

# Longtime volunteer for Meerwald dies

By Joseph P. Smith

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**COMMERCIAL** — Welding, carpentry, boat building — Mortimer Hughes could do them all and did for years as a volunteer for the Bayshore Discovery Project and its restoration project of the historic oyster schooner the A.J. Meerwald.

Ironically, Hughes never was much for sailing despite his enjoyment in the work.

“I was just talking to his granddaughter,” Bayshore Discovery Executive Director Meghan Wren said. “He got seasick. All that commitment to boats, all his life, but he didn’t like going out on them.”

Hughes, a widower, died Nov. 28 at the age of 92. He had been bedridden for the



**Mortimer Hughes** SUBMITTED PHOTO

last few years, said Wren, who attended the funeral.

Hughes, a resident of Erma in Cape May County, was buried on Monday at Cold Spring Cemetery. His wife Mildred also was a Bayshore volunteer until her death in 2003. Suzanne Benoit, his daughter, recalled her father’s familiarity with the schooner long before he became a volun-

teer.

“He used to play on the Meerwald when he was a little boy,” she said. “It was built in 1928 and he remembered it. He used to see it at the dock.”

Benoit said her father worked on the schooner in the 1950s when its owner converted it to a clamming boat.

On its website, Bayshore members assembled a written and photographic memorial of Hughes.

Wren wrote: “He was so much more than likeable! Humble, helpful, optimistic, quick to laugh (especially at himself), incredibly open and down to earth, yet he brought such a range of skills and knowledge and life experiences to the table that he could easily have been full of himself — not Mort!”