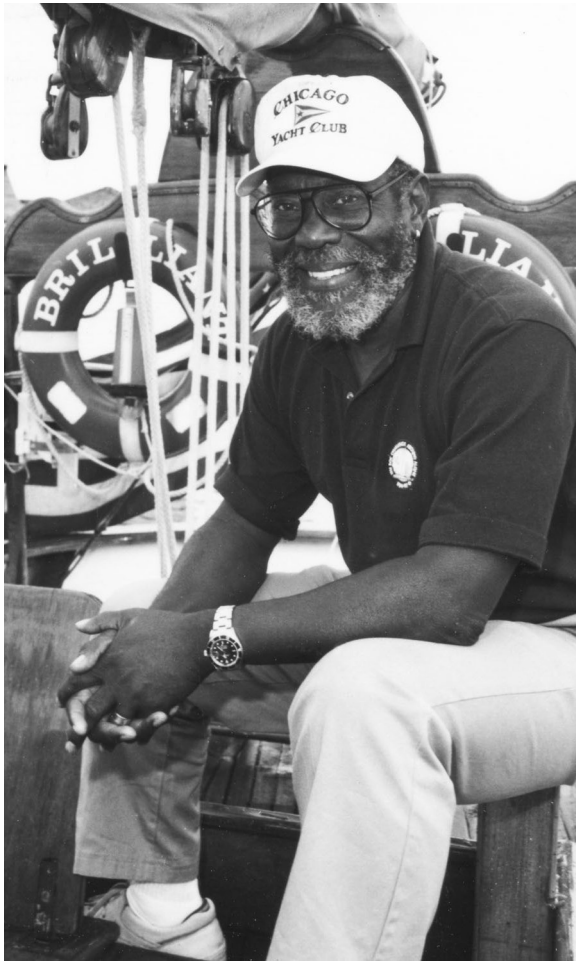




Bill Pinkney aboard the Mystic Seaport Museum schooner *Brilliant* in September 1995. Mystic Seaport Museum, Mary Anne Stets photo, 1995-9-140

From the Editors: This summer, the maritime world lost a groundbreaking pioneer, Captain William Pinkney, who passed away on August 31, 2023. Born on the South Side of Chicago, Pinkney followed an early stint as a navy corpsman and a successful marketing career by turning his focus to sailing and sail education. In 1992, he became the first person of African descent to sail alone around the world via the great capes. He used his voyage as an object lesson in perseverance for 30,000 American schoolchildren and the wider public through an award-winning documentary film.

He subsequently wrote several books. From 2000 to 2002, he served as the inaugural captain of the replica *Amistad*, taking teachers and students on voyages along Long Island Sound and across the Atlantic while delivering lessons on the Atlantic slave trade. Pinkney influenced several generations and organizations through his service, including Mystic Seaport Museum, where he served as a Trustee. In 2022, Mystic Seaport Museum presented Pinkney with its America and the Sea Award. J. Revell Carr, former President of Mystic Seaport Museum, offers the following tribute to his friend.



Captain Bill Pinkney and Revell Carr look forward aboard *Amistad* during the ceremony in which Mystic Seaport Museum officially turned the Freedom Schooner over to Amistad America and Captain Bill. Courtesy of J. Revell Carr

Bill Pinkney – ZEST for life! – a Remembrance

J. Revell Carr

From the moment I first encountered Bill Pinkney, he exuded a zest for life that was inspirational. That spirit and enthusiasm carried forward through the time I worked with Bill in his role as a Mystic Seaport Museum trustee, during his captaincy of *Amistad*, and in our friendship in the years after I retired.

We first met when he joined the Museum's board of trustees. Over the decades, the Museum has been well served by its distinguished and committed trustees. When Bill joined this group in 1994, he was certainly distinguished and demonstrably a man of commitment. Drawing on his life experience, he brought a unique perspective that enriched the board and greatly benefitted the Museum. I can attest to the fact that his opinions on board issues were well considered and carried weight with his board colleagues.

Naturally, Bill played a key role in the *Amistad* project, which had been inspired by Chris Cox, the Seaport's Director of Development. Largely through Chris's efforts and the skills of the shipyard crew led by Quentin Snediker, *Amistad* became a reality. Bill was always there to champion the project, work through the complex details of the vessel's future, observe the construction, and ultimately become the schooner's first captain. He served *Amistad* well, as he did the many who sailed with him.

But, of course, the central event in Bill's full life was not when sailing with others but when sailing alone—around the world. Bill's solo circumnavigation in the early 1990s, when he was in his mid-50s, began as a way to inspire his grandchildren. It evolved into a classic example of perseverance, courage, and commitment that inspired thousands of students in Boston and Chicago schools who followed his progress and heard directly from him as he faced the rigors of this often perilous voyage. It has also inspired countless others of all ages who have seen the documentary *The Incredible Voyage of Bill Pinkney* or have read his books. During visits in Puerto Rico after we had both retired from our roles at Mystic Seaport Museum, we talked about the joys and terrors he experienced during that voyage, in his aptly named vessel *Commitment*, and how they both humbled and strengthened him.

Bill faced other challenges with fortitude. In 2017 he and his wife Migdalia lost their Puerto Rican home to Hurricane Maria, but rebuilt their lives there with Bill's abundant energy. If there was ever a vividly clear example of Bill's zest for life, for me it was as he celebrated his 85th birthday dancing the salsa with fluidity, grace, AND every move in the book!

Two years ago, Bill received the appropriate honor of being inducted into the National Sailing Hall of Fame and, with his family around him, he was given its Lifetime Achievement Award. Bill's life was indeed one of continuous, admirable achievement. Bill's passing is a painful loss for Mystic Seaport Museum and all who knew him.