



Jeff's Marine, Inc.
P.O. Box 236
Thomaston, Maine 04861
(207) 354-8777 Fax (207) 354-6591
boatking@midcoast.com

January 31, 2012

Interview with 'The Lord'

Maine has such a fine heritage of some great boat builders, riggers, and craftsman many whom have retired and are still among us living out their golden years. I remember fondly a few years back when 'Whitehawk' was demasted in the Cape Cod Canal and having a hollow wooden mast a new one was needed. There were not many men around that had built them and Basil Day was called up out of retirement and then put an addition out on his shop on Booker street and he brought over a few of his fellow workers to give him a hand. I went up there periodically to watch this marvel of a full jig set up to make this tapered hollow wooden mast. The average age was 81 years old for the crew on the boat. They did not work a full week they said only 40 hrs. The wooden planes were working with some fine Sitka Spruce and before long the mast was assemble, glued and brought to life. Basil Day, Charlie Jameson and those boys have passed away but we still have a few great men left herein this area like Roger Morse & Ray Wallace to mention a few.

I would like to enlighten you to a fine mechanic (Elwin Lord) that I had the distinct pleasure of working with for 20 years. here at Jeff's Marine. Having started here in 1976 as the only mechanic and taking over the business in 82' I found myself in need of good help to keep things running right. I hired Elwin Lord in 1989 and it became the best relationship I ever had with an employee. Her was a master mechanic, has a wonderful dry sense of humor and made my reputation what it is today as a fine outboard shop. It was a relationship where he told me how it was to be done and I learned, listened, got educated by a true wizard. Here is his story.

Born in 1943 in Camden, Elwin was lobstering when he was old enough to run a skiff with his grandfather and was really brought up by his grandfather as he lost his dad at 39 when he was young and took over his grandfather's lobstering in 58'. He started off in a 12ft Ducktrap skiff rowing to each trap. In 1958 he went to a bigger craft and got himself a 5.5 Wizard made by Oliver, with a single hose and a fuel tank! He went to work for Leadbetter's in Camden on Bay View Street, with Gil Leadbetter's son Bobby, Peck & Dave. He actually got a chance to see Karl Kiekhaefer speak at a show in Boston in the early 60's. He was the founder of Mercury Outboards and if you get a chance read the book 'The Iron Fist' about Karl as it is a history of the outboard motor. I asked Elwin when was the last time your crossed the border on Maine into NH and his answer was 1974! " No reason to go there" he said as he would rather go north onto the Golden road!

They were dealers back then for Penn Yan and Cruiser's Inc when they were still wood. They also were dealers for MFG, Glastron, and Glassmaster. Gil had a complete machine shop and also hauled and stored boats right up on a ramp where the Waterfront wharf and Restaurant is now. They rolled the boats into storage on cradles, grease and sweat. No hydraulic trailers back then! They were dealers for Mercury and they worked there on the water till Gil saw the light on waterfront property and moved out to Rte 1 in 69' where the old Libby Chevrolet place was in Rockport at the corner. He was inducted into the Army in 62' and so he sold his traps and all his stuff and went to Bangor when he was 19. They did alternate picking and he was not picked so he was home that afternoon, but all his stuff was sold!

Elwin left that business in 71' and went to work for Wayfarer. He did rigging, electronics and during the winter on the paint and varnish crew sometimes. He enjoyed that as he said, " when you were done you could look back and see what you had accomplished". They usually had a crew of 3 doing the side of some of the big wooden boats and worked as a team on staging painting the sides up and keeping a good wet edge. He also worked on Johnson with the 'Great Pecker' he called him

He worked with Paul Wolter in the 'Palawan' and for a few winters she was hauled up on the ways and her rig was left in her. She had a complete boiler on board with forced hot water to heat the ship. They worked on her systems all winter and he though many times the boat was going to blow over. It was a long ladder up and down getting on board her. He worked there till

● Page 2

January 31, 2012

83' and thought that he worked with some of the finest men and craftsman you could find. He then went to work for Snow Harbor as I was not hiring at that time and after a brief stint there he went to Lyman and Morse. I hired him in 89' and it was the last place he worked for in the marine business

Elwin's health declined in the 06 dues to a weak heart and bad habits, but he rebounded and worked part time when he could till 2009'. I have had some great mechanics work for me over the years like Smitty whom got me going, Buddy whom was an ace, and numerous other fine men. I just wanted to write this biography about Elwin whom brought so much professionalism to outboard repair. It was not just his work which was the best, but his ability to think, diagnosis, and repair the problem. His work never came back, I never had to adjust his time and he always got the job done right. I would come out of the office and try and tell him what the customer wanted and what I thought the problem was and he would look at me and say " Don't you have a chair in your office?". Many times a motor would come in and the customer only wanted this one thing done and Elwin would go ahead and fix the outboard and explain to me that he could not let it go out without fixing it!

The knowledge this man had on the outboard industry made his presence a blessing on all whom came to work with him here for the 20 years he was here. Why I did not hire him when he came to me in 83' is one mistake I made. He has hung up his tools, and with his wife Betty and their numerous dogs are enjoying their golden years. I just want to salute this brilliant man whom made this place what it is. You are only as good as the men that work for you if you are running a business, and I was truly blessed by 'The Lord'.

Jeff Armstrong
Owner