John and Catherine Focke have been members of the Houston Yacht Club (HYC) since 1979. They participated with others in leading youth sailing on Galveston Bay as it changed from the local Tri Club Regatta to the regional Texas Youth Race Week, which included participants from Texas and its contiguous states, and including hosting the U.S. Junior Olympic Festival in 1997. John Focke also served as HYC Commodore 1990.

Marie Wise: Okay, so, um, I'll start with the date and, and why we're here. It's October 27, 2015 and this is Amanda Focke and Marie Wise and we're with John and Catherine Focke of Houston Yacht Club about the history of Texas Youth Race Week and, um, and a little bit of TSA history and a Tracy history and Galveston Bay history thrown in there. So, I've started with questions. We'll try to, there, it's gonna meander and that's a good thing.

John Focke: Uh, yeah, that's okay.

Marie Wise: So, by background and I was mentioning this, Dee Rogers has chaired the event for, gosh, a good ten years now maybe and is just now handing it over to Keen Butcher of Tex, of TCYC and there are so many people that are really deeply involved with this now, but many of them don't know the history at all.

John Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: So I'd like to start. Just tell me about your roles with the event. When were you involved? What'd you do and, um, and what kind of big aspects were you a part of? That's a really big question.

Amanda Focke: And maybe a quick overview of what is Texas Youth Race Week? Don't worry.

Marie Wise: Okay.

John Focke: Let me, let me start.

Marie Wise: Sure.

John Focke: And Catherine you interrupt, you, um, chime in here. Uh, Catherine and I joined the Houston Yacht Club in the fall of 1979 and at that time, um, there was what at, what was called the Tri Club Regatta.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.
John Focke: That had been first organized in 1976 and it was simply, uh, three regattas, one at each club, uh, rotating, uh, in a year and, uh, so, our children, Wulf and Thatch, uh, were of sailing age when we joined the club and at the time the kids were sailing sunfish. Um, they began sailing and Catherine and I participated in the Tri Club regattas. Uh, they were almost stand-alone regattas at the club, each club would have.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Um, and there were many other involved in that as well. Um, again the kids were sailing sunfish. Some of the older kids were beginning to sail lasers but it was, that was the beginning as we saw it.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And then, in, uh, 1991 it became a little more formalized when it was added to, as a circuit regatta on the Texas Sailing Association statewide competition, which involved a dozen or so yacht clubs, each having an event during the year and they would score them at the end of the year.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: So, that gave it a little bit of organization and at that time, Catherine and I had, gosh, ten years. Uh, we began as writing out parents and got involved in junior sailing because our children were, um, and then in, uh, uh, 1979 we were contacted by a person by the name of Lee Parks from U.S. Sailing Association and she was creating a national program called, uh, U.S. Junior Olympic Festival and there were gonna be a series of these events in states around the country. It was the first year and, uh, she was sort of writing the, uh, the program and trying to get it started and it so happened that our race week was perfect. It became the site in Texas for the U.S. Junior Olympic Festival.

Catherine Focke: And these were based on regions.

Marie Wise: On regions so they'd be regional?

Catherine Focke: The U.S. Sailing Association Regions as they were.

Marie Wise: And so that was in 1997 that it became that?

John Focke: Yes, yes.

Marie Wise: Yeah, yeah. I was, that actually was a little bit of history that I had to dig to find out and one of my questions was, I was wondering how that changed the event.

John Focke: Well it, it, uh, No. 1 it created some excitement.
Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Uh, it also created a broader perspective because kids that sail in these events could go onto other U.S. sailing junior events and, uh, in terms of the organization, it opened the possibility of sponsors.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And there were certain guidelines given us that a sponsor could, uh, support the regatta in some way like products or something.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Uh, and, uh, Lee Parks was at our, uh, the festival that year and there was some excitement. She was out on the water with us and sharing her experiences around the country with us and, uh, incidentally she is still with U.S. Sailing and you can find her on the web site if you ever want to talk to her.

Catherine Focke: And she is a dynamite lady.

Marie Wise: I, I do **** –

John Focke: She loved to Galveston Bay and she loved her clubs and this event and she came several years. She came down to –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: Okay.

John Focke: – to be with us. Uh, so at, at that point in time, 1997, we had a, um, a committee that was and formed for planning the event.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And there are a couple ladies that were very important to that effort, uh, Helen Donley with TCYC and, uh, Karen Burros with Lakewood.

Marie Wise: Okay.

Catherine Focke: Ellen not Helen.

Marie Wise: Okay.

John Focke: Yeah, yeah.

Catherine Focke: Ellen, yeah.
John Focke: And, um, Barbara Brownback from HYC and they, uh, would begin planning for this event. They started 11 months in advance and they're, of course they're many, there's a committee that plans and then various subcommittees to do things like to get volunteers from this and that.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And, uh, so I think we can talk more about them later, but.

Marie Wise: Yeah, so did you serve as, I know you were a race officer for the event also, for all those years. Were you on the water as race committee?

John Focke: Yes, that's –

Marie Wise: **** planning?

John Focke: Yes.

Marie Wise: What, and were you on the water as race committee also?

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm. Not quite as long as John.

Marie Wise: Okay, okay.

John Focke: By 1991, uh, I was the principal race officer typically for the, uh, focused on the, uh, juniors, the smaller.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: The **** fleets.

John Focke: Yeah, the organ, the event was organized into two race lines, one for what became optimist and the other for the older kids. And, uh, um, a HYC member by the name of John Nicholson volunteered to be the principal race officer for the senior line and I was the junior line.

Marie Wise: Okay.

John Focke: And we of course participated in all the planning, um.

Marie Wise: It takes an army to plan it.

John Focke: It did.

Catherine Focke: It's huge.
Marie Wise: Certainly understand.

John Focke: Later we can go over those committees because I think that's where all the great ideas and the richness of the event came.

Marie Wise: The history comes from. I want to, I want to talk about some of those committees and we can, um, wow, there's a lot to cover here. Um, I did want to talk about kind of why we do this and, and looking at youth sailors now and looking at, um, watching these kids grow up year after year I've been involved with TSA and race week now for about 5 or 6 years. There is something really special about kids who sail.

Catherine Focke: Absolutely.

Marie Wise: They've got this independence about them.

John Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: They're mature.

John Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: They're, um, well not always, but there's something about them. What, what do you guys think that is? Do you think that's specific to sailing? What, what do you think they get from sailing?

Catherine Focke: Oh, I do think it's specific to sailing. Uh, you start out your children are interested and so you get interested.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And as you grasp you want to travel to other venues and when you begin to travel to other venues, your children change because they meet people from all parts of the country.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: They become close and talk to other people from all parts of the country. They go away to an event and stay in some other person's home and you get to hear whether or not they made up their bed every morning. You know and it's a broadening experience for the child and the competition gets tougher.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And they get tougher and it's very.

Marie Wise: I always tell people that learning to sail is almost just the happy byproduct.
Catherine Focke: Yes.

Marie Wise: Of the whole thing, you know and –

John Focke: Let me talk about that a minute.

Marie Wise: Please.

John Focke: Because it's more than that. Just the, the act of sailing, uh, particularly on a young child requires that they not only be aware of the forces that are acting on the boat.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: The weather.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: They have to be aware of their competition and how they should react to their competition. They have to be aware of the rules of sailing and, uh, they have to assimilate that information and make decisions about sailing. So I think it's a process that builds something within the mind of a child that is way beyond what they could get in school.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: In this, this, uh, this taking in of data from different sources, assimilating it and making a decision and then acting on the decision and then taking the consequence for the decision. So, it's often unspoken and unseen to them, but that is what's going on in their mind. Now there's another aspect of it.

Catherine Focke: Let me just say just one comment. My brother used to describe sailing as a three dimensional chess game.

Marie Wise: Oh my gosh.

Catherine Focke: And that's exactly what it is.

Marie Wise: Yeah.

Catherine Focke: When you take in all of this input.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And create decision based on all of that input, it's incredibly skillful —

John Focke: And it's also a source of a lot of frustration.
Marie Wise: And to send a 10 year old out to do that says.

John Focke: It's the source of a lot of frustration for the sailors in the beginning because it, it is an awesome task for a young mind to do. Now there's another aspect of it in sportsmanship and what emerged out of this event over the years was a dialogue on sportsmanship. It was a big deal.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: To talk about sportsmanship and eventually the two race officers, myself and John, committed a perpetual trophy to sportsmanship.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And it was for fun and competition in sportsmanship and, uh, that sportsmanship deals with, uh, not the only the integrity of the individual in regards to sailing rules, but it also deals with how they interact with their competitors both on the water and on land and they do have difficult situations where they might protest a sailor.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And there's a process to deal with that. Uh, so, we thought it was so important that we single that out as for an award, uh, for a perpetual award trophy and then each, each, uh, event each year there was a persons, a sailor selected from the, the beginner, uh, the Optimist fleet and the seniors each to get that award.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And we, we made a big deal out of it, uh.

Marie Wise: It's still going on and, and I'm thinking in my mind of the young lady who won it from this past year, 2015, her name was Wendy Frolic and she was from Austin Yacht Club and another sailor, it was a very windy day and another sailor was struggling and I think it capsized and so she turned around on the race course and went back to, to give assistance and so the spirit of that award is still very much part of the event.

John Focke: Good, uh, um, I think during this event, uh, typically in the course of the event we would have, uh, an opportunity to sit with all the kids and have a lunch once at each, um, venue and then in the final trophy presentation and, uh, we would give during those lunch periods, we would have a speaker to talk about sportsmanship.

Marie Wise: Wow.

John Focke: I gave a couple talks about it. We had Evangeline Callahan was wonderful at it and, uh, to talk to the kids in their terms is what sportsmanship means and, uh, in this
information I'm leaving you, there's a little piece on the principals as we define them of sportsmanship and it's also defined in the deed of gift.

Marie Wise: I don't think I've seen the deed of gift for that award. So this is great to have.

John Focke: Yeah there's a –

Marie Wise: Did I tell you how much I appreciate it?

John Focke: — in there there's a criteria for the award, which I think is important. Um, so I think that was, that sportsmanship was part of it and there's one other piece that, uh, was so obvious when you saw it, uh, but it was so difficult to convey to kids. And that, uh, John Kolius, who back in the day, all the kids knew because he was an Olympic sailor and America's Cup sailor. Kids today don't know him, but he used to give, uh, clinics and he used to talk to the kids. He was just a magnet to kids, but he told a story about, uh, to these junior sailors about how important it was to never give up on your dreams. And so what came out of that and there's a, there's a write up on it in here. But, what came out of that was the Kolius NGU Award.

Marie Wise: Another NGU award.

John Focke: Never give up award.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And the, uh, the people on the race course, the coaches and the safety boats were all asked to look for that and the race committee looked for it and invariably over a week of racing.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Some little cherub would do something awesome.

Marie Wise: They pull it out when you least expect it don't they?

John Focke: So that was a very important award and, um, I think there was, uh, I'm going on here, but there was one other piece of this that created a thing in the event and that is the recognition of success. And at, there were, at one point fewer people who involved in the event who wanted to play down trophies and for everyone just to have a certificate of participation, but, uh, the nature of the competition, there are winners and losers and there are trophies given to the winners. And, uh, to reinforce that, we created a special T-shirt every year and I think you've seen the graphics for those.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: They were, we, uh, became known as the team first T-shirt.
Marie Wise: That was actually my next question that I wanted to talk to you about.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: I brought Alex's daily first shirt.

John Focke: Oh, yeah.

Marie Wise: And, um, I've got a whole slew of the different graphics and so, I didn't, I did want to know **** –

Catherine Focke: John William has given all of his graphics on a disc too.

Marie Wise: I have them somewhere or a version I found.

John Focke: Well the whole idea was this –

Marie Wise: So I'm so glad that I found this started.

John Focke: – if during the, the course of the week of racing there would be 18 races. And, uh, so, uh, so you take 18 races, uh, at each venue times 3.

Catherine Focke: 4 fleets and 4 fleets.

John Focke: So, at, at the, each venue, um, a T-shirt was given to any sailor who won one race in that event.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: One or more and at one time we would take these shirts and these stars that you see would represent how many first place races he won.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: So it was like a badge of courage and these would put on at the event.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And sometimes the kids, Catherine ****. She had –

Catherine Focke: 146.

Marie Wise: That's a huge job.

John Focke: She had kids that would come help her and one in particular that we call Action Jackson.
Catherine Focke: From Alabama.

John Focke: He would come and help Catherine and he would always come out on the racecourse and advise me.

Marie Wise: Okay.

John Focke: For the races, so, um.

Catherine Focke: He, he started in the green fleet and he eventually would, helped my brother in clinics and he is one of our funniest stories.

Marie Wise: Uh huh. I would love to figure, know where Action Jackson is now.

Catherine Focke: That child, he was a teeny tiny little boy and he was in the green fleet and the very first time I came out at TCYC with my press.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: To do a shirt he said oh, can I help you Mrs. Focke? This is probably the closest I'll ever get to a first.

John Focke: So –

Marie Wise: Oh how funny.

Catherine Focke: He was one hell of a sailor.

John Focke: These shirts were highly prized and it also gave opportunities for sailors to get an award and be recognized who maybe didn't, overall didn't qualify for a trophy.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Um, again, as this event progressed and this again is part of what I think is the opportunity to teach and learn in this event. Many of these sailors and clubs would send coaches.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: With their sailors and these were all typically older teenagers, uh, maybe young college kids that were working for the summer. And, I looked at those coaches as our first line of safety out on the water.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.
John Focke: So you wanted them out there and, uh, uh, we would meet with the coaches at the beginning of each venue and, uh, I've got a, in here, a definition of what their responsibilities were but we decided to organize them and use them. They'd have radios to communicate. They were always, they can only coach in between races.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: We provided them with water for the kids and what we were trying to do is elevate their sense of responsibility in a way that was added safety the event. And some of them were quite good and they were really good with kids.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And they could always, if we needed them, we could call them to go rescue a kid or to tow the kids in if the weather was bad, but they were always there.

Marie Wise: Now it seems that, um, and, and I don't know when USODA got really involved with the event, but now coaches are they're regular, you know, I mean there's kind of a coach armada that follows them around the race course and they still only coach between races. But, and, and kids are traveling much farther now –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – like you said to regattas and doing things. I'm kind of wondering how that changed, um, the, the kind of this home grown community event to have that be part of this bigger sailing universe.

John Focke: Well we **** –

Marie Wise: The, the coaches and just kind of everything being amped up.

Catherine Focke: That's when I left the race commission.

John Focke: Some of these coaches were certified to be coaches.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And, uh, it was really a, I thought a, a Godsend to us because you have to imagine that the, uh, the board of these yacht clubs and all the people, particularly the people in the water, uh, carried a tremendous liability. I mean you would never see a school teacher take 30 kids out on the water by herself, by themselves.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.
John Focke: Unaided and so, uh, to have these coaches there like I say, they were the first line of safety. The second line of safety were the parent volunteers, they were the mark set boats and we, we had safety boats.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And I always tried to have at least one power boat on the water for every five kids in their boats and they were our first, the coaches were the first line of offense and they could tell us, I could always call them and ask them, uh, are the kids up for another race. It's been a long day. Can they do it?

Catherine Focke: Is it too windy?

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Sometimes I would call Action Jackson over and I'd say can you make another race buddy? Because he was an optimist sailor and he would always advise me. But, uh, I think it –

Catherine Focke: Can you ****, uh, what ages the kids are? 'Cause I think that kind of illuminates what you're talking about in terms of safety concerns.

John Focke: Yeah.

Catherine Focke: Well, in the beginning you had to be 9 years old.

Catherine Focke: Uh huh.

Catherine Focke: To enter the Ragnaut program. Many ragnauts did not exist yet. So there were very few children under the age of 9.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Once we started sailing in optimist.

Marie Wise: Optimist ****.

John Focke: Yeah, the kids typically would start at 6 or 7 years old.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And the optimist fleet, uh, the kids up, up to the year they aged out at 15, could sail optimist and it was organized into four groups, the green fleet, which were the beginners.
John Focke: And they were typically 7 to 8 and then we had the, uh, the white fleet. They were 8 to 9 and then the red fleet, 10 to 11 and then the, uh –

Catherine Focke: 12 and over.

Marie Wise: Red, red fleet.

John Focke: – red, 12 and over, but to 15. So and they would race separately, but we always treated the green fleet a little differently in that the race committee would coach the green fleeters during the starting sequence.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Get up to the line, you got 3 minutes left, you got so many seconds left and then we would designate three of the coaches to follow the green fleet. They typically would start last. Uh, and with the provision that they could coach the kids that were at the back of the fleet. So we recog, wanted to recognize that the green fleeters were still learning and they, to keep them from getting too frustrated we had somebody out there they could talk to and that could coach. And then the kids, once they won a race, had to move up.

Marie Wise: Won one race?

John Focke: Yeah, well one at, at a regatta.

Marie Wise: Oh, okay, yeah.

John Focke: So, next year they had to move up and, uh.

Marie Wise: Okay.

Catherine Focke: So if you won the white fleet or the green fleet, you would have to move.

Marie Wise: Then you were time to, okay. Well that's interesting.

Catherine Focke: Move up.

John Focke: So and then of course the older fleet were kids up to 19.

Marie Wise: And they get, they get serious.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: They get super competitive.

Catherine Focke: Very competitive.
Catherine Focke: And what are they racing in at that age ****?

John Focke: Lasers and they have what is called a laser radio which was the, had a smaller sail for the lighter weight sailors and then –

Catherine Focke: Row typically got the laser radials.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Yeah.

Catherine Focke: Because they were lighter.

Catherine Focke: And were all of those like solo sailing?

Catherine Focke: Yes.

John Focke: Well, but there was, we always had some 420s.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm and we're trying to bring back the 420s.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: The 420 fleet didn't actually make this past year.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: And so one of the things that I’d like your, your insight on is how to build, I think doublehanded sailing is so important.

Catherine Focke: So important.

John Focke: Well here's the big deal in that –

Marie Wise: And, um, it's a different skill.

John Focke: – doublehanded sailing, it is a different skill, but you have to learn to work with somebody else on the boat.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: You have to, you have to for the first time in a kid’s life, he has to work as a team with somebody else and they have to do it in this process of assimilating information and making decisions. They have to do it together and, uh, it's a great opportunity, uh, it's in my mind where a child first starts learning some skills that are going to be useful in business and in a marriage and a family.
Marie Wise: Oh, I, I couldn't agree with you more.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: I mean they've gotta learn how to work together and then plus you get, you know, a gybe and a spinnaker.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: And, and.

Catherine Focke: We had laser twos.

Marie Wise: Yeah.

Catherine Focke: Before we had 420.

Marie Wise: My son Alex races in **** now and he says he wants a bow more than anything else.

John Focke: Yeah, yeah, sure. We got another opportunity for teaching in these events as you know in sailing, uh, when there's an infraction of the rule, intentional or unintentional. The sailor who alleges to have been offended can file a protest. And so after the racing if after we come in, uh, they would have a chance to have a protest hearing in which case they would meet with one or more U.S. Sailing judges.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And we all, we, sorry, selected judges who, some of them are real curmudgeons. They just enjoy their authority but some of them were real, had empathy with children.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And so I always made sure –

Catherine Focke: Good teachers.

Marie Wise: Yeah.

John Focke: – the judges would, in hearing the protest, would explain the rules, give each one of them a chance to testify if they have a witness to come and then make a decision and in doing that explain to the sailors what went wrong. So that they would learn, what they were learning not only was the nuances of the rules of sailing, they were learning how to conduct themselves in a hearing with adults and other children in a civilized way.
Marie Wise: They would need to know how to do, Mr. Nunez heard Alex's first protest.

John Focke: He was, he was great at it.

Catherine Focke: Oh yeah.

Marie Wise: I couldn't have traded that for the world. Um –

John Focke: We also had, always had a problem with parents who either wanted to coach their kids in the water, which I'd have to get after them, who wanted to interfere in a protest hearing, who, uh, would often address the race committee with language so bad that it would have gotten their son or daughter thrown off the race course if their son or daughter had used it.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And the race committee always reserved the right to, um, exclude the sailor for the use of foul language on the racecourse.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And the idea being that once you start using foul language, people quit listening to you.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And, um, so I have to say we were some days successful at that, some days not. That's just, so many parents here, uh, so many children hear it from their parents and other kids all the time. It's just it comes out of their mouth.

Marie Wise: You'd be proud to know that I think it's a pretty clean event these days.

John Focke: Okay, yeah.

Marie Wise: And, and, um, now that I've been east coast, west coast, all over the place, you know, I, I think **** good.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: A good, good clean background.

Catherine Focke: Good.

Catherine Focke: Can I jump in with a question?

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.
Amanda Focke: I, I, it's Texas Youth Race Week but I keep, I hear you talking about Action Jackson, Action Jackson being from Alabama?

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Amanda Focke: So where all, which yacht clubs participated in this or was it just Texas yacht clubs?

Catherine Focke: Oh my gosh. No.

Marie Wise: They come from –

John Focke: All contiguous states typically.

Catherine Focke: Okay.

John Focke: And there are always a lot from New Orleans and –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

John Focke: – and Mobile because our kids have been there.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And, uh, let me just say something about that. Catherine covered it pretty well earlier, but the kids that race and travel, and it's awfully hard on parents and sometimes it can be 10 grand a year just to haul your kid around to the regattas and more, but, uh, you know, kids grow up first with their family, then the kids in the neighborhood, then they have friends at school, and then they have friends at the yacht club, but these kids that sail and travel, they have a bigger perspective of the world. They have friends in San Francisco and maybe in, uh, by way of the yacht club –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – for all over that they see at different regattas. So they have a perspective, uh, more of a global perspective of, at least through this competition, of friendships, and some of the friendships, uh, lasted a long time, and some of the friendships were between families.

Catherine Focke: Through a different college.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Yeah.
Marie Wise: And these are the, and my hope is that my own son will grow up and be part of the sailing community wherever he –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: – ends up for his career.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: And that the people he sails with now in **** and in TSA, those are going to be his peers from other yacht clubs when, that's going to be his adult –

Catherine Focke: Exactly.

Marie Wise: – sailing community. He's going to know these people –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – their whole life.

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

John Focke: Yeah, we send –

Catherine Focke: We send kids all over to colleges and racing programs.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: Many of our kids, local kids have gone to Brown and Tufts, and all these colleges so very far away.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: The thing that parents I think eventually come to realize, I hope they do, is that this, uh, their child may have been sailing for, um, 15 years when they grad, by the time they graduate from college, but there's no career opportunity called sailing and it's, it's a, other than being an instructor somewhere –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – but it is a hobby after that because it's a Corinthian sport, um. Some might go on and, and prolong it to Olympics –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.
John Focke: – and other things, but generally not the case. So that's why these skills that are so important can then be applied to their next phase of their life and, uh, maybe sailing but also maybe a, a business setting where they're working on a team or competing, or.

Catherine Focke: Action Jackson was from Bay Waveland.

Marie Wise: Okay.

Catherine Focke: And his yacht club was entirely destroyed in the Hurricane Alicia?

John Focke: Uh, Katrina.

Catherine Focke: Katrina.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And so many of the seven yacht clubs were pretty much destroyed.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And so we took on –

Marie Wise: Well, I know HYC took on an event that they were –

Catherine Focke: – all those events –

Marie Wise: – mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: – that were, that could not happen.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And that was John's big creation for one of the tee shirts, and I can't tell you how many mothers came up to us and just said oh, my god, oh, my god, thank you, thank you.

Marie Wise: And they can have one of those shirts.

John Focke: One at the time.

Marie Wise: I wanted to talk a little bit about, um, you know, all three clubs, TCYC, HYC, and, and Lakewood, all love working together on this.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: I really believe that.
Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: But it's always difficult to juggle the schedules and the different needs.

Catherine Focke: Oh, my god –

Marie Wise: And to –

Catherine Focke: – the scheduling different clubs and the –

Marie Wise: – yeah.

Catherine Focke: – oh, yeah.

Marie Wise: And, um, and then the different resources that the different clubs have available and what they can bring to the event.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: Um, has this always been the case?

Catherine Focke: Always.

Marie Wise: Any insights?

John Focke: Well, I'll give you some insights from the sailing standpoint. There are different venues and different sailing conditions. Uh, sailing on the lake at Lakewood Yacht Club on weekends is dangerous.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: There's so many powerboats. So we always schedule that as sort of the middle venue. We might come back for the banquet, but the middle venue, the safest on the lake, powerboats everywhere on the weekends, uh, and then my preference to open the regatta was at Texas Corinthian because it was, uh, a small clubhouse and it was an open plan, and it was a madhouse. People would be registering. The kids would be there and the food, getting ready, and the boats are right on the, right on the water and they just go out –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – a couple hundred yards and they're on the racecourse, and it was a venue that, in my mind, created the energy that would carry us through the rest of the week, just that compression of kids and adults, and everybody excited about racing in that little clubhouse and on those grounds was just wonderful.
Marie Wise: I can see that. I hadn't thought about it in quite those terms, but I can, I always loved the silence that comes down after all the kids leave the shore.

Catherine Focke: I know.

John Focke: And then, uh, of course, after the first 2 days there, then there's a lay day to move boats, and the kids all want to sail over to Lakewood.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And that is very dangerous, uh, um, on a weekend coming into the channel. So I used to always admonish the parents that sailing, that, that moving the boats to the next yacht club was not part of this regatta.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And then, uh, made every sailor on the water on the, particularly at TCYC, after, after the last race on the last day, they had to come into and check in with their parents, and then if their parents wanted them to sail over back, they could just leave the racecourse and sail over there, and I'd always have to send the coaches out to bring them back. There was a big liability issue, but then they'd get to the lake and during the week it was pretty nice, and, uh, Lakewood is a great place and a great –

Catherine Focke: Great for everything.

John Focke: – food service and good place to launch, and, uh, and then we'd end up at, uh, Houston Yacht Club –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – and, uh, it was, and, and then the question is where was the good way to find, uh –

Catherine Focke: Banquet.

John Focke: – the banquet. It might be at any one of the clubs.

Marie Wise: Sure.

John Focke: It didn't have to be at the last venue, but.

Marie Wise: Okay.

Catherine Focke: People who aren't familiar with the landscape might not realize that where it's TCYC and HYC are both competing for space on the bay with the Houston Ship Channel.
Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: You know, coming right through the middle of it up into Houston. So when activities are going on and you're talking about managing space with the powerboats on Clear Lake, but there's also the Houston Ship Channel, which never stops.

John Focke: Yeah.

Catherine Focke: But we never go near it.

John Focke: You do have to cross it though right at Bayport.

Catherine Focke: You, yeah, coming between the two clubs.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: So in –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

John Focke: – moving the boats, uh, with parents' permission, their coaches would, they'd put ten of them in a string and pull them over, or they might put them on, Optis are easy to put on a trailer and just, uh.

Marie Wise: You make the coaches give us a list now, and the parents have to sign it before they even leave the lake.

John Focke: And I always make sure –

Catherine Focke: You have to transfer the liability –

Marie Wise: Yeah.

Catherine Focke: – back to the parents.

Marie Wise: Yeah.

John Focke: – I was really concerned about that liability.

Marie Wise: I, I couldn't agree with you more.

John Focke: They were signing off that moving the boats was not part of this regatta.
Marie Wise: You know, you had talked about how loading up the boats and moving them from club to club and, and even traveling beyond that is hard work for the parents.

Catherine Focke: Oh, yeah.

Marie Wise: I mean we put in a lot of work. Do you think the kids realize that as kids or do you think they grow up and realize hey, look what my mom and dad did?

Catherine Focke: I think they grow up and realize it.

Marie Wise: Okay.

John Focke: They, yeah, I think they do and particularly if during the course of sailing over a summer, if the parents put the boats away for the kids –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – that's a no, to my mind –

Catherine Focke: Mm mm.

John Focke: – it's a bad mistake.

Catherine Focke: No, I remember –

John Focke: It is a mistake.

Catherine Focke: – one mom who use to go out in her beautiful pantsuit and completely disassemble her son's Sunfish and put it away for him while he was in the, having Chipwich ice cream sandwiches in the portal.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: I went mom, what are you thinking. Stop it this instant.

Marie Wise: I agree. I agree. Um, one kind of unrelated question is, or thing that concerns me is not as many people are becoming U.S. Sailing officials or judges these days. It's a really big time commitment to take that step.

Catherine Focke: And really hard.

Marie Wise: It's a really hard job and, um, and I'm kind of wondering what you think that means for events like Race Week where it's harder to find really experienced PROs and judges.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.
Marie Wise: And, um, and especially the kind of judges who really listen, like we talked about and, um, the corollary, how do we get more people to become PROs and judges?

John Focke: Well, it, the Houston Yacht Club every year used to have a, um, course –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – to teach people how to run races and things, and always have that, one or two by law, and you do, ultimately, have to take a test to become –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – certified. You have to have a certain amount of experience, so that's a good question. I think it should be posed to each of the clubs and, uh –

Catherine Focke: The thing is the parents –

John Focke: – it's just.

Marie Wise: It's such a hard job. I mean why would –

Catherine Focke: – it is a hard job.

Marie Wise: – anybody in their right.

Catherine Focke: Well –

John Focke: You don't have to be a registered PRO to run a race, but you def, definitely have to be a, a certified judge and to hear a protest.

Marie Wise: You can, you can really tell the difference between the registered PROs, especially in managing, you know how hard it is to manage a flight –

John Focke: Right.

Marie Wise: – of Optis that size.

Amanda Focke: And it, we should say what a PRO is.

Marie Wise: The principal race officer.

Catherine Focke: But here, here's the deal. Here's how you start out. Your kids wants to learn how to sail.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.
Catherine Focke: And you volunteer to be on the chase boat, or you volunteer to help with Wednesday, Fridays.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And you know, it started like for us in 1980. We joined in '79. The boys went to camp that summer in 1980 and thereupon, we were out there every time they were.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: Now, that is when I wasn't working and John was working.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And so I was able to do Wednesday, Friday series races and there were plenty of moms that were able to do it too.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And so it was a learning experience for us and I didn't even realize I was a principal race officer until I went to one of the classes and sat for the test.

Marie Wise: It's like hey, I do all this stuff already.

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

John Focke: I think also it's, um, I guess maybe it's just my view of the event, but this even cannot be turned over to a staff position, no matter how qualified the staff. It needs parents –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – of all descriptions, uh, parents who care for their kids.

Catherine Focke: And care for other kids too.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And have –

Catherine Focke: That's one of the reasons I left –

John Focke: – yeah.

Catherine Focke: – the race committee was that we had gotten to the point where there were so many wealthy parents that would appear every venue, brought their own boats, brought their own coach, coached their kids through the entire race, and protest hearings, and it just got too
professional for me. I wanted those parents to care about the whole racecourse and whether your child was doing as well as my child was doing.

John Focke: One of the things that worked for us is that in 1991 we had John Nicholson and myself, and John had, uh, three or four people that he would call on, and we had three or four people in our boat that I'd call on, and I always made it a point at the end of the venue to ask everybody if they're coming back next year because the race committee goes through a learning experience and we all were, and in 19, let me, let me think about this a minute, um, when this became the Junior Olympic Festival event, I asked the people that were helping me and I asked John Nicholson, and he asked the people helping him to make a 5-year commitment so that we would always work together for the next 5 years.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Uh, and, uh, because we had, we just had the right mix of people.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And I found just an aside on the race committee though, we were keeping track of so many kids' finishes –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – schoolteachers were fabulous at that. I mean they can –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – we had a couple on board and they also know how to handle kids.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And they get –

Catherine Focke: Ellen Donnelly and, uh, Karen Burroughs were flawless at finishing.

John Focke: – an 11-year-old kid could hoodwink me with some story, but could not hoodwink a schoolteacher, so. Anyway, so John and I, he's got a group and we had one or two changes, but we kept it together, and, uh, and then after that 5-year period, let's see John –

Catherine Focke: We had another 5.

Marie Wise: Did you, another 5?
John Focke: – yeah, we did another 5. At the end of it, I retired and so did John, but by that time –

Catherine Focke: Shannon Bush was coming on.

John Focke: – we had found people –

Marie Wise: Okay.

John Focke: – that began to take over, but –

Marie Wise: Well, then Shannon Bush took over then.

John Focke: – yeah.

Marie Wise: She's actually just this past year, was her last year –

John Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: – which she'd put off –

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – like she'd extended many times also.

Catherine Focke: Yeah, yeah.

John Focke: Billy Richnow was –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – pretty good at, at that too, but –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

John Focke: – the point being that, uh, the parents are learning with the children –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – and how to handle the children, each and their own.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Uh, it really helped to keep people together.

Marie Wise: It would be a unique event for our race committee to have to manage because –
Catherine Focke: Oh, yeah.

Marie Wise: – of youth and it, it's a, not something you can just walk in as a race committee and understand –

Catherine Focke: Right.

Marie Wise: – the structure of it. Um, what are some of your best memories from Race Week?

Catherine Focke: Oh, my gosh –

Marie Wise: How do you even?

Catherine Focke: – the green fleet, oh, my gosh. They're so wonderful.

John Focke: I think one of my best memories, I have a lot of them in a way, but, uh, in, in 1991 and even more so about 1997, we had met families that were, would come here from Dallas or Fort Worth, or –

Catherine Focke: New Orleans.

John Focke: – New Orleans or Mobile or wherever, and these weren't just father with a child, it was mother and father, kid racing, and his little sister and little brother.

Catherine Focke: And they, somebody else from the yacht club.

John Focke: And we'd get to know them and then, uh, the following year, they'd be back, only the second middle brother, he's now racing in green fleet, and so we, you would see these families –

Catherine Focke: ****.

John Focke: – even families here that would press. We didn't see them during the year, but we'd see them –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – during that week and Race Week's pretty intense, I mean. There's 6 days in the water and an 8-day event, and you get to know people, and, uh, so I think that was a rich experience and –

Catherine Focke: Oh, yeah.

John Focke: – these precious young sailors were just awesome.
Catherine Focke: They were fabulous.

John Focke: They'd come up and talk to you and, and I just got in the habit of –

Catherine Focke: Come up and whack the bugs, call them off. I need some sunscreen. I don't have any water. This is wonderful.

John Focke: – and I think the, uh, I used to enjoy the planning in the meetings. We would have one in the fall and one in the early spring, and maybe two more before the event, but, uh, it was a group of people, probably a dozen people that all had some aspect of it, and, uh, it was fun.

Catherine Focke: We had a family from New Orleans and I cannot recall their name. They were quite a large family. I think we saw seven kids over 10 years come through the Texas Youth Race Week.

Marie Wise: There's a family like out in Austin now with a whole –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – they've got multiple kids in every fleet, you know –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – on every line and it's just really cool. It takes them a trailer to move all these boats –

Catherine Focke: Oh, yeah, yeah.

Marie Wise: – from club to club, which is really cool.

Catherine Focke: That's wonderful.

John Focke: We also involve, enjoy, uh, meeting and working with Lee Parks with sailing –

Catherine Focke: Oh, Lee Parks is wonderful.

John Focke: – she is a wonderful person and, uh –

Catherine Focke: You know, she lives –

John Focke: – God bless her for hanging in there.

Catherine Focke: – she lives up north somewhere.

John Focke: Yeah, in Newport or that area.
Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: And so she would come down and she would be, in the wintertime –

Marie Wise: Uh huh.

Catherine Focke: – we'd be having an event, and she would come down and be amazed, you know, all over again that we sail year round.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: I think another thing is that, uh, we involve traveling with our kids to regattas.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: Catherine would take them up to Connecticut or up to Michigan, a couple kids and a boat, and, uh –

Catherine Focke: Oh, my god, we went everywhere.

John Focke: – you know, when you're a guest like that, people treat you so wonderfully, and, uh –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – so that was.

Marie Wise: There's so much, and the kids get to go to clubs all across the country –

Catherine Focke: Oh, yeah.

Marie Wise: – and see what they're like and learn how to –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – how to do that.

Catherine Focke: Darrien, Connecticut with all, Greg and Wulf in a Blazer 2, oh, my god.

Marie Wise: What were some of the most, um, challenging things or difficult things about Race Week, and I know you've talked about some of the challenges, but, um.

John Focke: Well, two, I can tell you about two things. I'm not going to mention any names, but invariably, there would be one or two powerboats with parents who had no respect for the race committee or the race instructions, and would yell at their children either coaching them or
chastising them for something and I always had to find a diplomatic way to get them off the racecourse.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: So that was uncomfortable, uh.

Catherine Focke: And there were parents out there that were also drinking.

John Focke: Yeah.

Catherine Focke: And that would terribly exacerbate –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: – problems.

John Focke: By, by the way, we allowed no alcohol beverage on race committee boats or any of the support boats.

Marie Wise: I think it's still that way.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: I can't imagine that it's not. I haven't, wouldn't consider it.

John Focke: The other situation is we had, uh, a kid that came down from Chicago of all places to race and he was belligerent and foul mouthed, and said some things on the racecourse that were just, I was shocked, and we had a, the race committee protested him and his father got involved in the protest, using the same language the kid did, and the protest was ruled against him, and it was appealed and went all the way to the national hearings, and was appealed again, and, uh, it stood up, but it was a very unpleasant –

Marie Wise: Yeah.

John Focke: – event. We –

Marie Wise: That would take the fun out of it.

Catherine Focke: Oh, absolutely.

Marie Wise: Yeah, the rules ****.

John Focke: – we had one other event where somebody, we had a black sailor and some Texas kid told him he didn't belong in the regatta, blah, blah, blah.
Marie Wise: Oh, geez.

John Focke: So there, that's always going to happen because that comes from life.

Marie Wise: Yeah.

John Focke: That comes from the life these kids live.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: But, uh, they were, there weren't many of those.

Marie Wise: Pretty rare.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: Well, that, yeah.

Catherine Focke: I remember one father reduced poor Barbara Brownback to tears about something related to, not to the on the water but to the off the water.

Marie Wise: Sure.

Catherine Focke: He demanded, you know.

Marie Wise: Well, off the water, it's a whole 'nother operation and another, so.

Catherine Focke: Oh, yes, absolutely.

Marie Wise: And, and I don't want to dwell on the challenges, but, and the reason I ask is 'cause I think we can learn from them going forward.

Catherine Focke: Oh, yeah.

Marie Wise: I think it's important to remember what challenges we had.

John Focke: Oh, I do have another one.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: That is very common, and it's a very hard call. When you've got, and at the time we were running this event, there might be 135 to 150 boats in the water and Galveston Bay is such that you would get squalls that would come across the bay or you'd get lightning, and the question is it takes an hour to get kids in and then another hour to get them back out to race, and, uh, you're trying to get in a minimum of, uh, at least four races at every venue. So when the bad weather would come, it was just wind and maybe a little rain. There was always a temptation to
tough it out, stay out there, and that's, that's fine with the older kids, but you can't do that with green fleeters or –

Marie Wise:  Mm hmm.

John Focke:  – Optimus sailors. So making that call is a hard one because somebody's going to get mad at you no matter what you do.

Marie Wise:  Either way.

John Focke:  Some parents say yeah, they have to learn to compete and sail in this kind of weather, and some say you're putting my kids at risk.

Marie Wise:  It gets scary so fast.

John Focke:  And at one point, we even had an instrument on board that would measure the distance between the committee boat and the lightning strike we might see on the horizon, you know, that's 4 miles away or who knows there, but –

Marie Wise:  Oh, wow.

John Focke:  – my, in hindsight, I would say better to bring them in –

Marie Wise:  Mm hmm.

John Focke:  – because there's liability. There's a chance you might just scare kids to the point they would give up racing.

Catherine Focke:  Mm hmm.

Marie Wise:  Yeah, you don't want to do that.

Catherine Focke:  Mm mm.

John Focke:  Um, or somebody might get hurt.

Catherine Focke:  Mm hmm.

John Focke:  And, uh, so I even had some coaches thank me for staying out there and come back and say, you know, you shouldn't have been out there. My answer was well, you're their coach and it's up to you.

Marie Wise:  Uh huh.
John Focke: It's really up to every sailor when you get to the big world to decide whether or not they're going to be out there. It's not the race committee that'll make that decision. They might, but –

Marie Wise: Yeah.

John Focke: – and so the coaches, part of their responsibility was if they thought their kids weren't safe to come in.

Marie Wise: I'm always glad when I see a coach take a stand and say okay, my team's not in this one, you know.

John Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: We're going to go in short.

John Focke: That's a good thing.

Marie Wise: Yeah, it is a good thing. I'm always proud of that.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: Even though it is hard. I've got one more Race Week question and then –

Catherine Focke: Sure.

Marie Wise: – I wanted to ask you another TSA question. So, um, Wulf and Thatcher are still involved in sailing and at the club, and your grandkids are still involved in sailing, and now Amanda is part of the whole history of the event also, um. You must be really proud of this, and how did you do it? You've talked about some of the ways that you get kids, how do you keep your kids in this?

Catherine Focke: Well, you, you have to let the kids be the lead. You can prod and offer, but if they don't like it, they don't like it. So you've got to back off. I remember once when Thatcher came back from France, he had broken his arm in a, uh, horseback riding accident in France, and he was out there sailing with a baggie over his arm, and I looked over and he had just, he was just tired, and he was laying down. All the kids tired, with this cast down asleep saying let's – so I mean you have to be prepared for all kinds of heartbreak because that –

Marie Wise: And they may come back to it, I mean I think that –

Catherine Focke: – oh, yeah.

Marie Wise: – you know, even kids who don't go all racing, all out.

Catherine Focke: Yeah, sure.
Marie Wise: If they have the seed, they can come back to it and come in when they grow ****.

Catherine Focke: In fact, you know, it, there's this great community that forms around the kid as they go through this program, and I, you know, when John and I were regatta parents, my god, there were, you know, little kids, middle kids, super seniors, and we even had college kids come back and race with us on Wednesday and Friday. We had to give them a class called super seniors and it was Randall Rogers and Gary Ross and those big kids, but they, you know, formed a, uh, a kind of a camaraderie with these little kids, and oh, my gosh, those little kids, wow, you know, these are college kids.

John Focke: I think in, in my life as I look back, um, thank you for this opportunity to kind of think about this again, but, uh, my time out on the water I think was a part of my life well spent, not all fun and all good, but it was one of the most worthwhile things I've –

Catherine Focke: Worthwhile things we've ever done.

John Focke: – because we impacted so many kids.

Catherine Focke: And they impacted us.

John Focke: Yeah and the other thing is, I say this with some humor, but it's serious, is that my middle-aged crazy years, 40 to 50, were spent with the kids racing sailboats, not drinking and losing families, and I couldn't have asked for –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

John Focke: – a better –

Marie Wise: Oh, that's, that's so, I don't even know what to say. That's –

John Focke: – yeah.

Marie Wise: – a wonderful thing to say about the whole crazy process –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – that we all spend so much time working on and –

Catherine Focke: Yeah and money.

Marie Wise: – thinking on, and money, yeah, yeah.

Catherine Focke: It's expensive.

Marie Wise: Absolutely, I'm so –
Catherine Focke: But I have to say, just a little footnote for history –

Marie Wise: – mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: – the Kolius girls brought the Kolius family into sailing, not –

Marie Wise: Okay.

Catherine Focke: – my brother.

Marie Wise: We will make sure that –

Catherine Focke: Make sure that is, uh.

Marie Wise: – gets under the history.

Catherine Focke: Susan and I went to the first ever Girl Scout camp at Casa Mare as mariner scouts that opening year. We were part of a handpicked group of ten girls.

Marie Wise: And so you brought in John.

Catherine Focke: When we finished that 2 weeks –

Marie Wise: Uh huh.

Catherine Focke: at Casa Mare, our dad who prior to that had only played tennis and golf, got one of his law buddies to teach him how to sail during that 2 weeks because he didn't want Susan and I learning something he didn't know anything about.

Marie Wise: That he didn't know how to do. This is a really interesting footnote to history, and maybe we need to clarify the –

Catherine Focke: So 3, 3 weeks later, three of the fabulous Koliuses were dyed in the wool sailors, and we drug my baby brother and my mom along with us.

Marie Wise: – and then your brothers, let's just for the record –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – your brother John –

Catherine Focke: John.

Marie Wise: – who later on went on to become an American Cup skipper, and –
Catherine Focke: Oh, and so many things.

Marie Wise: And so many, yeah.

Catherine Focke: He, uh, sailed so many events with the Williams' sons –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: – and, uh, kids from TCYC. I mean they did all the junior events. They did all the senior events. The first year they qualified for the Mallorys, it was in Newport. They all won it.

Marie Wise: So this is John Kolius –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – coming from not know how to sail on Galveston Bay and starting because his sister dragged him into it –

Catherine Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: – and then look where that got.

Catherine Focke: I just want you to know –

Marie Wise: Just a little note of inspiration there.

Catherine Focke: – that he thought he was a Girl Scout. He gave the Girl Scout pledge. He understand be prepared.

Marie Wise: I'm glad you're, I'm glad you're out of that. The one other kind of non-Race Week question I had, I just recently awarded the David Green PRO of the year award at our TSA end of year event –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: – and you designed that, and, um, we've actually changed it and turned it into a regatta of the year, um. It got hard to separate the PRO from the regatta.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: So, um, so it's morphed after a couple of years of not being awarded. You recall anything about that award or do you want to say anything about the background of it? You were part of TSA when it was deeded.

Catherine Focke: Yeah.
John Focke: Oh, I remember not much about it. I know that, uh, Joanne was involved in that.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm, mm hmm.

John Focke: I remember the trophy.

Catherine Focke: Uh, it's a gorgeous trophy.

John Focke: And I think it was awarded to me once.

Catherine Focke: I think it was awarded to you twice.

Marie Wise: You got it the first year.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: And then, uh –

John Focke: That's all I can remember.

Marie Wise: – okay, I just wanted to kind of capture that because I gave a little lecture about it at the, at the awards presentation just going on what notes I had.

John Focke: Let me give you one, this is disconnected to these, but I don't want to leave it out. We talked about earlier the, uh, prohibition of any alcohol on any race committee or –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – boat, you know, uh. That's a big problem with teenagers, that and drugs. I mean that's sort of unspoken at this even, but it's there.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And, uh, at one time, John Kolius when he was giving clinics and talking to kids, this is about the time he was talking about the never give up idea, he, uh, he did a tee shirt, I did a tee shirt for him, and he had a thing he was talking about. It just, it was styled don't broad reach through life. Say no to drugs, and, uh, I don't know what, we never integrated that into this event, but it's something that parents should think about and there is always, particularly in older sailors when they have bars, a day of racing on the water is intense and there's always a need to unwind and relax, just like an adult would do at the end of the day.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And sometimes they might go off and have a beer or they might do something else with drugs, but, uh, maybe the next generation of people that are involved in this event can
just be aware of that and find out some subtle way to do it. I thought hearing it from John Kolius was a pretty big deal 'cause at the time all the kids knew who he was and he was an Olympic champion.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: You can't go to the Olympics if you, if you use drugs. You can't go to collegiate sailing if you use drugs.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: You can't sail, uh. You're not, there's a prohibition in sailing instructions about using, uh, alcohol or drugs –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – during the event, so.

Marie Wise: I think that's important to add, you know.

John Focke: Yeah.

Marie Wise: I'm glad you, I'm glad you got that in.

John Focke: Somebody smarter than me maybe can come up with something, but –

Marie Wise: It's important to add.

John Focke: – embrace your heart.

Marie Wise: It has and these kids have so, you know, it's such a gift and so many opportunities for that.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And the symptom is you see a kid winning on Saturday. On Sunday, he's back in the fleet –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – he's wasted.

Marie Wise: Yeah.

John Focke: Not many, but it happens and, uh, fortunately, and I would call this the most fortunate thing, is we never lost any children –
Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – in the 20 years we were involved.

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: We're very lucky. We're very blessed that way, and I think we are staying ****.

John Focke: You know, we had some kids that got broken bones or hit in the head with a boom or something, but no –

Catherine Focke: Split lip.

John Focke: – whatever. That's a parent's worst –

Marie Wise: It is, it is, and –

John Focke: – nightmare.

Marie Wise: – it's a dangerous sport. It really is, by its very nature.

Catherine Focke: It is. It's a physical sport. People don't realize how physical it is.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: But it is.

Marie Wise: Well, as we plan for 2016 –

Catherine Focke: Well, one of the things –

Marie Wise: – yeah.

Catherine Focke: I have to say one more thing.

Marie Wise: **** end up first.

Catherine Focke: One of the, one of the things about the NGU –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: – came from my brother's Olympic campaign where he came in second in soloing –

Marie Wise: Uh huh.
Catherine Focke: – in ’76, but I was there in Canada, and the last race, there were four possible winners, and the thing about the NGU is you sail your best rate. I don't care where your standing is because you can't tell which of these four are gonna get hit by the boom, or hit the mark and have to re-round, or have a protest –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

Catherine Focke: – with somebody else. You must said your best rates for yourself and let the chips fall where they may because you may think you're not winning and end up winning.

Marie Wise: Completely right.

Catherine Focke: Completely right.

Marie Wise: Absolutely.

Catherine Focke: That's why you never give up.

John Focke: One other aspect, this has to do with race committee responsibility or PRO responsibility, that sort of developed, uh. The first committee boat, the PRO is to be the first boat out of the harbor to lead the kids to the racecourse.

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: And it is to be the last boat into the harbor after all the kids are in and have been accounted for. This would always keep us out there for an extra 45 minutes or so –

Marie Wise: Mm hmm.

John Focke: – but I just think it's absolutely the –

Marie Wise: Yeah, you're right.

John Focke: – responsibility of the PRO to do that.

Marie Wise: And that's something we always try to communicate, you know, as we go all across Texas to all the different yacht clubs, some of which have very experienced PROs –

Catherine Focke: Mm hmm.

Marie Wise: – and some of them, you know, many places, many smaller clubs who don't have that. You're right. I'm really glad you, I'm really glad you added that. Well, as we plan for 2016, I would like to have you guys come to one of the banquets or the end of year banquet or –

Catherine Focke: Oh, sure.
Marie Wise: – something and always stay a part of it, because it's, who cares whether you, whether you think you're done with it or not.

Catherine Focke: Oh, you're never done with it. You're never done with it. I fully expect to see Action Jackson's style somewhere along the line, yeah.

Marie Wise: Should I hit the button and –

Catherine Focke: Yeah, I think so.

Marie Wise: – okay, let me.

John Focke: Oh, that was fun.

Marie Wise: That was.

Catherine Focke: I think we went way over time.

John Focke: ****.

Marie Wise: Oh, my gosh, not too long, it's just.