bullshit. If you don't know that, you've not read the plan, you've not read the executive summary. You've not been briefed. There's been no

caucusing on this. You've just been sent out like a hitman to shoot this down. Yes, we want to see a ramp-up plan. I'll be damned if I do a ramp-up plan. We just did a ramp-up plan. It's called a business plan, which you obviously—maybe you opened up the budget page—but you need to have a narrative in there, and I actually wrote really long, I wrote super detailed so it's on the record of all the stuff that we did. I didn't add all the impediments.

So, by the time the comprehensive waterfront plan came around—unfortunately, short notice, so it's not my best testimony writing—I just decided it was time to put this on the record, that our back story is a sixteen-year teachable moment on what the dysfunctions are on New York City public-sector waterfront management. And so, the general part of the statement talks about some harbor-wide issues, and I said basically we can't just do the normal thing of affirming what should happen. Things are <u>not</u> working. They have not worked. There was not change in the evolution of significance since Vision 2020. Allowing for the impacts of Sandy, these are some of the issues. So that was one general chunk, attaching some appendices about problems in pier design at Hudson River Park. And then, I decided to write an exposé of the EDC using the Atlantic Basin here; because we know it really well, and there wasn't the bandwidth at the time to do all EDC issues everywhere. That was going to be too monstropolous. That was pretty big [to address the issues in the Atlantic Basin alone]. So there was a whole section on what has not worked here, what's wrong about how it has been managed, from failed infrastructure to unfulfilled promises beyond the story of the promised home to PortSide, a whole bunch of that stuff. And then there's a separate thing, which is the EDC/PortSide story, which we had never told publicly in its entirety before. And so, to bring it back to the wheelhouse behind me—when are you going to go public with this?

Q: Sometime before the end of the calendar year.

Salguero: Okay, don't rush it. We haven't publicized that. It's on the public record. It occurred to me that embedding that in our statement for the Department of City Planning, embedded it in the public record, which could have more impact and would certainly have their lawyers looking at it—make them actually look at this stuff—and I learned that from the project that Allison Prete and I had did with the Waterfront Matters website about the Pier 6-12 study. Every comment that was collected on that study, we also recorded—this is before podcasts, mind you—we recorded all the public presentations and had them transcribed by human beings. The community board, CB6, submitted all of that, the meeting transcriptions and all the comments and whatever to the public record, which, as an urban planner told me, "Carolina, you've effectively shut down the study; because their lawyers are pouring over it. If they've been spinning or misrepresenting, it's all on the record. Normally, this isn't on the record. It's in the public record." So why put the statement on the public record? We haven't gone public with it on our website or the media yet, one, because we have some other immediate urgencies, but I needed some advice as to how best handle this; because PR is different from the kind of journalism that I know how to do.

So, one of our motives for this big renovation—this is how preservation works, at least around here—we were introduced to two fellows who founded a new advertising agency called Atlantic New York. We haven't done the press release on this yet. So don't publish this until you circle back to me on this. But they, for their own wonderful reasons, had decided they wanted to launch the agency with a pop-up office on a ship. They both come from maritime places, one in

Portugal, one in Brazil; and I loved them when they said, “Yes, we were looking for ships around New York, but where are all the boats? We’re from maritime cities. We don’t understand this.” Okay, I said, “basically we see eye to eye here.” So, their advertising concept was they launch, literally launch, being on a boat, and they have all this maritime language. They use a “crosscurrent philosophy.” They have what they call the “Atlantic Breeze.” And they have these maritime metaphors.

And they wanted to also, with the pandemic, as an idea of the mobile office, the remote office, the idea of being on the ship outside. So, they were looking for a place for two and a half months. I said yes, you can operate out of the wheelhouse. The wheelhouse restoration at that point had been interrupted and was stalled. So, that was the driving force to actually get this finished to this level. So, they started occupancy this week. So, what PortSide gets out of that, they donated $3,000, a reimbursement for these renovation costs. And, because we can’t rent the boat, and we can’t rent space, they’re going to give us work. So, we have a partnership. They’re going to work on helping PortSide craft an advertising campaign that balances the conventional non-profit messaging of “PortSide is great, support us” and also “here’s our back story,” which we weren’t telling, which is also related to this exposé piece. And I’m hoping they come up with something. So, they’ve got a few more weeks to work on that.

I hope I like what they come up with; but otherwise, we’re going public one way or another with this whole story, because we can’t exist until we get more space and more permissions just to do basic stuff. And we have failed to get it working within the system, negotiating, doing multiple business plans. For the EDC, we did an RFEI, request for expressions of interest, an RFP,

request for proposals, a business plan, had elected officials leaning on them, nothing. So we're going to tell the story.

But that actually is what helps finish the restoration project of the wheelhouse is the fact that Atlantic New York advertising agency is going to be here for two and a half months. Yes, they're going to work for us; and in addition, we get the secondary benefits or exposure of their social media, their clients. They're part of an international organization of small independent advertising agencies. They're going to have like a conference, mostly virtual here. So, we will get additional exposure from that. So, that's also very PortSide. We have continually struck up unusual partnerships. And so here we go. We're launching an ad agency from the wheelhouse of a historic ship. Future meets past with new missions for all.

And I really like them also; besides the fact they were looking for boats in New York, they are a socially conscious ad agency. That's interesting, I think that's a military radar plane [indicating plane overhead]. They're socially conscious, and they're also change agents. So, one of their first campaigns was—now I'm going to forget the name—Refund? it's basically a campaign for restitution for Black Americans. They also did a campaign to support gun control, but in their crosscurrent methodology. They did it by opening up a gun store where people come in, but then they talk about why people shouldn't have guns. So, they're creative thinkers. They're social change agents. They have a social conscience, and they like ships.

Q: It sounds like a perfect partner for PortSide.

Salguero: Yes, so there we are. That's a wrap.

Q: I think we can end there.

Salguero: I think that's a good ending.

Q: I have been scooting closer. I'm practically sitting on your lap.

Salguero: I know the sun is getting on you, and I have an 11:30 call, and we went over. And I talk too much. I always do.

Q: Perfect. Thank you so much for sharing so much, and being able to accommodate an outdoor interview and narrating so many of the sounds in the background too.

Salguero: Yes, you're going to have a soundscape for sure.

[END OF INTERVIEW]