

Here's something I wrote a few years back, and I just found it again in my computer. Thought you may want to take a look. – Noel

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In the 1920's and 1930s, Joe Hallman and his family, including his two sons Blue and Jackie, lived in the house that is now known as 17 Rosenbrook Avenue. He had constructed a large shed in his backyard that he used for building small boats, and over the years he developed a countywide reputation as a builder of excellent wood planked bateaus and small outboard runabouts. In 1935, Joe decided to open a small fish camp and boat building shop on the Bluff on the property that is now the Isle of Hope Marina.

His operations consisted of a small marine railway to haul larger boats out of the water for bottom painting and maintenance, as well as a very small dock for fishing boats to load and unload their supplies and catches. Rental bateaus were available for .50¢–\$1.00 per day. Hallman moved his boat building operation from Rosenbrook Avenue to a shed on the property.

Across Bluff Drive from Hallman's Fish Camp on the corner of Bluff Drive and Rose Avenue was a small frame house. The Bandy family owned this house, and they operated another small marine railway next to the Roebling Modena Plantation property on the south side of the Hallman land. Frank Bandy, their son, later became well known

in the live bait business, supplying most of the live shrimp to the marinas and fish camps in this area.

Barbee's Pavilion on the north side of Hallman's Pavilion also rented boats by the day. The Hillmans, Barbees, and Bandys were in competition with each other, and this created quite a bit of activity on the Bluff relating to river fishing, boat building, and boat maintenance. On the weekends, many Savannahians would catch the streetcar and ride out from town to rent bateaus to crab and fish for the day.

In the 1930s Bill Brady worked for the Savannah Morning News in the printing department. Bill was the brother-in-law of William M. (Willie) Barbee, who had inherited Barbee's Pavilion from his father. Brady decided that he would like owning and operating a marina at Isle of Hope better than his job at the newspaper, so he bought Hallman's Fish Camp around 1939. Brady named his company Brady's Boat Works, and it eventually became a major stopover in the Savannah area for Snowbird boats migrating in the spring and fall between Florida and New England. Lukie Stein, a Georgia Tech graduate who had formerly worked as a mechanic for Robert Roebling on Modena Plantation on Skidaway Island, became the marine mechanic and manager. Lukie was regarded as the best marine engine mechanic on the Georgia coast!

As the marina grew rapidly, it was necessary to hire additional mechanics and shipwrights. Bob Wolensky became the master mechanic, and he was ably assisted by mechanics Paul White and Dale Hendrix. The marina railway was so busy that additional shipwrights were necessary to keep up with the demand for major repairs on the wooden hull vessels. Eddie Carson from Wilmington Island (Carson's Marina), and

Crommie Sharp from Isle of Hope (West end of Central Avenue) filled this role for many years.

The marina also catered to a number of local boats from both Isle of Hope and Savannah. Mike Wright, one of the marina's first employees, mentions Tommy Johnson's Bounty, Olin Macintosh's Hobo, Farquhar McRae's Sgurrin, Bob Minus' Lovango, Dale Critz's Georgia May, Norman Fries' Chanticleer, Arthur Flemming's Sanchi, and Ralph Vick's Waterway.

At that time there were very few floating docks, and the marina boats were moored out in the Skidaway River anchorage. It was Willie Daise's job to row out each evening before dark and light a kerosene lantern on the mast of each anchored boat to prevent a collision from another boat passing in the night. The next morning, Willie would again row out to reverse the procedure and extinguish the lanterns. Willie lived at Thunderbolt and walked to Isle of Hope every day to work at the marina. Willie's wife would fry a fish for his lunch every day, and Willie could be seen at intervals during the day removing the fish from his pocket and snacking on it. When a marina customer planned to use his boat, he would call ahead to the marina and schedule a time he planned to use the boat. Mike Wright would row out to the anchorage and retrieve the owner's boat to have it at the dock awaiting the owner's arrival.

Henry (Shorty) Grant and Mike Wright became first-rate boat painters and hauled boats up on the marine railway for bottom painting (Shorty) and topside painting and varnish work (Mike). At one time, Brady Boat Works had three railways that were kept

constantly busy painting boat bottoms and repairing bent propellers and shafts. Mike Wright was renowned as one of the best boat handlers on the East Coast.

The icehouse above was always kept well stocked with large blocks of ice that were brought to the marina by "Red", the Savannah Ice Company delivery man. Red was well known countywide, and in the hot summertime, youngsters would flock around his large, orange flatbed truck begging for shards of ice that had accidentally broken off as Red cut the humongous blocks into more manageable sizes. Red would stagger under the weight of each block of ice as he lifted it off of his truck, slung it up on his shoulder cushioned by a wet crocus sack, and walked to the nearly empty icehouse. For the larger 300 lbs blocks, Red used a wooden chute to slide the enormous blocks from the truck to the icehouse.

Over the years, the marina added numerous floating docks and large covered boat wet storage sheds. They installed benches in front of the over-the-water office for customers and kibitzers, and the marina became the center of activity for the entire island. Many of today's Isle of Hope adults worked for the marina in their youths as their first paying job!

In 1962, Isle of Hope was filled with excitement! Gregory Peck, Polly Bergen, and Robert Mitchum were in Savannah filming the movie, Cape Fear. Several of the important scenes were filmed at the marina under the gaze of thrilled crowds of Isle of Hopeians. Isle of Hope lads Malcolm Harbison and Jim Sickel both had bit parts in the movie!

Bill Brady retired in the middle 1970s and Neil Mingledorff became the next owner. Under Neil's ownership, the marina became the official dealer for Hatteras, Bertram, and Chris Craft yachts. The land that is now the small boat storage yard that once had been a spartina grass marshland was filled in under Mingledorf's ownership.

In the mid 1980's, real estate investors became interested in buying the marina and the houses on the Bluff that had been acquired over the years with plans to close the marina and build condominiums and develop the marina land for commercial uses. When the developers realized the strong opposition to their plans from the Isle of Hope residents, David Johnson stepped forward and purchased the marina operations, and the IOH Historical Association purchased the residential properties across the Bluff. The Association immediately resold the residential parcels to individuals who agreed to rehab the existing homes or construct new homes on the few vacant lots in compliance with guidelines established by the Association. Jack Oliver became the manager, and peace returned to the island.

Today, Charlie Waller and his sister Kathryn Waller II, are the marina owners. They have recently completely rebuilt and modernized the facilities to transform it into the most up-to-date, desirable, and sought-after marina on the Georgia coast.

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Isle of Hope Bluff Drive Resident since 1944