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FEATURES

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DEPARTMENTS

READER SERVICES

Cover: Ben Brown runs his shad boat through a marsh near Wanchese, North Carolina, where the type—the state's official historic boat—originated.
Page 54

Photograph by Ed Tupper

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EDITOR'S PAGE

The Boat as Emblem

In his article beginning on page 56, Paul Molyneaux observes that the North Carolina shad boat is a reflection of its region's history. Indeed, as Paul details in his article, shad-boat construction, which began in the 1870s, was adapted to available resources, and hull forms morphed through the switch from sail to power and the evolution of the fishery. While the modern shad-boat emerged after the Civil War, its design is rooted in a millennia-old hull form, carved from big logs by the native Croatoan people of the Outer Banks. The boat's regional symbolism is so powerful that the North Carolina General Assembly designated it the Official State Historic Boat in 1987.

Jan Adkins, in his installment of Skills 101 beginning on page 37, notes, "The goal, purpose, time, and circumstance of a boat shapes its design." In the case of the shad boat, it's remarkable that the goals and circumstances that shaped it could have held on for so long. But it's not unique. My thoughts turn to Scandinavia when I think of boats as cultural emblems—of hull forms and construction concepts that held on through centuries, shaped by environment and need. The Nordic lapstrake, or "clinker," tradition is so powerful a cultural emblem—and so endangered by changing times—that in 2021 it was added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, to ensure its preservation. Boats built in this tradition range from Viking-era watercraft to the faerings that roamed Norway's fjords to modern-day fjord cruisers, built of fiberglass but with molded "strakes" to mimic ancient planking techniques. The influences of lapstrake-planked Viking-era boats are still visible all over Scandinavia and have even found a place in modern recreational kit boats built of plywood. We see this in several of John Harris's designs beginning on page 86.

Indeed, Harris has tapped many traditions in his designs, and his workboat-derived concepts have found an audience in the recreational realm. His Lighthouse Tender Peapod, for example, is based on the peapods of the Maine Coast—double-ended multipurpose workboats once used for hand-hauling lobster traps along bold, rocky shores. John's Southwester and Northeaster Dories are rooted in a Massachusetts tradition of beach-launched fishing boats that transitioned, as early as the late 19th century, into recreational racing craft. His Pacific Proa is a wood-and-epoxy interpretation of Oceanic voyaging craft. John's company, Chesapeake Light Craft, has many kayak designs; in fact, it was founded on this most ancient and emblematic watercraft of the Arctic.

"The changes [the shad boat] has gone through in design, power, and function," Paul Molyneaux writes, "perfectly mirror a unique slice of Americana." Likewise, Nordic clinker craft, Maine peapods, Massachusetts dories, Oceanic proas, and Aleut and Greenland kayaks are all rooted in regional traditions that are hundreds—even thousands—of years old. They have evolved over time. They are reflections of customs, traditions, struggles, and values, and have found new agency and appreciators. Regional watercraft survive because they fit a place and a purpose. If you're reading this, or have built, sailed, or enjoyed these boats, then *you* are part of that purpose.

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LETTERS

BAGHEERA's Lineage

To the Editor of *Woodenboat*:

With one small exception, I thoroughly enjoyed Todd Schwede's article "Saving BAGHEERA" (WB No. 308) describing the extensive rebuild of the 72′ Alden schooner in 1985–86. The boat was in my family from 1960 to 1975, and during that time I also spent a couple of years trying to save BAGHEERA, albeit as a youngster learning on the job rather than as a professional of Mr. Schwede's caliber. In my mature years, I used to sail past her on Casco Bay and wonder at how many people, including myself, have put so much of themselves into keeping that boat alive. She is truly something special.

My one exception to the enjoyment of the article, which is not a criticism, is that my family's ownership is omitted in her pedigree, which includes the following: "She…was owned by the Weir [sic] family from 1948 through 1973." This is not accurate.

Dale Weirs bought the boat in 1948, but sold her in 1956 to R.S. Brown. Mr. Brown, in turn, sold her to my father, Carter Bacon, in 1960. My father turned the boat over to me in 1972, allowing me to spend two-and-a-half years working on her as I sailed her from the Great Lakes to the Galapagos Islands and back to Florida with numerous friends and family members as crew. In 1975, after our trip, my father sold the boat.

The ownership error in the article is understandable because the U.S. Coast Guard ownership records, on which the claim of "Weir" family ownership is based, seem to indicate that my father bought the boat in 1973.

The confusion arises because BAGHEERA's federal ownership records were dormant when my father bought the boat in1960. By then she was registered under the State of Michigan system and had state registration numbers on her bow. After buying the boat my father learned that she was a federally documented vessel. However, throughout my childhood and teenage years she was registered as a Michigan boat.

When I took over the boat in 1973, I wanted a proper federal documentation. Over several months I obtained a bill of sale from Mr. Brown and a signed instrument from Dale Weirs's widow releasing a mortgage on the boat granted to Mr. Weirs by Mr. Brown when he first bought the boat. I submitted these papers to the Coast Guard and obtained a documentation certificate showing my father as the owner. With this in hand I terminated the Michigan registration. The papers were recorded in October 1973, so it looks as if that is when my father first acquired the boat, even though he purchased it in 1960.

I believe that my father, who was only 35 when he bought BAGHEERA and was impatient with legal niceties throughout his long life, did not understand the significance of a documented vessel. He did not hire a lawyer and would have accepted a bill of sale from Mr. Brown because Mr. Brown was listed as the owner on the Michigan registration. I do not believe my father understood that he could check for a clear title by requesting a document transcript from the Coast Guard. Why did Mr. Brown register the boat in Michigan if he had a documented vessel? I do not want to speculate about that. I assume his debt to Mr. Weirs had long since been paid in full by the time I asked Mrs. Weirs for a release.

The lessons: (1) if someone is selling you a boat registered under a state system, check to see if it is federally

documented—you might discover a mortgage; and (2) do not assume that a Coast Guard ownership transcript always tells the real story.

Carter Bacon Jr.
Cambridge, Massachusetts

Naval Stores

Dear *WoodenBoat*,

Reading Dr. Jagels Wood Technology column, "Tree Resins in Boat Finishes" (WB No. 307), I was intrigued by his description of the historical use of tar. As most residents of the Old North State will concur, any discussion of tar piques our interest. North Carolinians are, after all, known as Tar Heels!

In 2018, I had the unique opportunity to participate in the archaeological excavation of a relic tar kiln in eastern North Carolina dating to the mid 1800s. Interpreting the remains of this tar kiln led me to a wealth of historical information about tar, its uses in building and maintaining sailing vessels, particularly those of the British Royal Navy, and the naval stores industry in the American Colonies. Dr. Jagels writes that tar is the byproduct of charcoal production, and while this is nominally true, there's much more to the story. The production of tar and turpentine were the core of the naval stores industry that was a major economic driver in Colonial America and throughout the 1800s, and most naval stores products came from the pine forests of coastal Carolina. Resin harvested from living trees (primarily longleaf pine, *pinus palustris*) was used to make turpentine and tar. Overharvesting eventually killed the trees, and it was then that kilns were used to force the last bit of resin, in the form of tar, from billets split from the dead trees. An open-source article that describes the technology behind tar kilns and how they were constructed, why Great Britain turned to the colonies as their primary source for naval stores and what they did to promote this industry, can be found in the North Carolina Archaeological Society's publication, "Anatomy of a Tar Kiln," *North Carolina Archaeology* (2018) vol. 76, pp. 48–76 (https://www.ncarchsociety.org/ncarchjournal).

Many thanks to Dr. Jagels, whose columns never fail to inform and inspire me.

Joseph Herbert
Carrboro, North Carolina

The Legacy of Sam Rabl

To the Editor,

Stan Grayson's article about Sam Rabl (WB No. 307) exemplifies a philosophy that can be valued over a lifetime afloat—boats shaped by simplicity and experience, and by judgment rather than excess. Sam Rabl's reflections echoed that same truth: that a good boat earns her reputation honestly over the years.

FAIR DINKUM was built by Dean T. Stephens in Alameda, California. She is currently berthed in Toledo, Oregon. After 55 years of stewardship, I can say with confidence that the qualities highlighted in this issue—balance, restraint, and sound construction—are not abstractions. They are the reasons a boat remains trustworthy long after her launch day. One of my quiet satisfactions is seeing FAIR DINKUM under sail on San Francisco Bay in Sam Rabl's book, *Boatbuilding in Your Own Backyard* (page 182, Second Edition).

Keith Korporaal
Toledo, Oregon

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2026 SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE

MAY	JUNE				JULY			
17-23 / 24-30	31-6	7-13	14-20	21-27	28-4	5-11	12-18	19-25
ALUMNI WORK WEEK *May 17-23*	**Fitting Out Small Boats** with Bob Fuller	**Building the Kerisper** with Clint Chase		**Fundamentals of Boatbuilding** with Bob Fuller		**Fundamentals of Boatbuilding** with Warren Barker		**Building the** with Walt Ansel
ALUMNI WORK WEEK *May 24-30*	**Making Friends with Your Marine Diesel Engine** with Jon Bardo	**Fundamentals of Boatbuilding** with Rick Barkhuff		**Build Your Own Eastport Pram/ Passagemaker Dinghy** with George Krewson	**Build Your Own Stitch-and-Glue Kayak** with Eric Schade	**Glued Lapstrake Plywood Construction** with Bruce Mackenzie	**Introduction to Wood Turning** with Bruce Mackenzie	**Family Boatbuilding** with Joe Youcha
	Introduction to Boatbuilding: Skiffs & Dories with John Karbott	**Build Your Own Annapolis Wherry** with John Staub	**Fine Strip Plank Construction** with Nick Schade	**Paddle Making** with Eric Schade	**Introduction to Woodworking for Women** with Becca Levi	**Build Your Own Skerry Daysailer** with Dillon Majoros	**Woodstrip Canoe Construction** with Alan Mann & Rose Woodyard	**Runabout Repair & Restoration** with Gary Lowell
		The Art of Shaker Box Making with Bill Jordan	**Introduction to Woodworking** with Jim Macdonald	**The Art of Marquetry** with Jim Macdonald	**Elements of Sailing for Women** with Jane Ahlfeld & Kim Walther	**Build Your Own Apprentice Tool Chest** with Joel Senger	**Build Your Own Plank Constructed Pond Yacht** with Bruce Richter	**Building Half Models** with Reuben Brown
		Coastwise Navigation with Jane Ahlfeld	**Elements of Sailing** with Annie Nixon	**The Art of Monotype Printing** with Kate Emlen	**Traditional Sailing & Seamanship** with Annie Nixon	**Rigging Small Boats** with Jose Hernandez-Juviel	**The Art of the Sailor** with Jose Hernandez-Juviel	**Lettering & Leafing** with Bob Emser
			Elements of Coastal Kayaking with Rebecca Daugherty	**Elements of Sailing** with Jane Ahlfeld & Tom Conlogue	**Craft of Sail onboard NORA** with Andy Nadolny	**Introduction to Small Boat Racing** with Delaney Brown	**Elements of Sailing** with Susan LaVoie	**Family Waterfront** with Susan LaVoie & Becca Levi
				Craft of Sail onboard NORA with Kim Walther		**Craft of Sail onboard NORA for Women** with Kim Walther	**Craft of Sail onboard ELSKOV** with Andy Nadolny	**Open Boat Expedition** with Annie Nixon
						Open Boat Skills with Geoff Kerr & Casey Blust	**Open Boat Cruising** with Geoff Kerr & Casey Blust	

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MAR 30–APR 4	**Build Your Own Stitch-and-Glue Kayak**	*with Andrew Schroeher*
APRIL 20–25	**Build Your Own Annapolis Wherry**	*with Andrew Schroeher*
MAY 11–16	**Build Your Own Skerry Daysailer**	*with Andrew Schroeher*

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AUGUST

26–1

- **Noank Sloop** & Matt Morello
- **Finishing the Naskeag 16** with Dudley Dix
- **Runabout Repair & Restoration** with Gary Lowell
- **Build Your Own Plank Constructed Pond Yacht** with Bruce Richter
- **Creative Writing in Nature for Kids** with Sophia & Grace
- **Advanced Sailing** with Jane Ahlfeld & Gretchen Snyder

2–8

- **Introduction to Lines and Lofting** with Landing School Staff
- **Marine Painting & Varnishing** with Gary Lowell
- **Woodcarving** with Reed Hayden
- **Build Your Own Speed Pram** with Clint Chase
- **Elements of Sailing for Women** with Jane Ahlfeld & Gretchen Snyder
- **Traditional Sailing & Seamanship** with Annie Nixon & Jeff Evans

Regatta Photography July 30-August 2 with Tyler Fields

9–15

- **Build Your Own Ship's Wheel** with Bob Fuller
- **Building the McKenzie River Dory** with Cricket & Glade Zarn
- **Introduction to Woodworking** with Bill Thomas
- **Drawing Coastal Maine** with Kat Logan
- **Build Your Own Northeaster Dory** with Dillon Majoros
- **Concepts of Boat Design** with Clint Chase
- **Elements of Sailing** with Jane Ahlfeld & Carrie Baker
- **The Catboat** with Martin Gardner
- **Open Boat Skills** with Andy Nadolny & Marc LaFrance

16–22

- **Building the Open Chub Dory** with Cricket & Glade Zarn
- **Introduction to Boatbuilding: Traditional Plywood Construction** with Bill Thomas
- **The Maine Coast in Watercolor** with Kat Logan
- **Bronzecasting** with Michael Saari
- **Elements of Sailing** with David Bill & Martin Gardner
- **Open Boat Cruising** with Andy Nadolny & Marc LaFrance

23–29

- **Stitch-and-Glue Construction** with John Harris
- **Wood-and-Canvas Canoe Construction** with Dan Miller
- **Carving Name Boards** with Reed Hayden
- **Building a Ship in a Bottle** with Alex Bellinger
- **Building the 14′ Amesbury Outboard Skiff** with Graham McKay
- **Advanced Sailing** with David Bill & Martin Gardner
- **Craft of Sail onboard ELSKOV** with Hans Vierthaler
- **Open Boat Expedition** with Annie Nixon

SEPTEMBER

30–5

- **Fundamentals of Boatbuilding II** with Bruce McKenzie
- **Build Your Own Fox Canoe** with Bill Thomas
- **Sparmaking** with John Harris
- **Introduction to Canvaswork** with Ann Brayton
- **Messing About in Boats** with Andy Nadolny & Marc LaFrance
- **The Catboat** with Martin Gardner
- **Elements of Coastal Kayaking II** with Nick Schade

6–12

- **Wood-and-Canvas Canoe Repair** with Dan Miller
- **The Art of Woodcuts** with Gene Shaw
- **Punch Listing Your "Build Your Own" Boat** with John Staub
- **Sailing the Fleet** with WoodenBoat School Staff
- **Craft of Sail onboard ELSKOV for Women** with Arista Holden

13–19

- **Small Boat Repair** with Joe Connor
- **Concepts of Wood Composite Construction** with Mike Moros
- **Traditional Lapstrake Construction** with Jeff Reid
- **Marine & Seascape Photography** with Michael Kahn

20–26

- **Small Boat Repair** with Joe Connor
- **Making Friends with Your Marine Diesel Engine** with Jon Bardo
- **Introduction to Boatbuilding: Skiffs & Dories** with John Karbott

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OCTOBER 26–31	Build Your Own Eastport Pram or Passagemaker Dinghy	*with Andrew Schroeher*
NOVEMBER 2–7	Build Your Own Sassafras Canoe	*with Andrew Schroeher*

2026 OFF-SITE COURSES

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APRIL 24–26	Building the Caravelle Skiff	*with Clint Chase*

COURTESY OF MUSEU DE LA PESCA AND FUNDACIÓ GALA–SALVADOR DALÍ (BOTH)

***Above left*—At Port Lligat on the Catalonian coast of Spain, the surrealist artist Salvador Dalí planted a cypress tree in a boat as an art installation on the plaza in front of the house he bought in the 1930s. *Above right*—The boat has now been documented and stabilized by museum conservators.**

Boat restoration, with a surreal touch

by Daniel Caparrós Torres

At the edge of Catalonia's northeastern coast, near Spain's border with France where the Pyrenees taper into the Mediterranean Sea, the landscape turns wild. Cap de Creus is a peninsula of twisted cliffs and sudden coves, a place of light and wind. The north wind—the *tramuntana*—blows hard and without warning, bending trees and roughening the sea. Here, beauty is never still.

Tucked into this jagged shoreline lies the cove of Port Lligat. Small and almost hidden, it offers a pause in the chaos. Whitewashed fishermen's huts stand close to the shore, their walls pitted by salt and sun. A few *llaüts*—the traditional wooden boats of the Catalan coast—rest on the sand, hauled out for the season.

When the surrealist artist Salvador Dalí (1904–1989) was expelled by his father from the family home in Figueres, 44km (27 miles) to the west—and from their summer house in Cadaqués—he and his muse and wife, Gala, sought refuge at Port Lligat, along the coast and only a short walk from Cadaqués. They made their home there in the 1930s. Their house—in a cluster of fishermen's cottages wrapped around a natural harbor—became their retreat. Friends and fellow artists such as Paul Éluard, René Crevel, and René Magritte came for long lunches, swims, and languid afternoons. On this peninsula, the sea is never far from anything.

Dalí owned several boats in Port Lligat in those years. One, GALA, which has been restored in recent times, is on display at the Dalí Theatre-Museum in Figueres. Another still cruises the bay. But the most peculiar boat—known as *la barca-xiprer*, the cypress boat—remains in front of the Dalí house, which is now a museum.

Built in the early 20th century as a humble fishing llaüt, the boat was transformed by Dalí into a work of art. He opened its hull to let a living cypress grow through it, turning a simple working craft into a surreal fusion of sea and land, hull and tree—an image already alive in his paintings. Barely 5.9m (19′4″) long and built of holm oak and pine, the boat stands today as both sculpture and relic, a small vessel moored to the Catalan coast and to Dalí's imagination.

By 2023, decades of tramuntana winds, salt air, and the Empordà region's sun had taken their toll. Bottom planks had vanished, the lower topsides planking was damaged, and the keel and deadwood were gone. Most of the frames were broken, and several starboard strakes were missing. The cypress boat had become a fragile relic at risk of collapse. That was when the Dalí Foundation, together with the *Museu de la Pesca*, or fishermen's museum, in Palamós farther south on the Catalan coast, chose to intervene, not only as an act of preservation but also as a way to reconnect a surrealist gesture with the region's deep maritime craft tradition.

This has always been boat country. The *mestres d'aixa*—master boatbuilders—once turned out hulls for net fishing and coastal work, and Cadaqués remains one of the ports where the wooden llaüt stubbornly survives. The restoration of Dalí's cypress boat brought that lineage together with the precision of museum conservation work.

Led by boatbuilder Andreu Casas and conservation specialist Caterina Aguer, a team approached the hull as if it were an archaeological site, mapping every plank, seam, and frame before beginning any work, in close collaboration

between the restoration specialists from the Museu de la Pesca and conservators from Fundació Dalí (Dali Foundation). Consolidation came first. Fractured frames were pared to sound wood and sistered with template-cut oak frames, faired to the hull. Missing or weakened seat risers were restored, and three new thwarts, sized from the surviving ones, were installed and stiffened with discreet knees. To minimize intervention and to retain tool marks and historical wear patterns, rotten wood at the sheer and under the thwarts was repaired with graving pieces. With the keel, keelson, and deadwood largely gone, iroko cradles and galvanized-steel Y-shaped braces were set over the square's slate paving stones to provide light, reversible support without falsifying the structure.

Seen today, hauled up before Dalí's white house, *la barca-xiprer* carries the weight of two worlds: that of the craftsman and that of the artist. Its survival speaks as much to the endurance of maritime culture in the Empordà region as to Dalí's bond with the sea and Catalonia's boatbuilding tradition. At dusk, the wind rises again, the cypress trembles, the hull holds. Art endures; so does the sea's old craft.

Daniel Caparrós Torres is a Galician cultural journalist focused on maritime heritage, craftsmanship, and design. He often writes about traditional boatbuilding, life around the sea, and the people keeping endangered skills and trades alive.

Around the yards

■ At **Hylan & Brown Boatbuilders** in **Brooklin**, **Maine**, **three powerboats** were having electric power systems installed this winter, and three more diverse craft and solutions would be hard to imagine.

One is a 22′, **1907 Fay & Bowen torpedo-sterned open launch**; a second is a modern reconstruction of a 25′ **William Hand–designed modified V-bottomed, semi-displacement motor launch**, and the third is a cold-molded 19′4″ **Glen-L barrelback runabout**, well built by an amateur.

The Fay & Bowen boat is intended for use as a marina launch in Bucks Harbor, near Brooklin. Andrew MacArthur, the marina's owner since 2024, found the boat in upstate New York and took it to Hylan & Brown for a refit. **Ellery Brown**, proprietor of the yard, said electric power made sense for the boat, which will mostly operate in the small harbor, with occasional longer outings. To maximize inboard seating, Brown **recommended a rim-drive pod unit** from the Dutch company **Rim Drive Technologies** (www.rimdrivetechnology.nl). The 8kW, 48V motor will be powered by a Victron 20kW lithium-iron-phosphate battery bank. Rather than a conventional propeller, the drive has no shaft but rather blades that spin in a broad circular rim that also houses the motor. The pod is also used for steering; there is no rudder. This is the second boat in which Hylan & Brown has installed this type of unit.

"Obviously, electric power is quieter to begin with, but we're also taking any motor noise and putting it aft in the boat and under water," Brown said. The batteries will be installed well forward to distribute weight, which with the absence of an engine box clears interior space for side-bench seating. The helm will be side-mounted.

The hull has needed extensive work, partly because an earlier ill-conceived seam-reefing project, evidently done with a circular saw, cut into the steam-bent oak frames at almost every seam. "We're dealing with it by reframing," Brown said. To avoid having to dismantle the sheerstrake, upper structure, oval coaming, and deck, short upper portions of the frames were retained. New lower frame sections were bent into place to butt-join the upper parts, and then new sister frames installed in way of the butt. A long after section of the keel had to be replaced, but the rest remained in place, with graving pieces fitted as needed.

The Hand-designed boat is **WOMBAT**, a replica commissioned in the early 1990s and still with the first owner. Originally powered by a gas engine, it was **converted to an electric motor** of about 15kW some five years ago. But the owner and his family **wanted more speed**. After exploring options, Brown recommended an electric inboard connected via direct drive to the existing propeller shaft, with minimal disruption of the existing hull and interior. The result is an **ePropulsion I-40 inboard 40kW motor** in a **96V system** powered by two of the company's G203 lithium-iron-phosphate batteries of 23kW each (www.epropulsion.com). Brown estimates an **increase** in the boat's **top speed** from **10 knots to perhaps 16**.

For **SUMMERTIME**, the barrelback runabout, whose owner was also interested in speed, **Brown's solution** was to install

TOM JACKSON (BOTH)

***Above left*—WOMBAT (left), built to a William Hand design, and SUMMERTIME (right), a Glen-L runabout, are both having electric power conversions at Hylan & Brown Boatbuilders in Brooklin, Maine. Both will have ePropulsion 96V systems, WOMBAT with an inboard and SUMMERTIME with an outboard. *Above right*—A 1907 Fay & Bowen open launch is being restored and fitted with a rim-drive pod system incorporating the motor and an unusual propeller within the pod itself.**

an **electric outboard**. The clients were committed to electric power for a Minnesota lake and had thought of a new construction, but the idea of a more economical conversion came up during discussions with Brown. "I found this runabout for sale," Brown said, and it seemed a likely candidate. The **ePropulsion X40 outboard** is a **40kW** unit that will be mounted on a bracket off the transom, leaving ample room for cockpit reconfiguration and more seating. The rest of the system, including battery capacities, will be identical to WOMBAT's **96V system**. Because SUMMERTIME has a planing hull, Brown believes her **top speed** will reach **20 knots**.

"For both of these boats, it's the first electric boat product we've had where speed has been a real priority," Brown said. "Electric power makes more sense if you're willing and able to go slow." Doug Hylan, the yard's founder who is now focusing mainly on design, has "always consistently promoted fuel-efficient hulls and low-speed pleasure boating," Brown said, "so I think electric just has sort of naturally followed that. We've enjoyed pursuing this direction, so it's become a little bit of a specialty." That element of fuel efficiency—especially combined with nearly silent operation—will no doubt continue, even if some want, and are willing to pay for, higher speeds and greater range. The yard has responded by developing its own system for predicting speed and range calculations. **"The people who want to do it really want to do it,"** Brown said.

Hylan & Brown Boatbuilders, 10 Frank Day Lane, Brooklin, ME 04616; 207–359–9807; www.dhylanboats.com.

■ **Courtney J. Andersen**, a **freelance traditional rigger** in the **San Francisco Bay Area**, writes with news of **rerigging FREDA**, the iconic 32′ sloop built in **1885** in Tiburon, California (see WB No. 166). "FREDA is possibly the oldest surviving purpose-built pleasure yacht in the United States and certainly the oldest registered yacht on the West Coast," he writes. "She was the flagship for the early Corinthian Yacht Club, and later, the Master Mariner's Benevolent Association. After undergoing major rebuilds about every 30 years, she was donated in 2004 to the Spaulding Marine Center in Sausalito [see WB No. 217] for ongoing stewardship at an organization dedicated to maintaining wooden boats and the skills needed to keep them alive.

"Founded by Myron Spaulding in 1951, the boatyard is preserved in the Spaulding center [www.spauldingcenter.org], a charitable trust preserving the facility as a working boatyard and living museum as well as a training facility for the next generation of shipwright and marine-service technicians. Apprentices here learn paint and brightwork techniques, woodworking, fiberglassing, proper tool use, marine mechanical and electrical repair and installation, and now traditional and modern rigging.

"**This past year**, for the first time since her latest rebuild in 2014, **FREDA's spars and rigging** were removed for a thorough, **once-a-decade rig inspection** and upgrade. Although some of her galvanized wire standing rigging was still in good condition, the service used was not; other splices and seizings required replacement as well. I was brought in to perform the necessary work and **pass along skills** and techniques to **yard apprentices and FREDA's volunteers**.

"Her ½″ 6×7 galvanized-wire lower shrouds had the old, dried-out synthetic seaman's yarn and friction tape stripped off. Spun polypropylene seaman's yarn is a good product, provided it is regularly tarred—which this wasn't. The wire was inspected, then thoroughly rubbed down with raw linseed oil followed by a coating of pure lanolin. Hemp and cotton strips were used for parceling, which was then tarred with the proper Stockholm tar. The service used was No. 42 tarred three-strand nylon seine twine, which should hold up better than the polypropylene used earlier.

"**New wire** for the headstays, bowsprit guys, bobstays, and upper shrouds was all proper galvanized 6x7 wire from Hamilton Marine in Maine. It was hand-spliced, parceled, and served as necessary, using the same material as on the lower shrouds.

"**Blocks were reconditioned and replaced** as needed. New rope strops were made of spun polyester or Vintage 3 Strand from New England Ropes, then parceled and served (and leathered in some chafe areas) and the blocks seized in, using heavier-gauge seine twine.

"The Spaulding Center had a stock of Hempex cordage laid in from when FREDA was last rerigged, so we used it for new running rigging. Splices were served with new synthetic seaman's yarn from Europroducts, then tarred. (The running rigging will be replaced much more frequently than the standing rigging, so we felt confident using the polypropylene service here).

"**The mast**, probably made by Harold Sommer in the 1960s, was **still in excellent condition**. The bowsprit was dated back at least to the 1920s; photographs from that era showed that fittings were no longer present but plugs and graving pieces matched those still extant. Some new graving pieces were needed in this round of work. Two new steel chainplates were made to match the old ones, then galvanized and installed.

In addition to working with Spaulding Center volunteers, Andersen taught an "Understanding your Rig" class at the center in January and hopes to start an apprenticeship program for traditional riggers there.

Courtney J. Andersen, Rigger, P.O. Box 150283, San Rafael, CA 94915; 914–649–0713; www.courtneyjohnandersen.com.

COURTNEY J. ANDERSEN (BOTH)

LAUREN PRESSLER

***Above*—The iconic San Francisco Bay yacht FREDA has had her rig thoroughly overhauled. *Left inset*—Courtney J. Andersen (left) led the project, working with apprentices, among them Falipa Lilias (right). *Right inset*—Andersen teaches traditional rigging at the Spaulding Marine Center in Sausalito and hopes to start an apprenticeship program there.**

HAVEN BOATWORKS (ALL THREE)

***Above left*—In January, CORSAIR II, a 1926 50-footer designed by Leigh Coolidge, had a new engine installed as part of this season's work at Haven Boatworks in Port Townsend, Washington. *Above right*—After previous years of hull and systems work, COMRADE, a 38′ H.C. Hanson–designed yacht of 1930, had her foredeck renewed this season. *Right*—The Ted Geary–designed schooner RED JACKET of 1920 has had significant hull work done this year, including extensive sawn- and steam-bent frame replacements.**

■ **Haven Boatworks** in **Port Townsend**, **Washington**, has had a full house of large yachts this winter, with the most extensive work involving two large powerboats and a classic schooner.

CORSAIR II, a 50′ × 11′6″ power cruiser designed by Leigh Coolidge and built at the Martinac Shipyard in Tacoma, Washington, in 1926 was hauled out in September 2025 and is expected to relaunch in April. Installations have included a new horn timber, new floor timbers, new frames, and a significant amount of planking. In addition, "we reframed most of the foredeck and all of the afterdeck, then laid a 1¼″-thick teak deck over that," Holly said.

Her Ford Lehman **diesel engine** was replaced with a new 192-hp **Yanmar VLV turbo diesel**. Also, the original chain-and-cable steering has been replaced with a hydraulic system. The canvas sheathing on the cabin and pilothouse has been redone, and covering boards were added to both to add integral handholds at their edges. "We have **scanned the boat inside and out** to generate **CAD models**, and this winter, we will use these to aid in **designing a new flying bridge**, using Honduras mahogany that we've squirreled away for just the right project," he said. New deck furniture is in the works as well. Next season, the computer models will come into play again during planning for interior renovations.

"The very best part of working on CORSAIR II, however, has been getting to know the owners," Holly said. "They are relatively young but have the eye and the appetite for classic old things; we see them as the vanguard of the next generation of stewards for these classic boats."

The **schooner** now in the yard is **RED JACKET**, 62′ LOD, designed by Ted Geary and built at Blanchard Boat Building Co. in 1920. "A new owner has had us attack the foundation of the boat," Holly reports. The hull is framed with every fourth frame double-sawn, but one unusual feature is that the scantlings of the sawn frames, 2¾″ × 2½″ are the same as the intermediate steam-bent frames. The **reframing** has matched the original pattern, using **purpleheart** instead of oak for the **sawn frames** and **white oak** for the **steam-bent** ones. In addition to new purpleheart floor timbers, some welded steel floors have been installed to reinforce the hull's construction. The necessary **replanking** will be done with **Port Orford cedar**. "We bought a few logs of Port Orford cedar a few years ago with this project in mind," Holly said, "so we have nice, dry planking stock to work with."

COMRADE, a 38′ powerboat built to an H.C. Hanson design in 1930 at the Vic Franck yard in Seattle, was also in Haven's yard for the latest of several rounds of intensive work. This season, the refit focused on **installing a new foredeck** using marine plywood over a base layer of tongue-and-groove western red cedar followed by a top sheathing of fiberglass cloth set in epoxy. Such deck structures are often favored to keep fresh water from reaching the hull and deck structures and also to increase torsional strength.

In 2019, Haven Boatworks repowered COMRADE with a new 56-hp Yanmar 4JH diesel and replaced the entire electrical system. In 2021, work focused on the hull, with a new stem and horn timber of purpleheart, a complete reframing with steam-bent white oak, and a thorough replanking. "Every plank is new western red cedar," Holly said.

Haven Boatworks is known for regularly maintaining some of Puget Sound's best-known large yachts, one of which, the **100′ motor yacht MALIBU**, designed by Ted Geary and launched in 1926 at Blanchard Boat Building Co., was hauled out for regular maintenance. This year, that has included replacing a few planks. "The planks are 3″-thick Douglas-fir and taper to 2″ thickness to take that awful twist back at the fantail," Holly said.

Haven Boatworks, 775 Haines Pl., P.O. Box 4130, Port Townsend, WA 98368; 360–385–5727; www.havenboatworks.com.

■ "With the start of 2026, we are **tearing into a boat** of the one-design class of the Thousand Islands Yacht Club, better **known as a Number Boat**," proprietor **Reuben Smith** writes from **Tumblehome Boatshop** in **Warrensburg**, **New York**. "Designed by Charles Mower, then of Bowes and Mower of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, and built by Leyare Boatyard on the St. Lawrence River in Ogdensburg, New York, these are the **first one-design motorboat class** (see WB No. 220). They were built to the Corinthian philosophy that the boat should be a good family day boat during the week and then raced by their owners on weekends. Twenty of these boats built for the 1910 season became treasured by the Thousand Island families that were lucky enough to own one.

"The **restoration of No. 19**, begun 15 or so years ago at a different boatshop, for 10 years had been awaiting the right customer for completion at Tumblehome. She will be **powered by a Wisconsin T-head**, a marinized version of the engine in the earliest Stutz Bearcat car. This engine **makes 40 hp at 1,000 rpm** and will push the sleek and lightweight hull along at just over 20 mph.

"Also in the shop is the **1926**, **30′ Fay & Bowen runabout SEQUOIA**. She has been **completely rebuilt** with all-new backbone timbers, nearly all-new steam-bent frames, new

deckbeams, and about 70 percent of the planking replaced. She is awaiting the correct model Fay & Bowen engine, the LNS43, which we are rebuilding this winter. The engine project has been about as involved as the hull. It turns out there is a **wonderful guild of antique engine craftsmen** that's not unlike the wooden-boat community—with the exception that these mechanics tend to be known for particular skills, like iron stitching, babbitt scraping, or magneto rebuilding. Working with them has been a revelation of another world of arcane skills and amazing dedication. Restoring wooden boats requires careful research, and the ability to be patient and particular, even while managing frustration with repairs done beforehand; working with antique engines is very much the same.

"But the experience of running these boats with their proper engines is incredible. The low-rpm engines have loads of torque and feel as if they're just loafing even when the boat is being pushed right along. With these easily driven hulls, they're also remarkably efficient.

"We are **also in the midst of restoring a 1936 GarWood utility** and just **completing the restoration of a 1937 Chris-Craft utility**. Both of these boats have new bottoms—including frames, keel, and chine logs—and have had much, much more work done to them. Along with our seasonal work, and other smaller projects, we've got our hands full this year."

Reuben Smith's Tumblehome Boatshop, 684 State Route 28, Warrensburg, NY 12885; 518–623–5050; www.tumblehomeboats.com.

One of 20 so-called Number Boats of the Thousand Islands Yacht Club is under restoration at Reuben Smith's Tumblehome Boatshop in Warrensburg, New York. The boat, built in 1910, will be powered by a reconditioned Wisconsin T-head, gasoline engine.

REUBEN SMITH (BOTH)

■ **Darling's Boatworks** in **Charlotte, Vermont**, is completing a structural **rebuild of the 44′ yawl KINNSHIP**. "Originally named SANTA MARIA, she was designed by the naval architect Francis Kinney in 1966 for his family's personal use," the proprietor Sam Darling reports. "She was built in 1967 by the Walsteds Baadeværft yard in Thurø, Denmark. The boat, which had been renamed GESTURE, was purchased by a grandson of Kinney's, Kevin Duffy, who has changed her name to KINNSHIP.

"In July 2022, Kevin had the boat trucked to Darling's Boatworks, where she was inspected and scheduled for a **reconstruction** that **began in summer 2025**. Local shipwright Rob Thompson (see WB No. 307) was hired to assist with the rebuild and work alongside the crew at Darling's Boatworks.

"Built to high standards by the Walsteds yard, the hull's laminated white-oak frames had failed, along with the laminated mahogany backbone. In our research of these problems, we heard of other Walsteds boats from the same era with similar glue failures. A casein-based glue was likely used in construction of the backbone and frames. According to Kinney's notes on the construction details, the mahogany double-planking was epoxy-glued, which maintained the structural integrity of the hull.

"Our work began with the removal of the interior to provide access to the frames, followed by removal of the lead ballast keel and deadwood stack. To provide access, the carvel planking was removed from the garboards up to where it was rabbeted to the double-planking. Replacement of the structural keel was considered, but since no rot was detected, we determined that the laminates could be epoxy-glued. Old glue residue was removed and the wood was allowed to thoroughly dry. Following the glue-up of the keel, sternpost, and internal deadwood knee lamination, work began on the **replacement of 46 pairs of laminated white-oak frames** glued with G/flex epoxy. To maintain the stability and shape of the hull, as each new pair of frames is installed, the next pair is being patterned, removed, and replaced. Many of the floors are cast bronze, so only two wooden floor timbers needed to be replaced.

"In addition to the structural repairs on the hull, the owner has requested other upgrades. The present sloop **rig will be changed back to the yawl rig** that Kinney designed, with modernizations by Adam Langerman of Langerman Design in Bristol, Rhode Island. The Westerbeke auxiliary engine will be replaced with a new 50-hp Beta diesel. We are designing a new 24V electrical system, and all of the yacht's systems will be replaced.

DARLING'S BOATWORKS

***Above left*—Darling's Boatworks in Vermont is rebuilding the 44' yawl KINNSHIP, including regluing delaminated centerline timbers. *Above right*—Forty-six frame pairs were replaced with new ones of white oak laminated with G/flex epoxy.**

TONY GILBERT (BOTH)

***Above*—Michael Brolly of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, reconceived his Iain Oughtred–designed St. Ayles Skiff as a mobile stringed instrument. *Right*—The strings are secured to the new laminated stemhead dragon with geared tuners of the type used for double-bass instruments.**

"We're hoping the repairs may be completed in time for a **launching**, **sea trials**, and **systems checks** on Lake Champlain during the **2026 sailing season**; Kevin's future plans are for a return to saltwater cruising."

Darling's Boatworks, 821 Ferry Rd., Charlotte, VT 05445; 802–425–2004; www.darlingsboatworks.com.

Offcuts

■ Most of us think of boatbuilding as something of an art, but it's unusual to think of art as something like a boat. Exhibit A in this issue is the report at the top of this column about the Spanish surrealist painter Salvador Dalí's choice long ago to plant a cypress tree in a traditional boat of the Catalan coast. We hear of another artist's eccentric use of a boat via the writer Tony Gilbert, a recent transplant to **Pennsylvania** from San Francisco who visited **Michael Brolly** in **Bethlehem** to see how he **repurposed his Iain Oughtred–designed St. Ayles Skiff**.

"Michael's wooden boat, SEPHIRA, bobs along in a gentle sea offshore, stopping for a moment to 'speak' with whales using what might be the world's most **eccentric musical instrument**. He modified his sturdy 22′ double-ender so that the boat can act like a **giant floating harp or guitar**, with eight wires stretched between the stem and the after hood ends of several planks. The wires can be tuned and calibrated to have the boat communicate as a stringed instrument.

"'The idea for SEPHIRA was first inspired with a visit to the New Bedford Whaling Museum in Massachusetts,' Brolly told me. 'There were recordings of the whales talking to each other, which were mesmerizing. But underlying the whole thing was the monumental

slaughter of millions and millions of sentient, intelligent beings. I was inspired to build the boat at the museum, but first I had to learn how to build a boat.'

"He was already an acclaimed wood artist; his MFA is from the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth (see www.michaeljbrolly.com). But because he hadn't built a boat before, he started off by looking to *WoodenBoat* for guidance. **He built SEPHIRA in 2012** with the help of Bethlehem students, and that year it made a splash at The WoodenBoat Show at Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut. In 2013, it even competed at the St. Ayles Skiff World Championships rowing regatta in Scotland. With the 2020 pandemic interruptions and other projects demanding Brolly's attention, SEPHIRA's use declined and she fell into disrepair.

"**In 2025**, Brolly set out to **repair the boat**, with the help of volunteers, at the JuxtaHub 'maker's space' near his home. 'I refurbished the wood, reconnected the frames, and added some fiberglass in spots,' he said. A dramatic addition was finding a way to attach new strings to make the boat an instrument and devising a way to tune them. He added **curved laminations to the stem**, including six ¼"-thick mahogany veneers along the forward edge, to create a high, curving piece topped with a dragon's head to serve as a pegbox for the string tuners. 'I fitted **tuners from a double-bass** at the head of the dragon, but it proved too hard to be up there tuning while under way. So, I put piano tuners where the strings are connected to the hull aft. That way, one person can tune the boat while one or two musicians play the strings. I also invented a way to detach the strings easily for transport and racing.'

"Through vibration and song, the boat delivers what Michael calls a message of conservation and harmony."

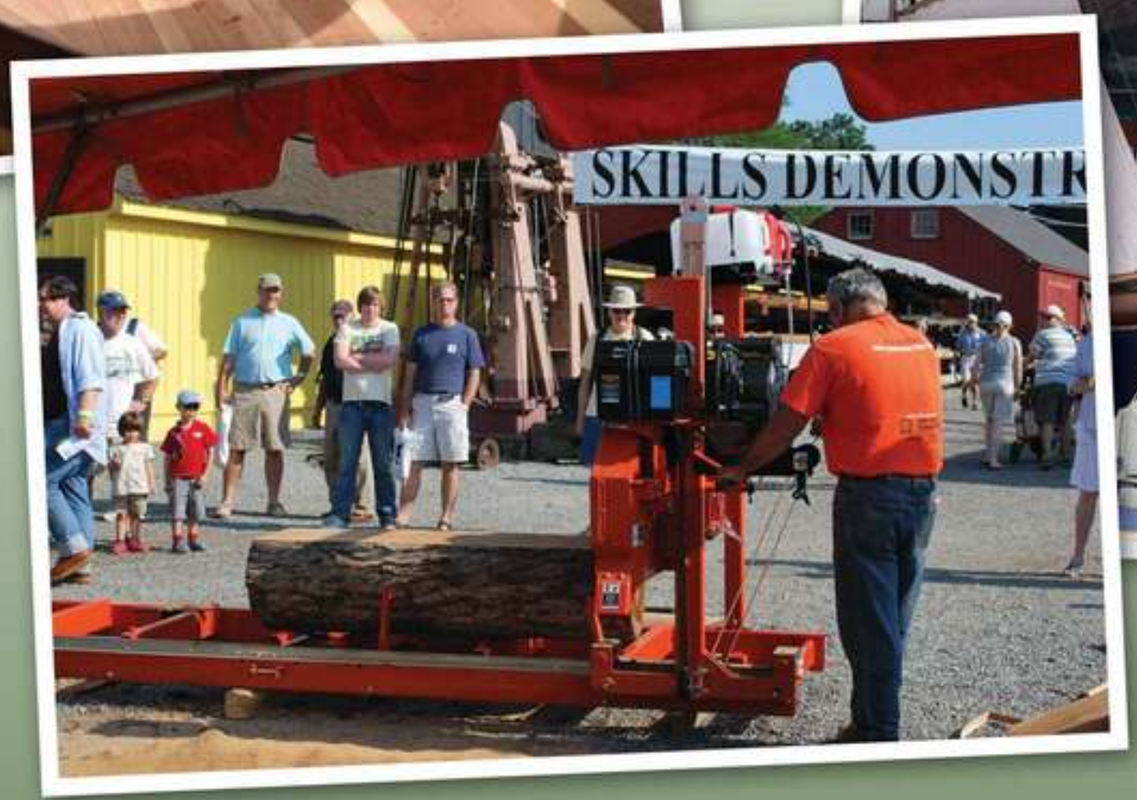
■ **Douglas Brooks**, the Vermont boatbuilder who for many years has made a specialty of traditional Japanese boatbuilding, has **expanded his repertoire** to include a **six-day class** he will teach at the Mt. Fuji Wood Culture Society facilities in Kawaguchiko, west of **Tokyo**. "It is a first for me," Brooks wrote, "but I've got a couple of other woodworking schools in Japan talking to me about future classes, and I am even thinking of establishing my own class workshop in Japan."

The class, scheduled for May (but already filled), is for boatbuilders hoping to learn the Japanese techniques Brooks has written about extensively. In 2019, Brooks and other apprentices worked alongside the last builder of a Shinano river boat in Niigata, on the main island of Honshu's central west coast, and the May class will focus on building a boat of that same design.

Brooks is also **planning** what will be his **10th apprenticeship** working alongside boatbuilders **in Japan**, many of them aging out of the craft and leaving no successors. This time, he'll work on the final boat being built by Hirofumi Tenkyou in the Hiroshima region. Tenkyou builds a type of boat that has been used for centuries in Japan for what is known as cormorant fishing, which involves the use of trained and tethered cormorants to capture fish from rivers. It's an ancient technique, known elsewhere in the world but surviving only in Japan and parts of China, and it is quickly being displaced by modern methods. The project will involve not only building but documenting the construction techniques for a type of boat that is on the verge of disappearing forever.

A raise of the pint and tip of the hat to him, if you please.

Douglas Brooks, 84 S. Maple St., Vergennes, VT 05491; 802–877–3289; www.douglasbrooksboatbuilding.com.



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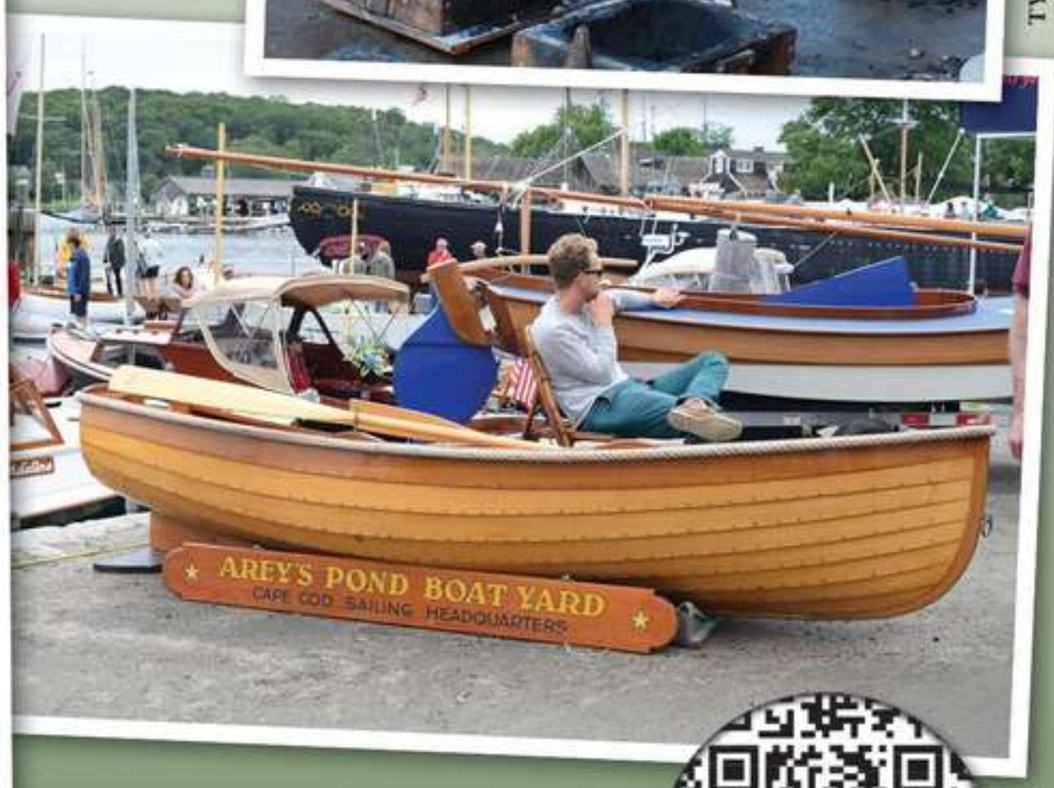

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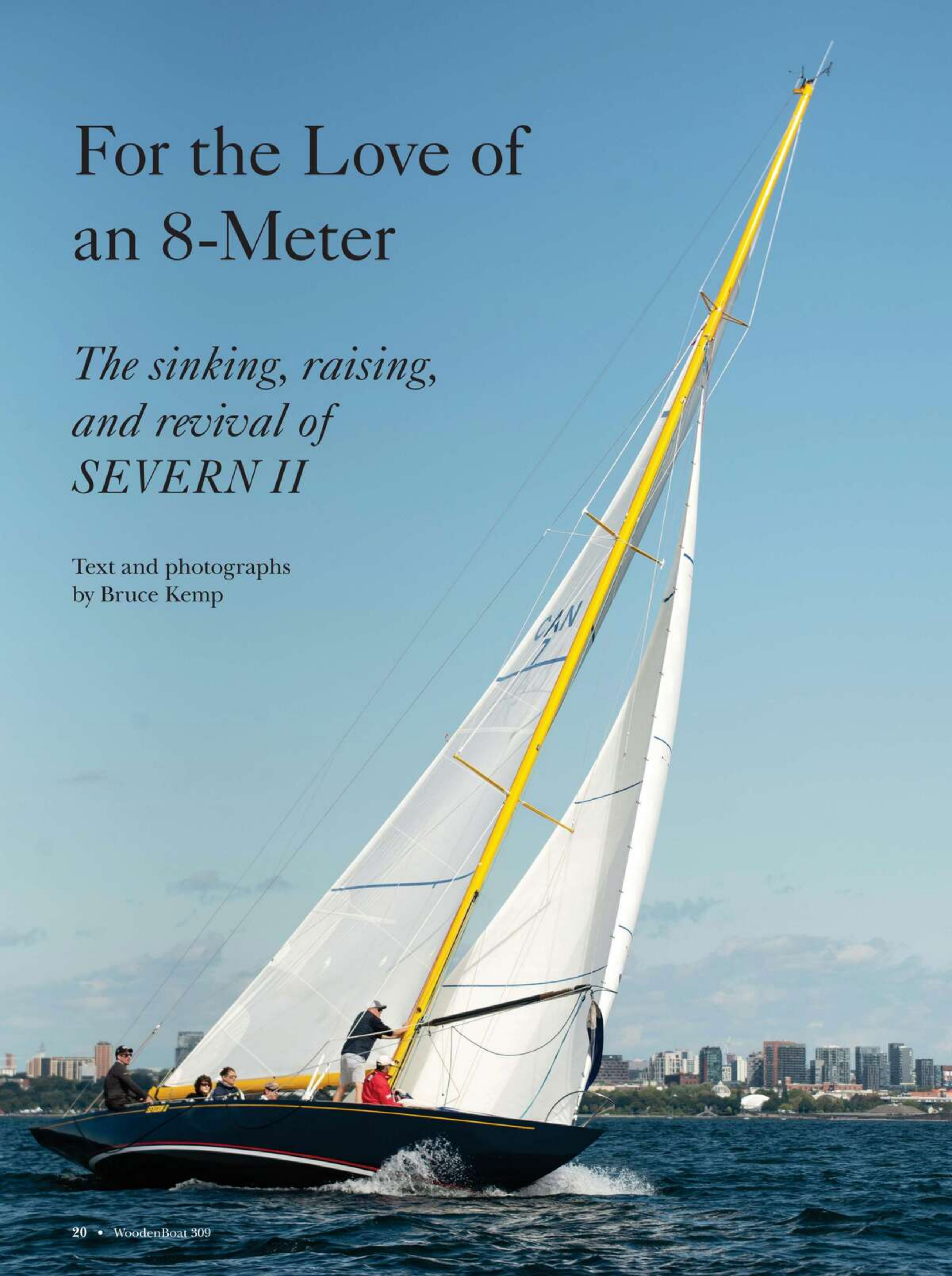
For the Love of an 8-Meter

The sinking, raising, and revival of SEVERN II

Text and photographs
by Bruce Kemp



In late spring 2023, Steve Reid, the Ontario, Canada-based owner and skipper of the modern 8-Meter-class sloop YQUEM, was forced, while racing, into a series of fast maneuvers off Toronto Islands that resulted in a collision that sank the historic 8-Meter SEVERN II. Although the event was traumatic for all involved, nobody was hurt, and the recovery that followed was remarkable.

It was a brilliant day with winds gusting between 15 and 20 knots; the seas were lumpy but not concerning. "The collision," Reid recalled two months later, "was probably the result of a whole bunch of things that started going wrong." The boats were on the first downwind leg of a double windward-leeward course. "We were hot on the heels of LAFAYETTE—another modern 'glass 8-Meter—and we'd been battling with them the whole downwind leg."

LAFAYETTE was heading for the downwind turning mark but apparently mistook the finish mark—positioned in the same area of the course—for the turning mark and went for that instead. "All of a sudden, we realized that the [turning mark] was actually now upwind of us. So, we quickly got rid of the chute and turned the boat around."

When YQUEM arrived at the mark, she was crowded in with another fleet and had to dodge and weave, eventually jibing. The jibe left Reid and his crew in a mess and working feverishly to bring the main in and get the boat into upwind trim. It took 10 critical seconds while they were on port tack. "I've counted it out on the video of the accident. We were concentrating on getting the boat going and didn't even see SEVERN II coming across on starboard." SEVERN II was steered by her owner, Cedric Gyles Jr.

YQUEM was forced to sail by the lee to get around the mark. They jibed around to start going upwind on port tack. "In a normal situation, there wouldn't be a boat coming from that area—but there they were. We saw them a second before the impact. At that point we really couldn't do anything. If we'd headed up, we'd have still got hit, and if we'd borne off, we'd have hit him head on. We were trapped. That's how the collision happened."

Reid thinks the two boats came together at a 70-degree angle. As SEVERN II crashed into YQUEM, her bow rode up to the point where Reid could see her boottop well above YQUEM's gunwale. SEVERN II glanced down the side of YQUEM's cabin. Then SEVERN II's stem hit YQUEM's big three-speed Lewmar winch and sheared it off.

***Opposite and above*—The 8-Meter-class sloop SEVERN II was designed by Alfred Mylne and built by Bute Slip & Dock Co. in Scotland in 1934. A mid-race collision in 2023 sent her to the bottom of Lake Ontario. After a delicate and carefully planned recovery, she was refurbished and relaunched last year.**

ERIC ROGERS/TORONTO DRYDOCK (BOTH)

Left—**SEVERN II settled upright into the lake's bottom sediment. An inspection of the wreck by remotely operated vehicle revealed that the gooseneck could provide an ideal lifting point for the recovery.** ***Left bottom***—**Late in the evening of July 29, 2023, 11 days after the sinking, SEVERN II was raised to the surface, towed to a nearby marina, and then trucked 108 miles to Thornbury, on Georgian Bay, for repairs.**

To compound the difficulties caused by the collision, YQUEM's leeward running backstay, which had been fully run out, snagged SEVERN II's bow. "So now SEVERN II was trapped between our lower runner and as they slid back, that took up the tension on the runner." YQUEM's mast then came down on SEVERN II, and Reid recalls that one of his crew dove below to fetch a pair of bolt cutters to cut loose the forestay, which had looped around SEVERN II.

Untangling the boats took a few minutes, distracting the crews from a more serious problem. On SEVERN II, Ced Gyles didn't notice the intake of water right away. "I think, unfortunately, it was too late by the time we realized it. We started the engine, and it stalled as the water rose up and over it."

YQUEM's mast was in two pieces. Reid's crew recovered both sections but couldn't free the mainsail from the mast track. A Canadian Coast Guard Rescue boat towed the crippled YQUEM back to her home base at the Etobicoke Yacht Club about 5 miles southwest of Toronto Harbour, where they had to hoist the mast, rig, and sail in one piece to set it on the lawn before it could be sorted.

The Sinking

"Both boats certainly would have been doing 6+ knots," John Gyles said when I went to see SEVERN II, mid-repair, in his shop in Thornbury, Ontario. He is Ced's brother, and maintains the boat. "Trying to get a time frame out of anybody is going to be next to impossible, only because of the fact they were so preoccupied. I think the people on SEVERN II were so busy trying to separate the boats, they didn't realize they'd been holed." Pointing to a 1′-long slash just above the waterline on the starboard side, John said, "By the time they figured out what was going on, there was so much water in the boat this would have been underwater."

SEVERN II's 2,000-gallon-per-hour automatic bilge pump's 1⅛″ hose was insufficient to deal with the flooding. "It's pretty significant," John said. "The only thing that probably slowed it down a bit was YQUEM's genoa car was wedged in the hole."

As SEVERN II began to settle, the crew was picked up by other boats. "They had time to grab what they needed to and get off the boat," John said. "My nephew, Will, had to be virtually dragged off. He was not going to let her go. He was bailing in a panic but obviously couldn't keep up." Finally, SEVERN II was awash and gently pitched forward as she sank. The lake is 189′ deep at the collision site, and the yacht touched down with a gentle landing into 4′ of muck. The only substantial damage from the landing was to the rudder.

"The bottom was a lot softer than we anticipated," John said. "Everybody expected her to hit a hard bottom and fall over—or shove the keel up through the bottom of the boat. There's no evidence of that. She was up to her waterline in mud." The sinking took place on Saturday, June 17, 2023. There was a lot of video footage of the event, and it was aired by national and international news outlets. Before leaving the boat, the crew recorded the coordinates of the sinking, which proved fortuitous.

SEVERN II and the Canadian 8-Meter Class

On Lake Ontario, the 8-Meters NORSEMAN (left) and BANGALORE (right) flank SEVERN II on the starting line

SEVERN II belongs to a fleet of International Rule 8-Meters based in the western end of Lake Ontario. The most widely known International Rule classes are 6-Meters, 8-Meters, and 12-Meters; boats designed to the rule adhere to a set of parameters that a designer balances to create a particular hull shape. While most of the boats built for the Great Lakes fleet were conceived for light air, SEVERN II was developed for the heavier sea and weather conditions of the North Sea, where she was built. This makes her a superb boat for racing on the lakes in the spring and fall, when the winds are strong.

SEVERN II was designed by the Scottish designer Alfred Mylne and built for Sir Lionel (George) Preston, Fourth Sea Lord, by the Bute Slip Dock on the River Clyde. Mylne had opened his shop in 1896, and a decade later became a major influence on the development of the International Rule, having designed the highly successful 19-Meter OCTAVIA, a string of 15-Meters, and SEVERN II. (There was already an 8-Meter, SEVERN, sailing in the United Kingdom, so when SEVERN II slipped down the ways in 1934 she was formally christened SEVERN II OF ARDMALEISH to prevent confusion.)

She came out of the gate to win the prestigious Coupe de France as Great Britain's contender in 1935. For nearly four more decades, she was dominant on the Clyde and around the British Isles; her long career was interrupted by World War II, when all racing was put on hold.

The 8-Meter class flourished in Canada after the 1930 Canada's Cup series, when the Rochester Yacht Club fielded three new 8-Meters for the event: CAYUGA, CONEWAGO, and THISBE. The RCYC offered QUEST as the challenger. The series went to Rochester's THISBE, which still sails today under the stewardship of RCYC's Dick Mitchele and his family.

SEVERN II remained competitive in Scotland until 1975, when RCYC's Steve Cameron brought her to Canada. Cameron didn't keep her long; he sold her to two other club members, Cedric Gyles Sr. and Dan Molloy. Gyles had come to the RCYC from the Royal Vancouver Yacht Club on the West Coast, where he owned a Universal Rule R-Boat and an 8-Meter named CONCERTO. When Gyles moved his family to Toronto, THISBE, QUEST, VISION, and VENTURE were racing there under the RCYC burgee. Gyles, in an effort to revitalize the fleet, bought NORSEMAN from an American owner and brought her to the club. He also bought the 8-Meter BANGALORE on Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts, when she was close to being fed to the chainsaw.

Bryan Gooderham, a helmsman eagerly sought after to drive boats for various owners, grew up with the class. His father, Bill, was an early proponent of the class and skippered the William Fife III–designed QUEST in the 1930s Canada's Cup events. The younger Gooderham is often described in 8-Meter circles as the "winningest skipper" in the class. Since 1984, he has won three world championships, four North Americans, and eight Sira Cups—the pinnacle 8-Meter award.

"These are tactical boats requiring you to think-ahead," he said. "They are bigger and slower to turn [than more modern boats], so you have to play the long game and commit to the plan. Making a lot of small quick maneuvers just isn't as easy as in more modern designs, and sometimes it's impossible. A lot of tactical thinking goes into trying to ensure you've got yourself set up in the right place on the start line, and the same up the racecourse."

The 8-Meter class still has legs. Its website currently lists 192 registered boats. Europeans are buying and restoring classics from the 1920s and '30s. Toronto regularly hosts the 8-Meter World Championship, with boats coming from across North America and Europe, and in the interim, they race locally in the Lake Ontario Racing Council and Lake Yacht Racing Association events. New ones are being designed, and more vintage boats await restoration.

—BK

***Above left*—John Gyles, the brother of SEVERN II's owner, Ced Gyles, managed the yacht's repairs at his Thornbury shop. *Above right, top*—SEVERN II's sinking was the result of a 1'-long gash just above the waterline; immediately after the accident, the severity of the flooding went unnoticed until the hole was underwater and the boat was destined to sink. *Above right, bottom*—Eleven days of immersion resulted in water penetration that caused varnish failure on the cabin trunk sides. The boat required thorough and careful drying.**

Raising the Boat

SEVERN II was raised 11 days after she sank, late in the night of June 29. Discussion of how to recover her centered on lifting by the gooseneck because of her position in the muck. John Gyles, who was ready to oversee the restoration, called in the naval architect Steve Killing, who was able to give Eric Rogers enough weight and buoyancy information to formulate a lifting strategy; Rogers owns Toronto Drydock, the company hired to raise the boat.

Killing thought she would come off the bottom bow-up at a 30-degree angle if she were hoisted by the gooseneck. "Success depended on how the gooseneck was attached," he said. "SEVERN II's gooseneck was fastened with 10, 5⁄16″ bolts. The aluminum mast sits in a slotted aluminum step and the mast heel has a tenon that fits into the slot.

"It was a technically very challenging operation for us," Rogers said. He, like a lot of Toronto Harbour denizens, is a second-generation mariner. His father, Norm Rogers, owned and operated Toronto Drydock Ltd. beginning in 1989. "With SEVERN II being a wooden boat, there isn't a lot of weight to it underwater," he said. Killing conservatively calculated the boat's underwater weight at 15,000 lbs, and determined that the gooseneck would take that weight. Out of the water, she weighed approximately 21,000 lbs. When Toronto Drydock lifted her, the crane's scale never ticked above 10,000 lbs, not even as the boat broke the suction of the mud.

There was much concern over whether the running backstay was on; without it, the mast would not be secure. The photographs of the sinking boat suggested that the stay was engaged—as did the presence of a handle in its winch. Despite this encouraging detail, "it was very much touch and go," Rogers said. "It's always a little bit of a guess. We also had to decide whether the lift would compromise the [hull] structure."

Boats don't often sink straight down. Currents, waves, and the changing trim of the boat can send it scurrying in all sorts of directions before it hits bottom. Rogers contacted Orange Force Marine, a company specializing in hydrographic and bathymetric surveys for underwater exploration. Their role was to find the boat on the bottom. "While we had an initial indication of where the vessel went down," said Derek

***Above*—To prepare for deck repairs, the boat was stripped of hardware and fittings. *Right*—John Gyles surmises that the rudder likely hit the bottom first, because it suffered significant damage. The lake bottom, however, generally provided a soft, cushioned landing.**

Niles, president of Orange Force Marine, "nobody knew exactly where it was sitting. For Eric to move his barge and lifting equipment directly overhead to raise the vessel, we had to find it first."

Orange Force Marine used side-scan sonar to pinpoint the yacht. They started with a rectangular search grid. Each pass of the sonar emitter—the so-called "tow fish"—covered about 300′ on each side of its course. Because SEVERN II's crew had the presence of mind to log the coordinates before leaving the boat, Orange Force found the yacht within 45 minutes of starting the search.

They then deployed the recovery tug RADIUM YELLOW KNIFE. Once the tug was in position, Niles launched his remotely operated vehicle (ROV) to inspect the boat to determine how she was lying. Although SEVERN II was within technical diving range, the cost of bringing in professional divers would have been prohibitive. So, with the yacht located, Rogers's crew devised a plan. First, an ROV-mounted pole was used to fish a messenger line across the boat, from one side to the other, below the boom. The ROV then maneuvered to the opposite side and grabbed the line with its manipulator arm and rose to the surface with it. "The goal was to 'choke' the mast," Alex Gold told me, "essentially putting a big slipknot [around it] then gently hauling up with a crane."

It sounds simple, but there were complications caused by the tangle of loose lines surrounding SEVERN II. "It ended up taking quite a bit longer than we anticipated to get the line threaded properly. It isn't easy to lasso something entangled by ropes and wire rigging"—especially from a boat that is rocking and rolling as waves on Lake Ontario were beginning to build. "We were very lucky she sank upright, as this meant we could get right to the bottom of the mast and minimize any damage."

Next, a heavier line, ¾″ in diameter, was spliced onto the messenger line and sent back down. It was successfully pulled through the maze of obstacles. Finally, the 4″-diameter lifting line was rigged, which proved challenging because the gooseneck had a very narrow V-shape through which it had to pass, and the two splices connecting the ¾″ and 4″ lines would jam in it—as well as catch in the loose rigging lying about on the deck. Further complicating the process, the lines, and especially the 4″ lifting line, were so buoyant the ROV couldn't pull them down to pass below the boom. The salvage crew eventually weighted the lines with large shackles. When they finally passed the 4″ line below the gooseneck, it got tangled in the

Spots of delamination in the deck were repaired and then faired into the surrounding areas before the entire deck was refinished.

In early July 2025, the newly refurbished SEVERN II was trucked back to Lake Ontario for relaunching.

rigging strewn on deck and Gold had to start this part of the operation over again. "We made another attempt to pass the line below the gooseneck but picked up a sheet on the deck." They finally solved the problem by tensioning the fixed end of the 4″ line that led to the surface, giving a better angle of pull. The large line then passed through, and the shackle-weights allowed Gold to tighten the slipknot on the mast. This phase of the operation took almost eight hours.

They then carefully raised her with a deck-mounted crane over the course of three hours, the crane operator continually adjusting the rate of ascent because the seas were starting to build. Because SEVERN II was in 189′ of water, and the crane had a lift of only 60′, the lifting gear had to be reset three times. The crane's cable was attached to the 4″-diameter line with a basket hitch. When the crane cable reached its maximum lift, the lifting line was tied off to a bollard on the barge to suspend the yacht while the tackle was reset lower down on the lifting line. It was a slow process.

"We brought SEVERN just to the point where the bow was going to break the surface." Rogers said. Then they stopped, because when a salvaged boat breaks the surface, the apparent weight increases. This was a critical point in the operation. "It was getting close to midnight. We used the ROV to rig another messenger line to pull a sling around the stern of the yacht" so a second crane could balance the final lift.

The salvage team placed four, 2″ submersible electric pumps aboard SEVERN II when her gunwales broke the surface. Dewatering took an hour. And then, at the end of a very long day, the salvors were able to lash the yacht to their tug and set off for Marina Quay West on Toronto Harbour. The following morning, SEVERN II was towed to Outer Harbour Marina, where she was hauled and loaded onto a truck for transport to Thornbury on Georgian Bay, where John Gyles operates Gyles Sails and Marine.

Repairing and Relaunching the Boat

The hole from the collision was substantial. Several frames in the bow were damaged but not broken, and big chunks of the stem were gouged out. "As we replaced the planks that were damaged, we also replaced the collision-damaged ribs. Then we found other areas that needed some new planking, so some of it was general maintenance work as well."

Aside from the evident damage forward, there was a lot of cleanup to do; the yacht was on the bottom long enough for a significant amount of mud to accumulate.

SEVERN II sat outside John Gyles's shop for two weeks as his work crew cleared everything out. "We vacuumed as much debris as we could, then hosed her down while applying a cleanser." They also scrubbed the entire inside of the boat. In October 2023, she moved into the shop.

Damaged planks and frames were replaced. The bottom planking was remarkably dry despite the sinking; John had splined and epoxy-coated it in 1995, and by careful storage and humidity control, this treatment had maintained a dry and stable structure in the ensuing years of service. The topside planking, however, was saturated with moisture and its splined seams were compromised. The Awlgrip topside finish showed some signs of bubbling. Stripping her of hardware and

SEVERN II rejoined the fleet midway through the 2025 season.

The restored yacht's hull, said Ced Gyles, took on just a shot glass of water upon relaunching—likely through the rudder's stuffing box.

fittings took the repairwork into the winter of 2024. They began replacing splines in March 2024 and finished two months later.

The topside seams were opened with a circular saw, leaving a ⅛″ kerf. These were filled with thickened epoxy that was poured into tubes and injected with a caulking gun. Then a mahogany spline was pushed into the epoxy-filled seam. With the splining operation completed, the hull was given a final fairing.

There were spots of delamination in the deck and coachroof plywood. To repair these, John ground away the fiberglass sheathing in these areas, cut out the damage with saws and routers, but left ¼″ of solid plywood as a base. He then laminated new plywood sections into the deck and coachroof and re-sheathed them in 10-oz cloth set in epoxy. He faired the damaged sections before repainting them with non-skid Awlgrip.

The engine and its electrical components suffered the most from the sinking. John has re-installed the Westerbeke gas engine after a thorough overhaul. SEVERN II has minimal electronics. The engine instruments, navigation lights, battery, VHF, and navigation instrument package have all been replaced. John also replaced the aluminum mast.

Around noon on July 4, 2025, SEVERN II rolled into the parking lot of Toronto's Outer Harbour Marina. She had made the 108-mile (175-kilometer) trip from Thornbury on a heavy-lift trailer. Launch day had been scheduled for the start of the 2025 season, but a slow turnaround in installing the overhauled engine bumped the date into midsummer. She gleamed in the morning sun and her brand new, deep-blue Awlgrip paint was so stunning it almost hurt the eyes. After launching she was towed to the Royal Canadian Yacht Club's island facility, where she was rigged for sea trials. This gave sailmaker Hugh Beaton the opportunity to tune the rig to accommodate the newly stiffened hull and test a new jib that replaced the one ruined in the sinking.

"The boat has been doing really, really well," Ced Gyles Jr. told me in early September. "For the Royal Weekend it finished second in a photo finish. It was a matter of inches. Otherwise, we would have won that series. When SEVERN was relaunched, she took in less than a shot glass of water and I attributed that to the rudder stuffing box, which I soon tightened up. After not being in the water for two years, and all she took in was a shot glass of water, makes me totally believe in the process that we do."

Bruce Kemp is a regular contributor to WoodenBoat. *He has written about a range of topics, from the AMERICA's Cup to voyages through the Northwest Passage to fine dining in Europe. He lives in Ontario, Canada.*

Aging with a Boat

LAWRENCE W. CHEEK

Simplify, and watch for useful tweaks

by Lawrence W. Cheek

The year my wife and I both turned 74, we had our first big sailing scare. This was four years ago, near the end of a pleasant and otherwise uneventful afternoon daysail. I had furled the jib and started the motor, and Patty edged out to the foredeck as usual to douse the staysail. Abruptly she crouched to the deck and clutched her chest with an ominous yelp. "Sharp pain in my chest!" she cried.

"Get back to the cockpit!" I shouted.

"I can't move!" she whimpered, and the emergency became real. She was in a precarious place, and our 21′ cutter has no lifelines.

I dropped the mainsail in an unceremonious heap—it's a gaffer, and dousing it normally involves a time-consuming fuss of flaking and rolling—and called 911 for an ambulance to meet us at the dock. I aimed the boat at the marina, locked the tiller, and scrambled to the foredeck to help her back to the cockpit. In five minutes, we were at the dock, where waiting EMTs hustled her to an ambulance.

It turned out not to be a heart attack. The hospital never found the cause; she recovered fully, and there's been no recurrence. But the event served as a dramatic reminder that we're not immortal.

At least half our sailing friends within a few years, plus or minus, of our vintage have sold their boats, either exchanging them for motor cruisers or retiring from boat ownership entirely. Some have downsized. Their reasons weave through safety concerns, the physical demands of boat handling, and the burdens of maintenance. For wooden-boat owners, the latter may be the most onerous and literally painful issue. A few weeks ago, I spent a couple of hours on the deck kneeling and bending to recaulk the mahogany rubrails at the sheer, an annual exercise, and my back ached for the rest of that day and the next. Patty and I haul

PATTY CHEEK

***Top*—The physical demands of boat handling increase as a sailor ages. While going forward to tend sails without lifelines is always a cause for caution, the need for handholds and the convenience of roller-furling become clearer with advancing years. On the author's 21′ cutter, all lines now lead to the cockpit. *Above right*—The author perceived a need for an effective boarding ladder that could be reached from the water, so he designed and built his own.**

out every spring for a typical cavalcade of paint, varnish, and repair projects, and over the past five years our annual boatyard stint has ballooned alarmingly from two weeks to five—with a corresponding bump in boatyard space rental from $350 to $900. We're not goofing off, and the boat isn't demanding that much more than before. We're just getting slower.

It's no secret that sailing, and more specifically the wooden-boat culture, is awash in a high tide of gray. The average age of the wooden-boat owners I've written about for this magazine over the past five years has been 66 at the time I interviewed them. A private industry survey of more than 3,800 wooden-boat enthusiasts found a large majority—63 percent—were between 65 and 84 years old. Under 35? One percent.

Patty and I don't want to retire from our boat, but neither do we want to risk a mishap that could lead to serious injury or worse. What to do? Well, throughout my 57-year career in journalism, I've sometimes resolved issues of my own by discovering what others were doing in similar circumstances. So, I went out and talked to wooden-boat owners right in my marina in Port Townsend, Washington, to find out how they were adapting boat, body, and mind to cope with advancing age. Or, in one case, to learn how one had come to terms with selling a beloved boat.

When I launched PATTY B in 2019, I was already 70 but obtusely had given little thought to accommodating any eventual physical decline. I had been putting in six- to seven-hour workdays building her for nearly three years, but I seemed to spring back reasonably quickly from aches and sprains acquired in weasel contortions around the boat, and my health was generally good. Denial is easy when you're not actively hurting.

But four years later, after Patty's fast ride to the emergency room and a realistic appraisal of how fatigued we both sometimes felt after a day of sailing or boat work, I began a systematic look at what we needed to do to keep sailing and maintaining a wooden boat in this eighth decade of our lives. I started by making a list of things to do, or at least consider, arranged under two headings: first, safety and convenience and, second, maintenance.

A few of these were stupidly obvious: For Pete's sake, stash reading glasses aboard so you can decipher depth soundings on the charts! And Patty built an Excel spreadsheet to keep track of our maintenance chores, with a view toward avoiding overwhelming accumulations.

I had led nearly all the lines to the cockpit when I built the boat; the only reason anyone normally had to leave the cockpit for sail handling was to pull down the staysail. Creating a remote downhaul—a line running along a toerail to the cockpit—was an easy 90-minute fix. I also remembered that once or twice every year the jib's roller-furler had jammed, and I'd had to go forward, lie flat on the bowsprit, and manually wrench the furling drum into action. Studying the geometry of the furling line's run to a block on the bowsprit, I could see that moving the block farther forward would reduce friction and probably solve the problem. Again, easy.

LAWRENCE W. CHEEK

Bertram Levy, 84, has dealt with advancing age by building himself another boat—repeatedly.

Six years ago, the retired Port Townsend physician launched the 19′ spidsgatter MURRELET. He was downsizing from the 24′ Bristol Channel cutter ABLE, which he had built 40 years earlier. The smaller sailboat, mainly intended for daysailing, was fitted to the realistic appraisal he had made of his physical abilities.

"I wasn't as steady on my feet as I used to be," he says. "I didn't feel like I could jump off the boat at the dock to get the lines. When I wanted to reef, instead of taking 15 seconds it was taking two minutes because I had to balance myself. When I needed to paint, I couldn't stand on a scaffold and hold the brush and paint and still hold onto something. I was beginning to depend on others, so I felt like I had to sell ABLE. Which was very, very hard."

But he wasn't going to live without a sailboat because, as he says, "I'm crazy for sailing." MURRELET is sized so he can sail singlehanded into the slip, where he can reach over the coaming to slip a line around a cleat. It's small enough that scaffolding is not an issue. And it should be noted that MURRELET's mahogany-planked hull is varnished, not painted, so he's hardly taking it easy. Last summer, he figures he went daysailing five days a week on Port Townsend Bay. And he'll do it again next summer, though sharing time with the new boat he's about to complete: STEVEDORE, a 20′ tug-style motor cruiser designed by Paul Gartside.

"Motoring is really boring," he declares with his signature bluntness. "But we can trailer it up to Alaska and spend three months cruising." The new boat, he says, will cost about $50,000. "If I bought a decent RV it'd be $100,000 and I'd be parked around a bunch of people playing loud music that I can't stand. And I've really enjoyed this process. I haven't had a better four years in my life than building this thing." —*LWC*

LAWRENCE W. CHEEK

Kaci Cronkhite, 64, bought her 28′ spidsgatter, PAX, in 2007, restored her, and wrote a memoir (*Finding PAX: The Unexpected Journey of a Woman and a Wooden Boat*) about the experience. But she found that her body, once strong and agile enough for serious big-boat bluewater sailing, was losing that tone through an office-bound job and menopause. To counter the loss, she looked back to a concept she absorbed as a beginning sailor in her 30s.

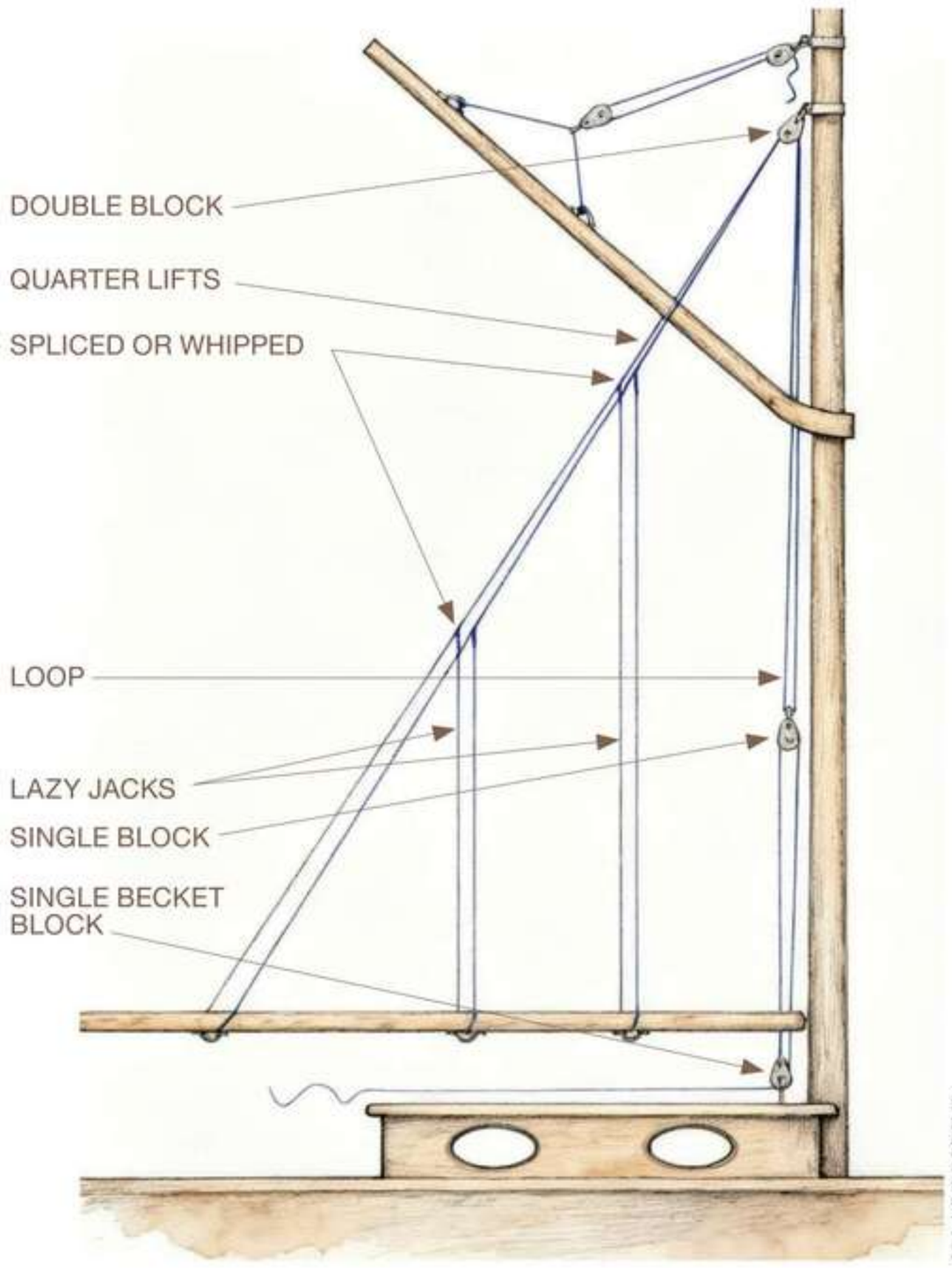
"When I started sailing, I looked for the oldest singlehanders in the anchorage. I thought, that's who I'm going to emulate. Because they're still out there. They're not just throwing muscle at everything. They use finesse, they think for the long term, they are patient."

She points to the extra-heavy lines on PAX, for example the 5⁄8″ mainsheet. "Otherwise, I'd be wrapping them around my hand—you know, the thing we're not supposed to do." The winch handles are long. She recently switched out the mainsail track for a low-friction UHMW (ultra-high molecular weight) track-and-slide system. She has even found that small investments in better tools, such as ergonomic scrapers and brushes, can make a difference.

I observe that her 90-year-old PAX is not gracefully adaptable to some modern concepts of safety and sailing ease, such as lifelines, which would be an unspeakable besmirchment of the boat's organic beauty. Kaci again refers back to that reliance instead on finesse and patience. "I never trust lifelines anyway," she says. "To me, they're just not real. I pay attention. I hold onto my handrails."

Maintaining PAX has generally been a 50-50 split between doing it herself and enlisting help, professional or otherwise. Now, she says, she is becoming increasingly willing to ask for help. "I think there is a space for us to embrace being elders," she says. "And you know, from the times you've helped someone older, how good that felt, and what you got to learn because you did it." —*LWC*

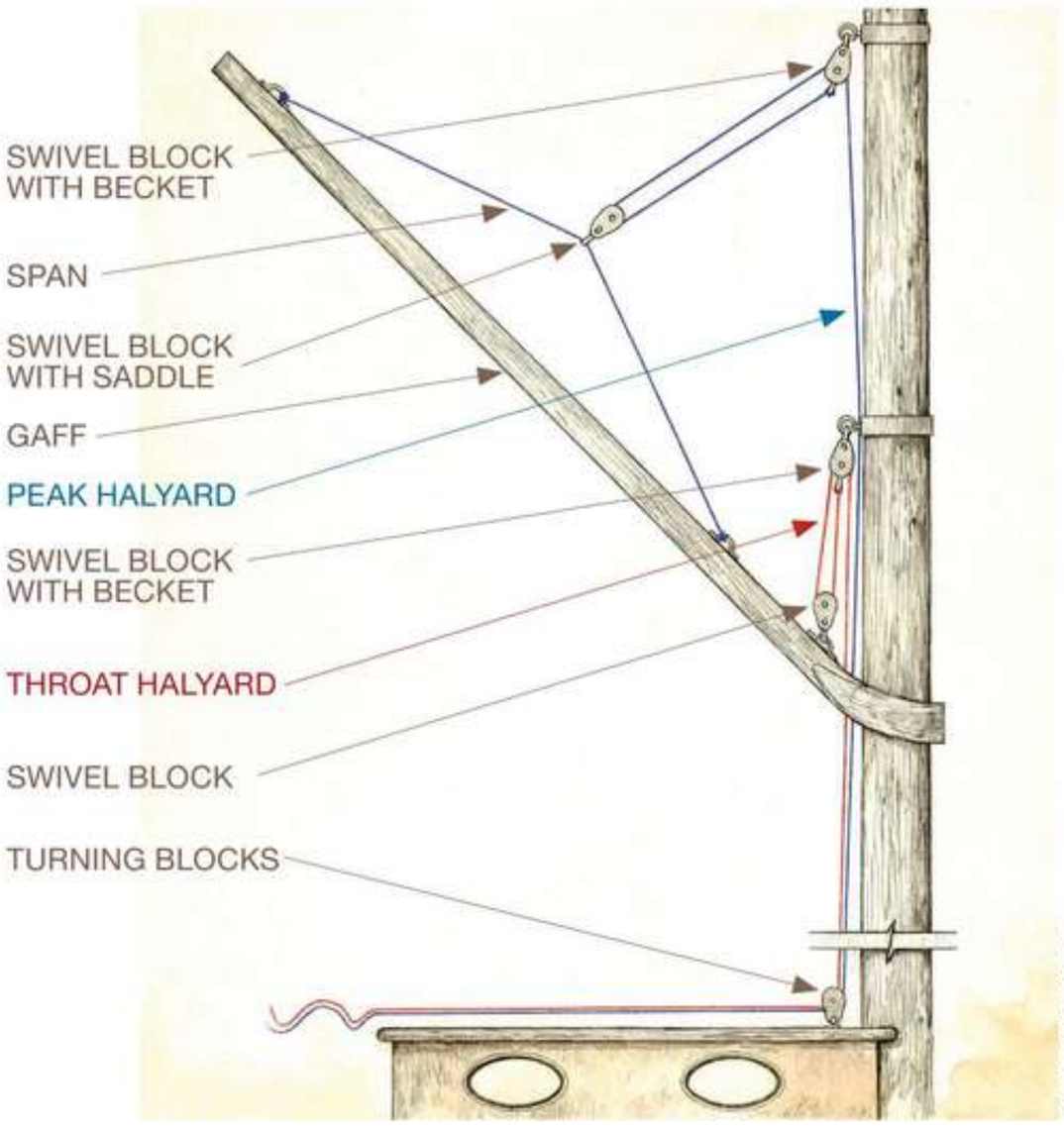
A more complicated, and much more expensive, suggestion came via Sean Rankins of Northwest Sails & Canvas, who had made PATTY B's sails. He advised rerigging all halyards for a 2:1 purchase to make it not only easier to hoist the sails but also to provide much better luff tension. I was dubious about any need for rerigging the pipsqueak jib and staysail, 67 and 49 sq ft respectively. But I've learned to trust Sean's advice, and he was right. New lines and blocks set me back more than $400, and the mainsail throat and peak halyards are now crazy long at over 70′, but our pleasure in seeing perfectly set sails is palpable. And it's half the effort to get them there.



ISAAC ROBBINS

The author admired Arnt Arntzen's method of combining lazyjacks with the quarter lifts of a gaff rig's boom.

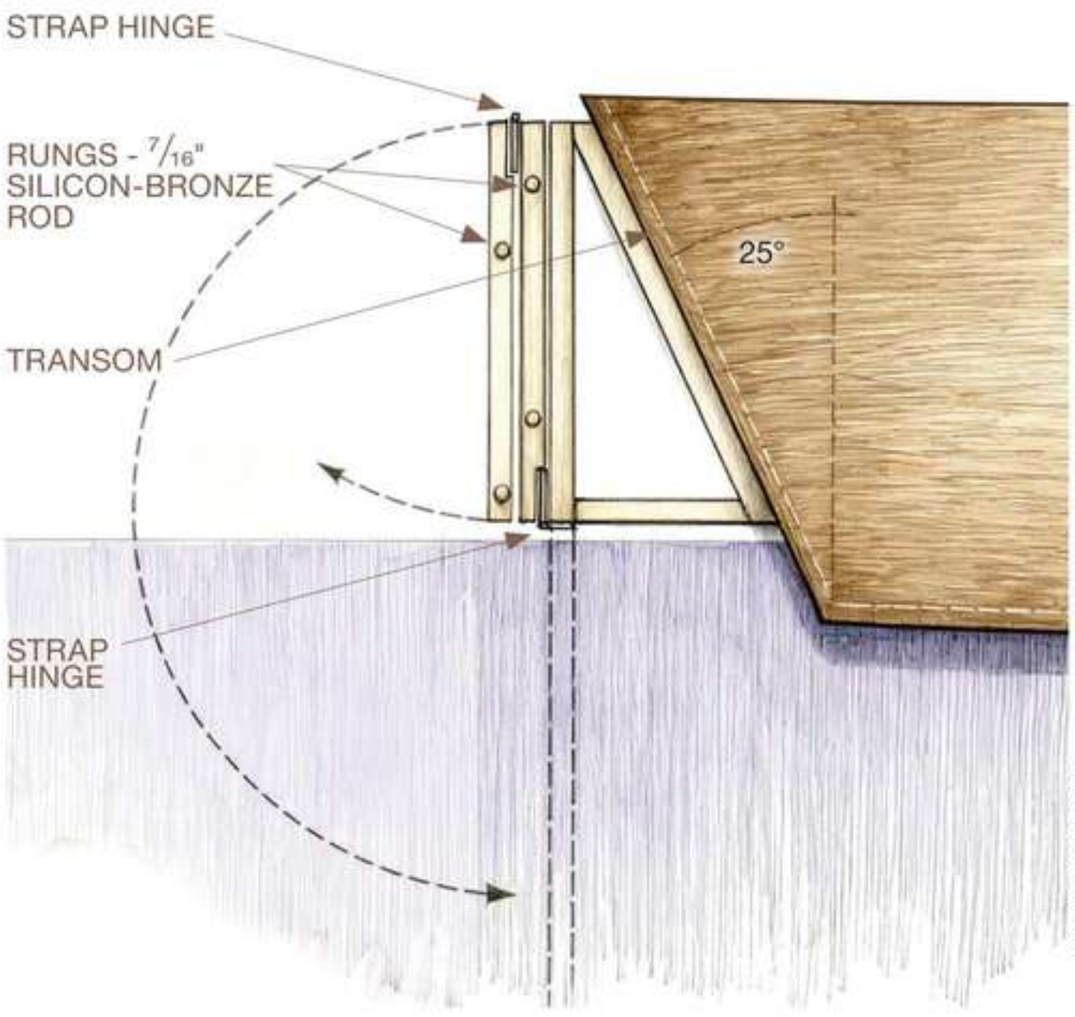
The scariest thing to do on this boat always has been raising or lowering the mast, which pivots in a tabernacle integrated into the cabin front. A gin pole strapped to the mast's forward face provides leverage for raising and lowering, but even so, someone—me—has always stood in the cockpit with a 10′ wooden fork to urge the mast through its first 20-some degrees of travel. If the fork were ever to slip, a 54-lb mast would be on my head in a fraction of a second. More geometric pondering suggested that with my 4:1 mainsheet tackle moved to the bowsprit, I might have enough purchase to raise or lower the mast without cockpit help. It works—and a foolishly hazardous operation is now history.



ISAAC ROBBINS

A 2:1 purchase for the gaff's throat and peak halyards, as recommended by sailmaker Sean Rankins, vastly eases the effort required to raise the sail.

The toughest thing to do on this boat during an average daysail is corralling the 187-sq-ft mainsail at day's end, especially if the wind is still blowing 10 knots. I recalled, though, how a Canadian friend of mine, Arnt Arntzen, ingeniously rigged his gaff cutter ANJA (see WB No. 290) with lazyjacks that splice into quarter lifts. He can drop his mainsail into a neat bundle in 15 seconds, compared to my two or three minutes. I emailed Arnt, who kindly responded with an instructive sketch.



ISAAC ROBBINS

PATTY B, the author's Sam Devlin–designed Song Wren 21, has a transom that rakes 25 degrees, calling for the custom boarding ladder he's shown building on page 30.

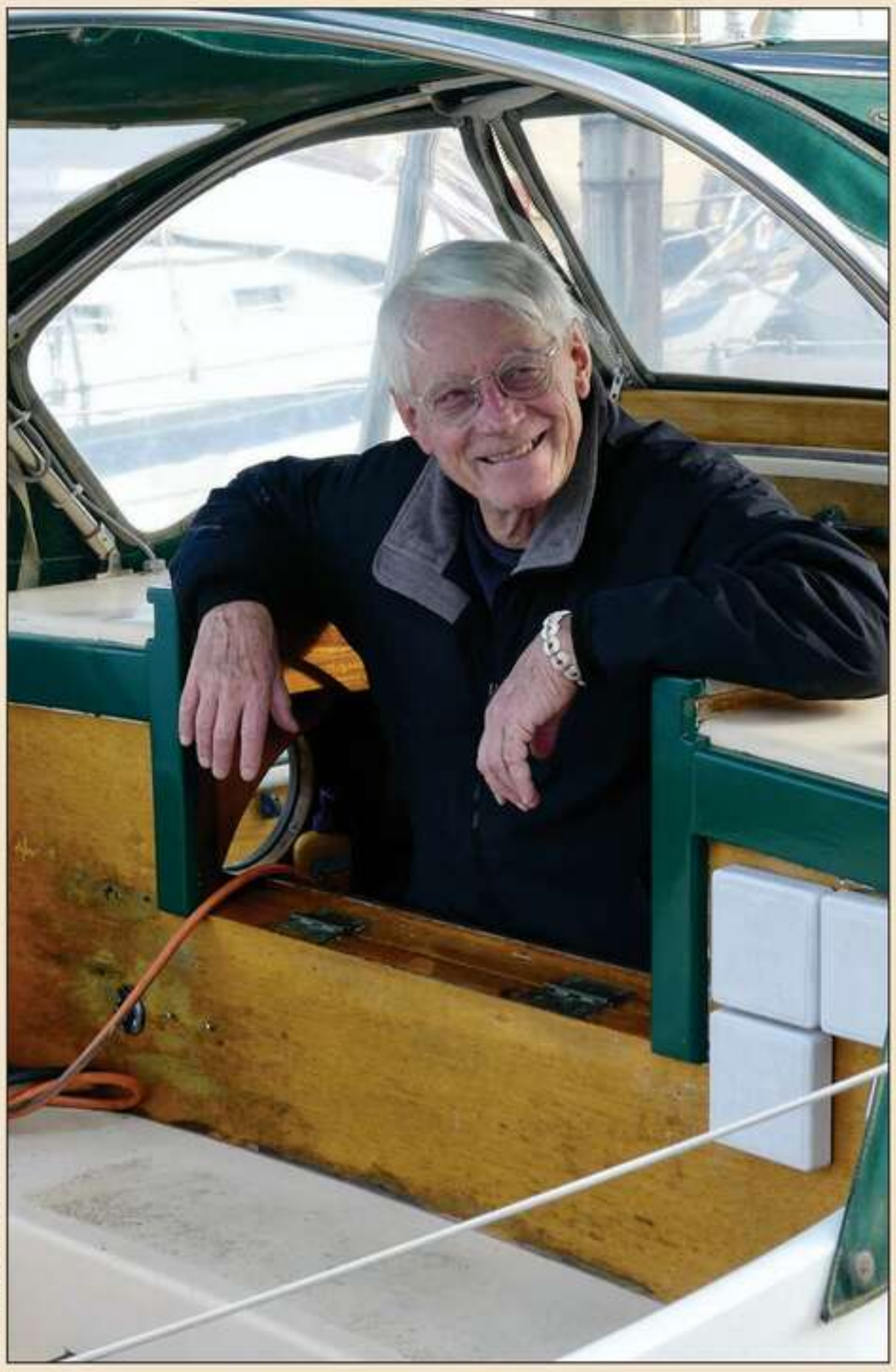
Leslie Lincoln, 67, has owned her Herreshoff H-28 ketch, KHOYA, since she was 19, and she says that now, finally, she can properly keep up the varnish. The reason: a full-boat winter cover she designed and sewed herself five years ago. She's uniquely qualified for major boat projects, having had a career in maritime electronics and with an early venture into a marine canvas business decades ago. And she's been building her own Port Townsend home, room by room, over the past 20 years. There isn't much hands-on work that scares her.

Partly this must be innate ambition and versatility. But the practical skills have been nurtured through her long relationship with KHOYA. "Working on the boat taught me how to use my hands," she says. "When I was 20 and first went out to sea, we had to fix things—there was no choice. It gives you a lot of self-confidence. A wooden boat is an incredible teacher."

Her sailing life today is somewhat constrained by an old ankle injury that's made hopping off the boat during docking problematic. "I used to single-hand all over the place, but now it's harder to jump off the dock, so it's best to sail with others. Yet the joy of sailing KHOYA is more rewarding than ever."

She insists that maintaining her boat—mostly by herself—is far from a burden. "Last October, I was on my hands and knees recaulking the deck, and I had to get down and up and down and up, and my knees and legs got stronger because of it. After doing that all day, I had to carry the boat cover down to her dock—I was exhausted, but I could physically do it. The boat is a continuity in my life that's very important. And it makes me very happy." —*LWC*

LAWRENCE W. CHEEK



LAWRENCE W. CHEEK

Bill Stanley, 79, has a FOR SALE sign on his 32′ Alden cutter, VEGA. It's time, he says. He has owned the boat since 1982, briefly living aboard in Seattle, and he has taken nearly annual cruises north to Vancouver Island or farther up the Inside Passage to Alaska. The maintenance has been weighing heavily. He's had multiple joint replacements, and his balance has grown less reliable. The unusually high bulkhead sill at VEGA's companionway is becoming harder to negotiate. His wife died in 2020, and since then he has spent most of his time on the boat singlehanding. He didn't greatly enjoy the solitude. And then, a couple of years back, as he was rowing out to an island anchorage in a borrowed inflatable, the dinghy's bottom detached. Reboarding VEGA alone from a deflated dinghy without a firm bottom to stand on was extremely difficult. "I think it was then that I started to realize I'm not as agile as I used to be," he says. "That was the turning point."

Despite his long relationship with the boat, he says the decision wasn't painful. He examined the image people seemed to have of him as a sailor and realized it was not how he defined himself, nor was his profession as a physician. "I'm not defined as what I do," he says. "I think I'm defined by my relationships. And after retirement, I'm busier than ever."

What does he recommend when growing old with a wooden boat? "I'd say get somebody to do the maintenance. And have a reliable first mate." *–LWC*

PATTY B's transom rakes at 25 degrees, so there's not much room on it to mount a production-model reboarding ladder. Since 2019, we've carried a folding ladder in a cockpit locker to be deployed from a cleat if ever needed for a rescue. It's a clumsy operation, and I've known that if I were the unlucky man overboard, I would be having to talk someone still aboard through the process—and I sometimes take friends out who have little boating experience. It's far better, obviously, to have a folding ladder permanently mounted to the transom, operable either by the swimmer or crew in the cockpit. Why, I wondered, am I feeling limited by the manufactured choices? I could build a ladder tailored to this boat. It's turned into a complicated undertaking, involving first making a working full-sized model with scrap wood and cheap hardware, and it's still in progress. But it will be ready for the 2026 season.

The most time-consuming ritual on this boat has been maintaining the exterior brightwork: about two weeks of scraping, sanding, and varnishing every year. Finally last spring, in a burst of reluctant practicality, Patty and I painted 75 percent of it. Only the spars, handrails, and toerails remain bright. This was nearly painless once I had finally come to terms with necessity, and it might be the most important reconciliation I've made with the realities of aging: If one's ego is all tangled up with the boat, it's time to break the two apart. What's a boat for—to show off or enjoy using?

Finally, I've understood that to manage the maintenance I need to shift my attitude toward the work. Temperamentally, I am wildly unsuited to Zen: I've always been goal-focused, impatient, quick to irritation whenever a tool fails to work properly or I fail to use it properly. But change can happen, and I am working to learn to see the work itself as a thing of beauty, not as a means to an end. I'm not there yet, but I'm progressing.

Some issues on our list remain unresolved. PATTY B has a smooth, quiet, and reliable two-cylinder outboard motor, but it requires a ferocious tug to start it. What does Patty do if I'm suddenly disabled? I've thought about swapping for an electric-start motor, or even a pure electric outboard, fixes that would range from expensive to incredibly expensive. I've made no decision yet. I have a custom-made half-tent for the boat, which covers the cockpit and after third of the cabin. A second cover for the rest of the boat, I've learned, would be north of $3,000. So I won't be getting that yet, and maybe not ever. I did, however, improve the existing cover's rain protection for the cockpit just by experimenting with its suspended height and making new and tighter elastic hold-downs. That's one more incremental improvement.

It's alarmingly easy, on reaching a certain age, to get drawn into a swirling cycle of vexations and frustrations and become, not to put too fine a point on it, an old grump. The counterweight is to practice patience and perseverance. What better teacher than a wooden boat?

Lawrence W. Cheek, of Whidbey Island, Washington, is a regular correspondent for WoodenBoat.

Old Salt—a design with old salts in mind

Stability, ergonomics, and safety are at the heart of Old Salt, a design collaboration between Joshua Colvin and Brandon Davis aimed at aging sailors.

"What if we designed a boat, and at every design decision we chose to look out for the older sailor?"

Sometimes such rhetorical questions bloom into missions, which this one did. It launched five years of discussion and back-and-forth drawings between Joshua Colvin and Brandon Davis, finally materializing into a stitch-and-glue plywood catboat kit intended for production in spring 2026. Josh, the publisher of the online magazine *Small Craft Advisor*, earlier collaborated with the New Zealand designer John Welsford to create the 12′ SCAMP. Brandon is the owner of Turn Point Design, a Port Townsend design and CNC-cutting firm specializing in marine fabrication.

A kit is envisioned for the 15′3″ boat, making it easy to build.

The Old Salt concept began with typical catboat proportioning of a 2:1 length-to-beam ratio: 15′3″ × 7′6″. The cockpit is deep, wide, and uncluttered, with the centerboard trunk offset into the starboard seat riser. The boat weighs about 450 lbs, with provision for an equal weight of water ballast in the bilge. It's apparent that it aims to emulate the stability of a much larger boat; the designers expect Old Salt sailors are unlikely to be eager to practice capsize-and-recovery drills. "SCAMP is amazingly seaworthy for a 12′ dinghy, but it's still a 12′ dinghy, and if you make a big mistake you're going to go for a swim," Josh says. "The Old Salt is going to be a boat where if you make a mistake, lose your balance and slip to the lee side or something, you're not going to go over."

The rig might prompt sighs of covetous envy from anyone who's spent a tedious launching-ramp hour rigging a small sloop or yawl. There's a 20′ carbon-fiber mast in two fit-together sections that store in the boat and a flat-top, battened sail. There are no stays, and a heavy batten in the sail's foot functions as sort of a boom without the hazard of hard timber swinging overhead. The mast weighs less than 15 lbs, and to make stepping as easy as possible, there's a 34″ long "toaster slot" in the cuddy cabintop. Pop the mast in at a slant, rotate it to vertical, close a hinged door and pin the mast in, and you're ready for the sail. The boat is designed for the crew to never leave the cockpit, and a quarter-round cutout is sawn into the cabintop to support someone working at the mast.

Tradeoffs eternally haunt boat designers: make one performance aspect better, and another one becomes worse. In Old Salt's case, the very broad beam and embracing cockpit enclosure erase any possibility of rowing, although two paddlers could nudge it along for short distances. The designers are working with EP Carry, a Seattle-area electric outboard manufacturer, on a motor specifically tailored to fit. Josh says other electric outboards or a small gasoline outboard also would work. But any kind of motor adds expense and potential complications that oars wouldn't.

The Old Salt's most intriguing aspect is that it seems likely to appeal not just to old salts. It looks not one bit frumpy; the curvilinear sweep of the cuddy cabin is stylish and svelte, and the proportions are right. If you're hot for performance, the designers point out that not filling the ballast tank would provide a ratio of sail area to displacement that would nudge well into race-boat territory. If that isn't thrilling enough, they're offering a "Tequila package" option of a bowsprit and asymmetrical spinnaker. Without the ballast, Brandon expects the boat to be able to plane with the spinnaker, and maybe, "on a screaming reach," with mainsail alone.

LAWRENCE W. CHEEK (ALL THIS PAGE)

The boat is also designed to be forgiving; the crew should never have to leave the cockpit.

If it all works out, there could be gray-whiskered sailors on the water looking for whippersnappers to humiliate. Call it the revenge of the old salts. —*LWC*

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Text and illustrations by Jan Adkins

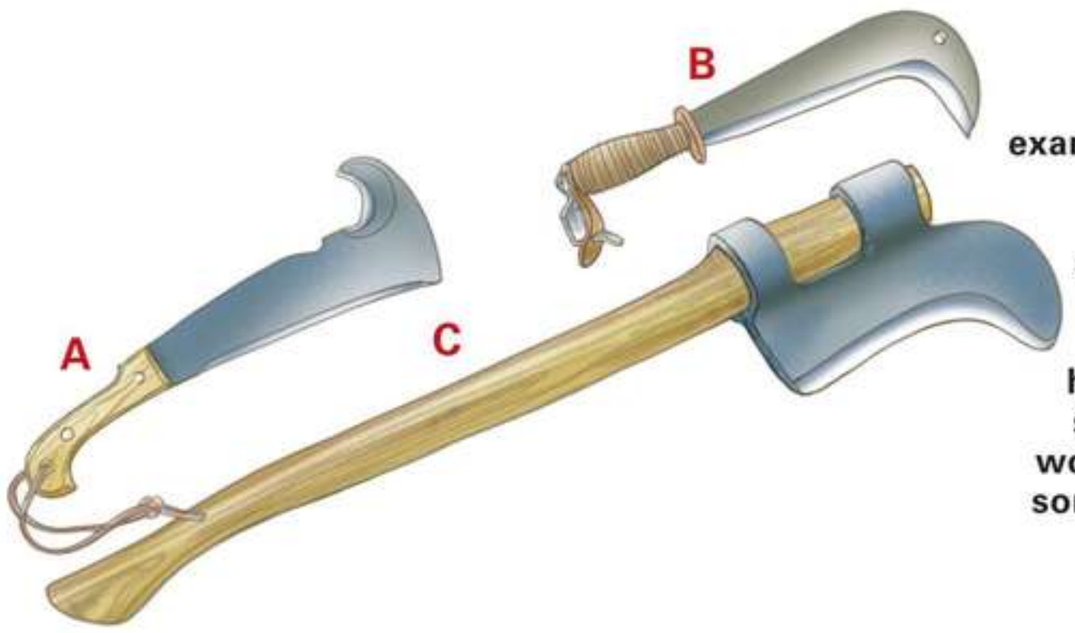
Heritage Tools

Our goal with Skills 101 is to present the practical *now* of boats that are built for the crucial business of discovery, recalling that every boat length we travel from the dock is exploration. Yes, we look carefully at old classic boats; the evolved construction of vessels that prevailed against time and storms, competition, and hard use delivers lessons of what works and, just as important, what *almost* works. An important dictum in boats, tools, and all design is *form follows function*. The goal, purpose, time, and circumstance of a boat shapes its design.

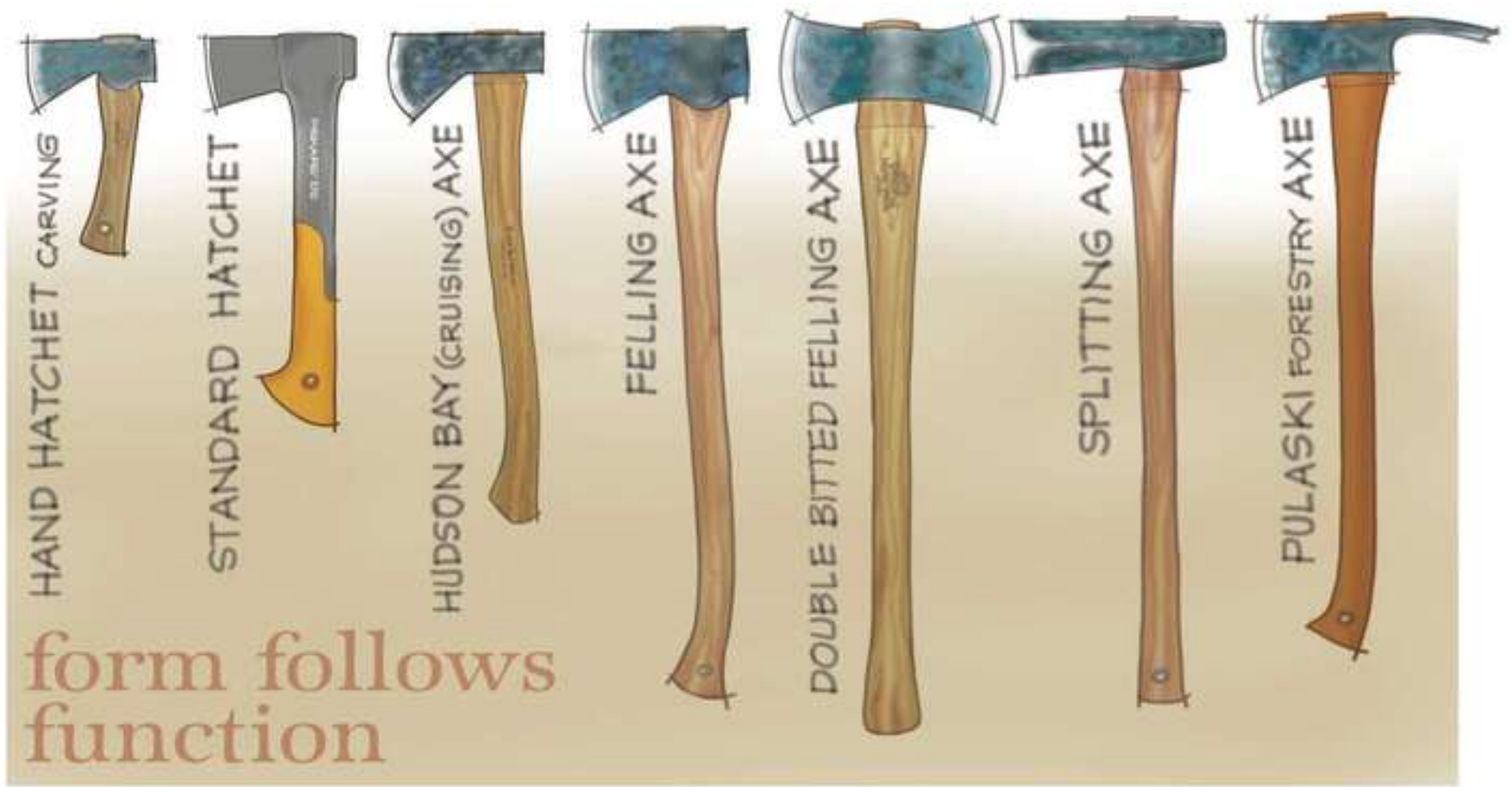
In other words, we have a reverence for old tools, and particularly how they inform and ease modern work. You might have noticed, in previous installments of Skills 101, that we explore the beginnings of things: Egyptian deckhands using sounding poles on the Nile riverbed, Roman carpenters using bronze planes, Chinese craftsmen striking an ink line, medieval builders establishing anthropomorphic measures. We similarly adore cable-ties, plywood, and epoxy. We're eager to tell you how best to use new "tech," and we like combining the functional old with the helpful new.

Often, we stumble onto old tools that may be outdated but never lose their juju, never stop doing champion jobs. We find these heritage tools worth a second look. In this Skills 101, we'll present a gallery of tools that work too well to stay in a museum case. You probably have a list of such tools too. Tell us about them, and we'll fill another Skills 101 with more tool heritage.

The hedgerow is an ancient pasturing pattern still worked by shepherds and farmers. Unseeded barriers between cultivated and grazed fields quickly grew boundary lines of hazel, blackthorn, hawthorne, chokeberry, ash, elder, and other quick-growth greenwood. A hedge worker with a bill hook (see next page) could weave a robust fence stronger than sheep or cow invasions. The hedgelayer slashed about half the width of the greenwood near its root and bent it to a slant, weaving the tops of the still-growing bushes to left and right of the vertical posts. Most of these bushes had thorns; thick gloves, aprons, and puttees were necessary. Green branches, which are thin, were bunched, twisted, and woven horizontally to tie the verticals together. You'll see this bucolic pattern all over Britain and Europe. Many hedgerows are centuries old; some bear delicious fruit each year. Barbed wire is convenient and quick to install but charmless.



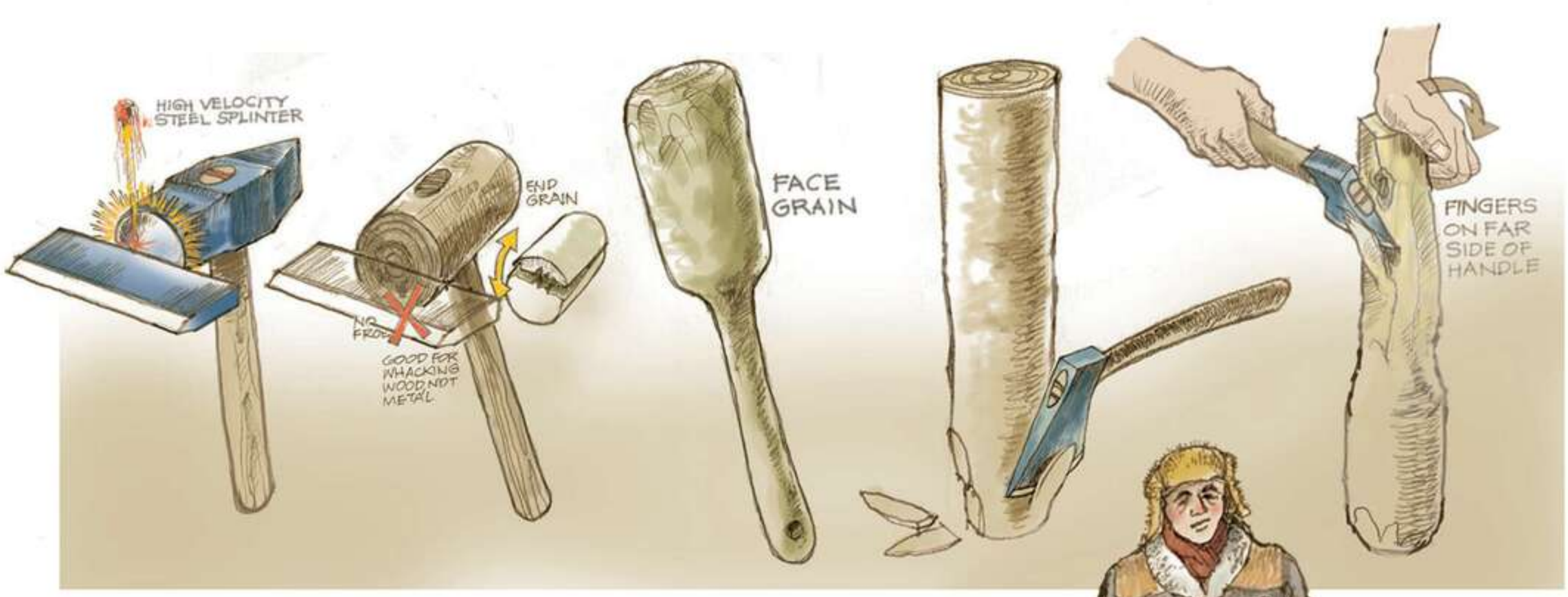
The bill hook is not just ancient, it's paleolithic. The earliest examples of this tool had flint edges but the familiar curved profile—meant to cut down across stalks, twigs, and green branches—is recognizable. Cutting edges made of copper, bronze, and steel supplanted those of flint, but the form was persistent: it worked. With a sharp bill hook you could prune trees, shape patterns of climbing vines, and harvest a range of fruits and vegetables. Bill hooks still work: the venerable *Woodsman's Pal* (A) still has lively sales with campers; the commercial leather-handled bill hook (B) would be familiar to an ancient Egyptian farmer; the larger version, sometimes called a *brush hook* (C), has a powerful swinging handle and enough weight to "hog" tangled undergrowth.



The axe's evolution is clear in the subtle changes of design for differing uses (left to right). The little *hand hatchet* is a light, relatively thin, and facile tool for sculpting wood. (We see it later in the shaping of the *froe maul on the opposite page*.) The usual size and shape of the *standard hatchet* is widely useful for working up kindling, pruning, and camp chores. This is Fiskar's modern version: excellent high-tech steel and a synthetic handle, but the form is plain. The *cruising axe* is uncommon, light and compact but long enough to swing with authority; it was the standby of canoe campers who needed to work up firewood and campground poles. The *felling axe* is thick and heavy, with a long swing handle to bite hard. The *double-bitted axe* may be an anachronism: professional timber cutters saved time by having two sharpened cutting edges, but in amateur hands this two-edge sword is a danger to cutter and observer. The *splitting axe* is thickest and heaviest, really a long-swing wedge with a mild edge. You don't need a *Pulaski axe*, a combination of cutter and digger shaped to the needs of forest-fire professionals, but it points out that there are doubtless another two dozen patterns and variations of the axe. The discrete needs of particular tasks demand design shift.

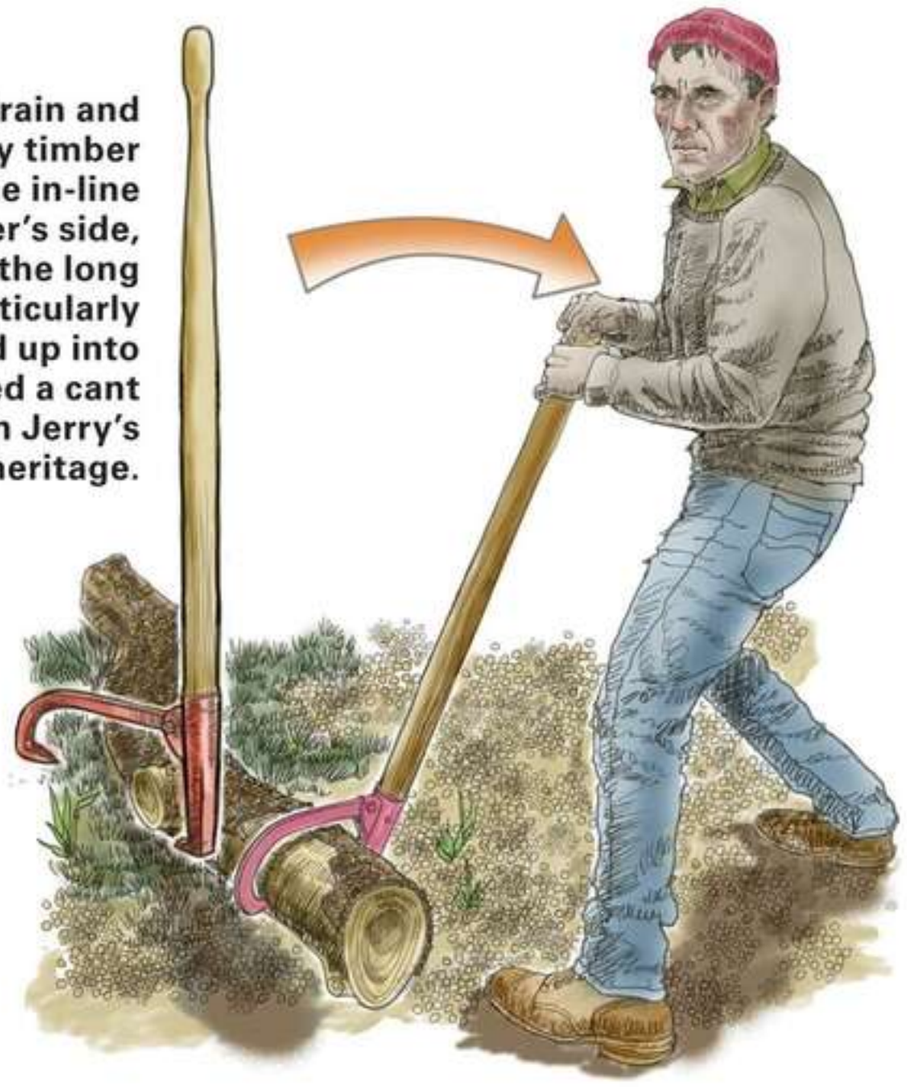
The digging bar belongs in a discussion of axes. This is truly an ancient tool familiar to farmers, carpenters, landscapers, and workmen of all persuasions. It has half a hundred uses and is certainly a shop's go-to heavy lever. But in our context the *digging bar* is nearly magic. Yes, it loosens the soil you're shoveling, and it pries out the stubborn stone that stymies you. But its flat end with a chisel profile is a righteous cutting blade with the bar's weight (more than 40 lbs) behind it to use like an in-line hatchet to defeat the inevitable roots beneath our feet.

The froe is a kind of sideways hatchet, a tool for taking advantage of wood grain. The froe's blade section is in line with the handle, so swinging it like a hatchet is not effectual. It's *driven* with a heavy *maul*, a wooden hammer tool. Wood is not a casual material choice for this purpose, for safety reasons: striking a tempered-steel bar with a tempered-steel hammer can, occasionally, stress striker and stricken in compression, a millisecond deformation that can shear through a microscopic flaw in the steel's makeup and emit a sharp splinter of steel at an impressively dangerous velocity. The odds are against this. But playing the odds is not worth your eye. Consequently, the froe should be struck with a wooden device. Your common shop mallet is well-designed to absorb stress parallel to its strong *end grain*, but striking a thinnish steel bar with an end-grain mallet will chew it to bits quickly. Ideally the froe is struck with *side grain*. Some sculptors' mauls are turned from dense wood to present side grain, but they're expensive artists' tools, and the work of the *froe maul* is pedestrian: to drive the broad froe blade into the end grain of wood. When the froe handle turns the blade, wood splits along its grain. The froe is repositioned farther into the wood, perhaps driven down by the maul again, following the grain deeper, widening the split. The traditional purview of the froe is splitting out cedar shingles, a Yankee carpenter's joy. But the froe is a premier tool for following any grain. Archery bowyers use the froe to split out yew or osage-orange bow staves. Splitting rather than sawing doesn't cut across growth planes. You may not be making bows or shingles, but the froe is a handy tool for splitting kindling out of bigger firewood.



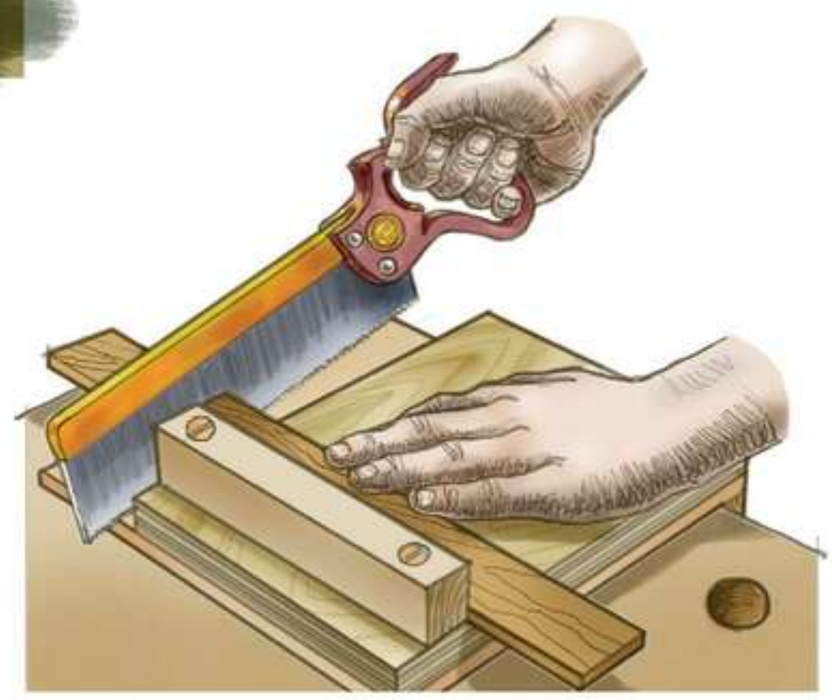
The froe maul is a bit of sculpture; making one requires a light hatchet and extreme thumb-and-finger caution. This is not meant to be a parlor item; don't court perfection or finish from this utilitarian tool. We must, however, add that the Old Fellahs wielded a hand hatchet with aplomb and precision to a remarkable degree. We're told that old Russian carpenters, called *plotniks*, were suspicious of sawn wood "opening the grain to Russian winter" and created their winter-tight *izba* homes and even entire onion domes with axes. You are trying for a heavy head and a longish handle that will fit your hand. The important caution here is to *keep your thumb and fingers on the side opposite your hewing*.

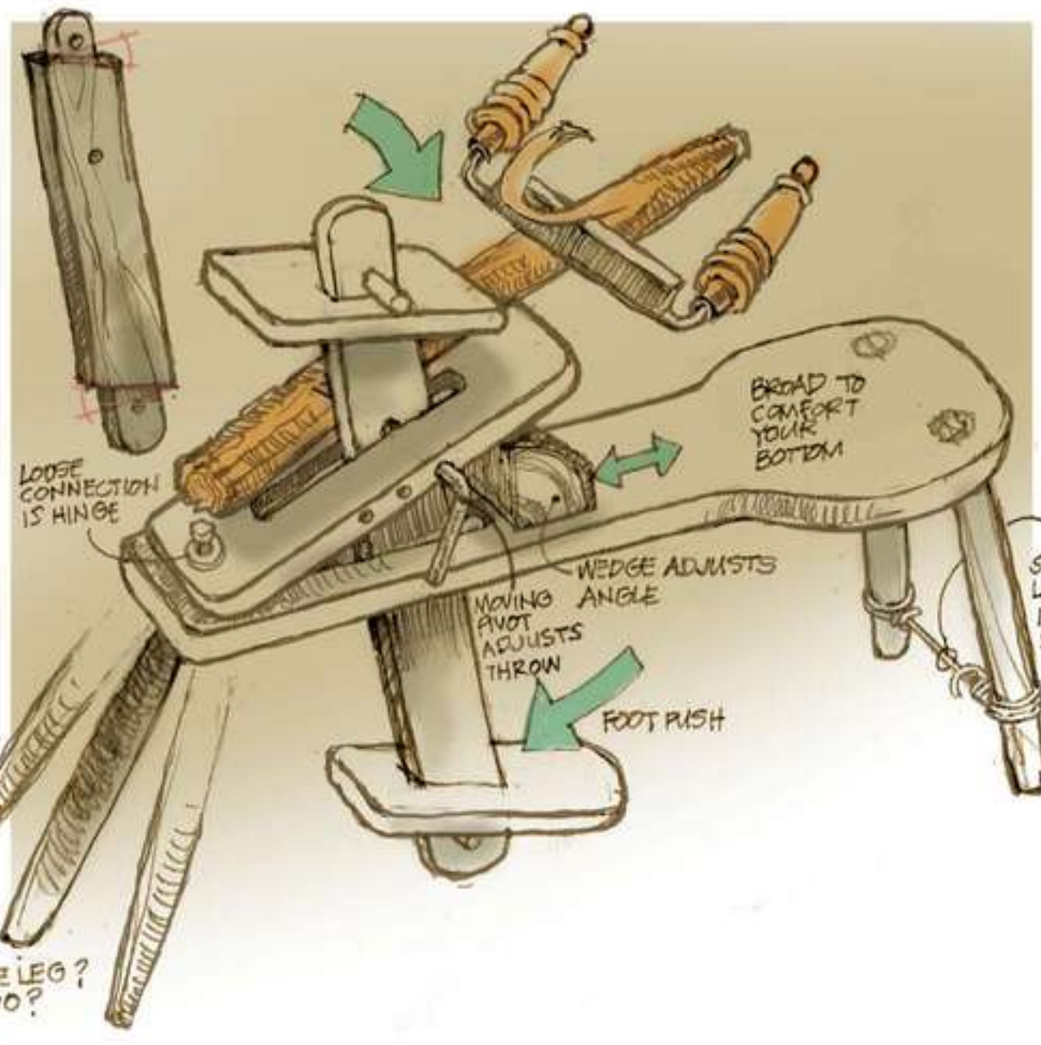
The cant hook is another heritage tool that could save you strain and swearing if you work up firewood, clear brush, or horse heavy timber balks around the boatyard. It's essentially a double lever: The in-line point drives into timber, and the hinged cant catches the timber's side, giving you a wide grip to rotate the timber by turning with the long handle. This tool gave timber men authority over butt logs, particularly when workers were floating lumber to the sea and logs worked up into "jams" on the oxbows and shallows of rivers. Once you've used a cant hook a few times, listen to the Yankee work-song "The Jam on Jerry's Rocks" and think of yourself clearing it. That's heritage.



The bootjack is a heritage tool your grandfather used. If you don't have a *bootjack*, you should. It's simple and utilitarian: you could run one up in half an hour, and every time you use it to pry off your deck boots you will bless you.

The bench hook has been mentioned before in our discussions, but it's so simple and useful that we're always surprised when we don't see two or three sizes of bench hook in someone's shop. Light downward and forward pressure securely holds the wood you're sawing *and* holds the bench hook firmly to the edge of your counter or workbench. The end of the backstop is a good guide to a vertical cut. This is another half-hour project that will serve for years.





The shaving horse is not a half-hour project, but the time you'd spend in making one is a good investment. This ancient device invites you to sit at a convenient height (make your seat wide to comfort your backside) and use your foot pressure to clamp a chunk of wood toward you. The height and angle of your workpiece are determined by a moving wedge below the clamp and by a series of vertical pivot points in the clamp arm. This is not the only *shaving horse*: detailed plans and YouTube videos abound. The convenience of a shaving horse is not just the seat and the angle but also the ease of lightening foot pressure to turn or reposition your workpiece a little or a lot. The shaving horse is a natural partner to the drawknife's keen edge in creating admirable hand work.

Jan Adkins is a regular contributor to WoodenBoat. *Visit his blog,Dockwolloping (www.dockwalloping.boats), for more insightful illustrated discussion of all sorts of maritime matters.*

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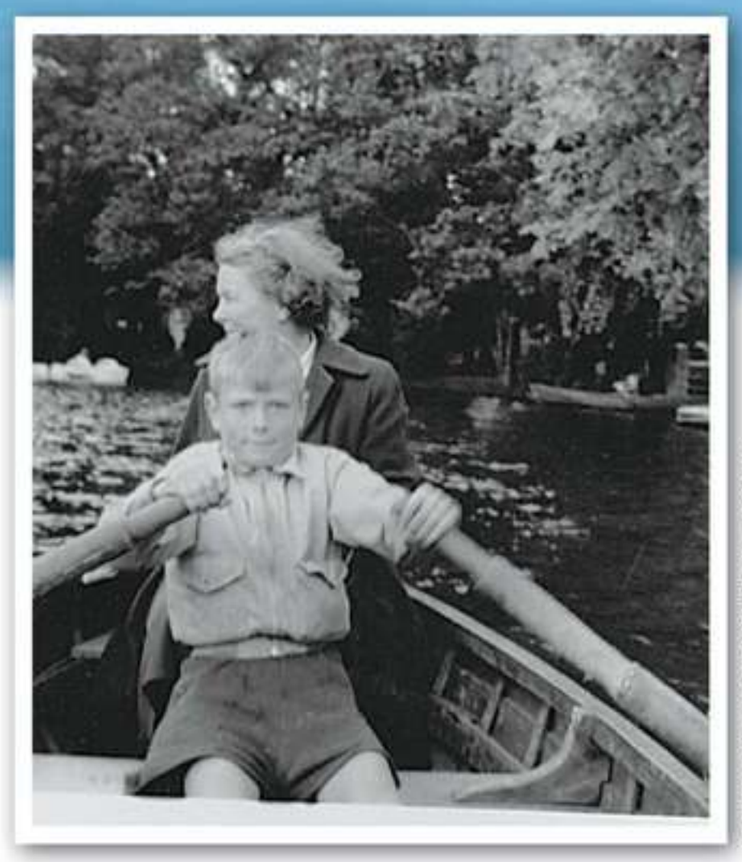

TOM AND ROS CUNLIFFE (BOTH)

Tom Cunliffe

A life in six (wooden) boats

by Nic Compton

"We had to leave Rio de Janeiro, and we had to leave quickly, but we had no chronometer and no charts because they had all been stolen. All we had was a chart of the Atlantic Ocean and the coordinates for Barbados. My proposition was to sail north until we passed 13 degrees North and then to turn left and run down the line of latitude until we got to Barbados. At the last minute, a friend gave me his Bulova Accutron watch, which would have given us longitude, but that went overboard at Cabo Frio, so we had no longitude again. So, there we were in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, and we didn't know where we were to within 200 miles. And it didn't matter. It was not important because we knew that we were safe and we knew that we were going the right way."

I'm sitting in Tom Cunliffe's "den" next to his home in a quaint village outside Salisbury in South West England. The pretty cottage where he and his wife, Ros, live and the converted outbuilding are all quintessentially English, as is the 1949 Bentley in which he picked me up from the station. But the stories he tells me conjure up another world, one of stormy seas, leaky boats, exotic locations, and curious characters. His stories are told with the characteristic mix of high drama, acute technical know-how, and great humor that has turned him into something of a celebrity in the British sailing world.

***Above*—Tom Cunliffe took up writing in the mid-1980s to fund his passion for old wooden boats; he's now written 30 books on subjects ranging from histories to sailing manuals and cruising pilots, penned numerous magazine articles, and appeared in television documentaries. Although he failed to reach Greenland in his pilot cutter HIRTA in 1983, he returned in a friend's boat in 2013. *Inset*—An early attempt at rowing.**

Since Tom took up writing in the mid-1980s to fund his addiction to old wooden boats, he's written about 30 books on subjects ranging from histories to sailing manuals and cruising pilots, as well as hundreds of articles for British and American sailing magazines. He's featured in three BBC series about the sea and has become a regular fixture on the boat-show and yacht-club speaking circuits, where he's guaranteed to raise a laugh. In recent years, he's taken to the Internet, with more than 40,000 subscribers to his YouTube channel and 1,000 subscribers to his online private members club, The Sea Chest. Most recently, he's written his first novel, a tale of corruption, murder, and love in the Caribbean, based on his experiences of sailing among the islands over several decades.

It occurs to me that I'm very lucky to have, for a full five hours, the undivided attention of a man with such a remarkable CV. He tells me about his event-packed life, including the six wooden boats that shaped him as a person and helped to make him famous.

HINDU, a 75′ Gaff Schooner

Tom did not come from a family of sailors, but they did pass along other skills that would serve him well in later life. His maternal grandfather was a Methodist minister, active in the early days of the Labour party and a campaigner for worker's rights. Tom's mother followed in her father's footsteps, organizing women's conventions and being involved in both party and church. Tom's father also qualified as a Methodist lay preacher at age 14, before going on to read classics at Cambridge University and eventually becoming a judge in Manchester and Liverpool. Coming from such a fearless, civic-minded background instilled in Tom a clear sense of purpose and an admirable ability to speak in public. Watching Tom talk with his characteristic zeal about surviving a storm on a 32′ yacht, it's not difficult to imagine him speaking from the pulpit about the blood of Christ with equal passion.

"They were all speakers and wordmongers," Tom says. "And I've got no chance to be anything else."

But Tom did not become a preacher. Instead, he, too, followed in his father's footsteps and studied law at Liverpool University. He was all set to become a barrister when something happened that would change his life forever. Even as a boy, he had been inspired by books of sailing adventures by authors such as Bill Tillman, Joshua Slocum, and, most influentially, Bill Robertson, whose book *Deep Water and Shoal* he believes "every young man should read." Seeing his interest in sailing, his parents arranged for Tom and a friend to hire a gaff-rigged cruiser on the Norfolk Broads for several years in a row to teach themselves how to sail. Tom pursued this interest at university, racing Fireflies on the marine lakes at Southport and West Kirby, on the northwestern coast of England.

Then, in the third year of his law degree, Tom booked a flight to the United States on the British Universities North America Club (BUNAC) scheme, which supports working holidays in the United States. It was the late 1960s, and he enjoyed his first real taste of freedom to the fullest. But his most significant experience was working as a deckhand on the 72′, 1925 William Hand–designed schooner HINDU, one of the first whale-watching boats working out of Provincetown, Massachusetts.

"She was a lovely boat and very well run in those days by a chap called Justin Avellar," Tom remembers. "He'd been on the Banks and was a proper seaman. I learned quite a lot from him. I'd turn up at six o'clock in the morning, polish the brass, and get everything rigged up. People would arrive, and off we'd go. And that was magnificent because at the end of that, I realized I could get paid for doing what I really liked doing, which was going sailing. And I thought, why am I struggling on with this academic career when I'm really not cut out for it? I really want to be a sailor. I want to have adventures."

LEIHANE, a 22′ Bermudan Sloop

Back home in England, Tom struggled for another year with his law degree before giving up and deciding to become a sailor. But, of course, there were no jobs on ships in Liverpool in the late 1960s, and he ended up driving trucks instead. Eventually, he spotted an ad in *Yachting Monthly* magazine that said: "Hands wanted for refitting a 90-ton trading ketch with a view to sailing to the West Indies." The boat turned out to be the ex-Baltic Trader JOHANNE, which would go on to become famous under the ownership of Edward and Clare Allcard, who wrote numerous books about their voyages. When Tom joined the vessel, she was a semi-wreck moored on the Hamble River and needed some intense activity to get her going ahead. It was gruelling work, but he was at last embarked on the career that would absorb him for most of his adult life. What's more, it was while working on JOHANNE that he met Ros.

Tom didn't make it to the West Indies in JOHANNE; instead, he jumped ship in Madeira and hitched his way home to be with Ros. An aspiring adventurer he might

TOM AND ROS CUNLIFFE

Tom learned the ropes in the 1925 William Hand schooner HINDU, in which he served as crew in the late 1960s.

TOM AND ROS CUNLIFFE

Tom's first boat was the 22' centerboard sloop, LEIHANE, designed by Alfred Westmacott and built of teak and mahogany on oak.

have been, but he also knew when he was on to a good thing. And so the couple rented a house in Salisbury and Tom got a string of jobs doing boat deliveries and whatever else came his way, including selling perms and wigs for the hairdressing brand Clynol, while Ros finished her secretarial training. One of his jobs at this time was delivering a Miller Fifer motorsailer down to the Mediterranean and skippering her from her base in the south of France for a few months. For full disclosure, I should mention that this was when the Compton family first met Tom. We were living aboard our 48′ Silver motor yacht in St. Jean Cap Ferrat when Tom appeared and impressed my parents no end with his dogged enthusiasm. In return, Tom says, my father taught him how to predict a mistral better than the local forecasters. I was nine years old at the time, so must admit I have no memory of him.

It was while Tom was working as a sales rep that he and Ros bought their first boat. It was a modest 22′ centreboard sloop with "full crawling headroom," according to Tom. LEIHANE was designed by the legendary Alfred Westmacott and built by the Woodnutts boatyard on the Isle of Wight in 1932. They bought her for £600 and sailed her locally around The Solent and across the Channel to France. The experience convinced them they needed a bigger boat.

SAARI, 32′ Gaff Cutter

The plan was to buy a house, work for a couple of years to pay the mortgage, then sell the house and buy a boat with the profit. The plan almost worked, although they lost patience towards the end and had to get a bridge loan to cover the difference between their savings and the price of their new boat.

The object of their impatience was a 32′ double-ended Scandinavian beauty imbued with a Viking spirit. The boat's provenance was a puzzle. According to *Lloyd's Register* (which only ever published the information provided by an owner) she was built at the Åbo Båtvarf in Finland in about 1920 for a former Finnish pilot. When they visited the yard years later, however, there was no record of the boat in their books. After a great deal of research, Tom and Ros ended up at the Colin Archer archive in Oslo, where they found the exact plans of their boat. It turned out that SAARI had been built by Colin Archer in 1903 for the Finnish pilot service, in which she served until 1920, when she was sold off during a push toward motorization. She had then been taken to the Åbo Båtvarf and converted into a yacht. By the 1960s, she had ended up in the United Kingdom under the ownership of Chris Waddington, a prominent member of the Old Gaffers Association.

One of the curious aspects of SAARI's conversion from pilot boat to yacht involved an extension of the coach roof aftward to increase the accommodation; one of the original full-width deckbeams had been left in place, presumably to maintain the hull's integrity. That meant one had to duck under a very low beam to get

TOM AND ROS CUNLIFFE

Tom's first transatlantic passage was in the 1903 Colin Archer pilot cutter SAARI, seen here in Bahia, Brazil, on her way to Rio de Janeiro.

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TOM AND ROS CUNLIFFE (BOTH)

***Left*—In 1976, Tom hauled SAARI at Frenchy's Slip in Grenada. *Above*—Tom and his wife, Ros, began living aboard SAARI in the early 1970s.**

from the galley and navigation area to the saloon, a small detail that made perfect sense structurally but also made her very hard to sell, despite her impressive performance at sea.

"She sailed like a witch," Tom says. "Which was just as well, because the engine wasn't any good. It was constantly breaking down and was just useless. But she was a pretty boat. Flawless, really. Usually, there's always some angle that lets a boat down, unless it's a Fife. And there wasn't with SAARI. She was perfect from every angle, in or out of the water. It was just the headroom that was no good. I'm 6′6″, but when I was 25, I didn't care about that. Everybody else did, so we got the boat cheap."

This was the early 1970s, when fiberglass ruled. Wooden boats were regarded as anachronisms, even more so those equipped with four-cornered sails. The main reason to buy wooden boats was because they were cheap. But Tom had good reason to put his faith in a 70-year-old piece of floating history. He had tried both

modern and traditional boats, and the experiential difference was startling.

"I remember when we were living on board SAARI; I was teaching sailing to pay her off," he says. "My teaching tool was a Sparkman & Stephen–designed S&S 30, which had just cleaned up in the Half-ton Cup. She was very fast, a good sailing boat. But I remember very clearly one day when we were coming out of the Hamble River in SAARI for a weekend away, some clown came past us in a motorboat and produced a big wash. I'd been sailing the other boat all week, and it was a revelation the way SAARI went through that sea compared with the race boat. The difference in comfort was just mind-boggling."

While they paid off the boat debt, Tom and Ros lived aboard SAARI on so-called "debtor's jetty" on the Hamble River near Southampton, where there was a lively community of like-minded people. One fellow wooden-boat dweller was the aspiring yacht designer Nigel Irens, who had yet to design his first boat. A lifelong friendship was forged which many years later would result in an unlikely collaboration. And it was at the legendary Jolly Sailor pub on the Hamble that Tom was introduced to a random stranger who offered him a job skippering a boat in Rio de Janeiro. The stranger even offered to fly him out there, but Tom had a better idea: to sail SAARI across the Atlantic on what would be the Cunliffes' first major boating adventure.

They spent nearly a year in Rio, while Tom skippered what he describes as a "not particularly distinguished" Charles E. Nicholson ketch, but legal complexities of being in Brazil were heating up, which drove them to leave in a hurry—with or without charts and a timepiece, as described earlier. In the event, Tom managed to get a time check via radio and was able to take a sight and calculate their position. After a 42-day passage to Barbados, they got a job delivering "a quarter ton of bikinis" to an island off the coast of Venezuela before proceeding on to the east coast of the United States. They landed in Charleston, South Carolina, and, after getting the engine fixed with the help of a retired U.S. Navy mechanic, headed up the Intracoastal Waterway toward New York. To make ends meet, Tom took a job longlining for cod off Nova Scotia for a few weeks, after which they decided to return to England. It was on this crossing they encountered probably the worst storm (as opposed to "gale") of their lives, described in glorious detail in Tom's second-most popular YouTube video (@TomCunliffeYachtsandYarns).

MARISHKA, a 28′ Gaff Cutter

Back home in England, Ros soon became pregnant, and it was apparent that SAARI would be too small for three. Despite the boat's low headroom, they sold her for a good price and with the proceeds bought a cottage in Devon and their third yacht: a 28′ gaff cutter built in Sandbank, Scotland, in 1895, making it even older than their previous two boats. Based on the lines of a Loch Fyne skiff, a type of Scottish fishing boat, MARISHKA was designed by Daniel Fyfe (cousin of the more famous William Fife) and owned by Noel Guinness of

SANDEMAN YACHT COMPANY

The "lovely MARISHKA," an 1895 Loch Fyne skiff derivative that Tom and Ros bought while living in Devon, England. She was extensively rebuilt by a subsequent owner in 2022.

Guinness brewery fame in Dublin for the first few years of her life.

Tom remembers the boat fondly, describing her as "lovely MARISHKA. What a grand little sailing boat she was. She used to bustle along. She had an old Coventry Victor diesel, which went, 'Pop, pop, pop, pop.'"

With a baby on the way, the couple decided it was time to settle down and earn some money. Following a spell on the bridge of a commercial coaster, Tom duly got a job as yachtmaster instructor at the National Sailing Centre in Cowes. They moved to the Isle of Wight and bought a Jacobean farmhouse, which Ros ran as a bed-and-breakfast. Their daughter, Hannah, was born in 1978, and it seemed as if they might live happily ever after in their sweet English idyll.

Ros, however, had other ideas. Her father had been a fighter pilot in World War II, so she "grew up at the end of a runway," moving across Europe from base to base. Settling down wasn't in her blood. Tom was also soon burnt out, teaching countless aspiring yacht skippers and having to sit back and watch as they set off on their own adventures. After just four years of living what seemed a perfect life, they decided it was time to move on, and for what they had in mind they would need a bigger boat.

"We got very interested in the discovery of North America in the 10th century," Tom says. "We read all the sagas in some depth and formed our own conclusions about where people had been and what had happened. So, we bought our next boat with the intention of sailing to America."

WINKIE NIXON (BOTH)

***Right*—Tom and Ros's 15-year ownership of HIRTA, a 50′ cutter, began in 1982. *Far right*—In Mystic, Connecticut, the following year, they repaired the stern.**

HIRTA, 50′ Gaff Cutter

Their search for an ocean-worthy cruiser eventually took them to Scotland to look at an exquisite 1930s William Fife gaff cutter, which was the epitome of the classic yachts that would become extremely fashionable in the 1980s and '90s. But Tom and Ros were looking for a long-legged cruising yacht and turned her down. In desperation, the yacht broker suggested looking at an old pilot cutter on the other side of Loch Fyne. After a long drive up and down winding Scottish roads, they reached Tarbert. It was a life-changing moment.

"We came over the hill, and she was moored in the middle of the harbor, like a set piece really," Tom says. "We just looked at her and said, 'We'll have her.' We hadn't even been aboard, but she looked just right, dead right. And so she proved to be."

The boat in question was the 50′ Bristol Channel pilot cutter HIRTA, which would dominate the couple's lives for the next 15 years. Built in Polruan, Cornwall, in 1911, and then named CORNUBIA, she worked as a pilot cutter until 1913. She was sold in around 1920 and was converted into a yacht. During World War II, she was used as a sail-training vessel by sea cadets on the Firth of Clyde in Scotland, until she was bought by Adam Bergius in 1958 and used as a family boat for the next 23 years. Under the Cunliffes' ownership, she would become famous around the world and not only transform their fortunes but, perhaps more important, advance the cause of gaff rig generally. For, even though gaff rig was still regarded as eccentric when Tom and Ros bought HIRTA in 1982, by the time they sold the boat 15 years later the concept had re-entered the mainstream, and there's no question they played a large part in that transformation.

TOM AND ROS CUNLIFFE

Tom and Ros's daughter, Hannah (right), grew up sailing aboard HIRTA; she has been the director of National Historic Ships UK since 2017.

First, however, they had to get out of Loch Fyne.

"As we beat down the loch, we had headwinds and we found that she was leaking quite prodigiously," Tom remembers. "So, we pulled into Campbeltown and I rang up the [previous] owner and said, 'Look, we're leaking quite a bit of water here.' And he said, 'Yes, you'll find that she will make some water. It's never too much. And it keeps the bilge clean.' He was an excellent man, who'd been a bit of a hero as a submariner in World War II. And it wasn't for me to criticize anything he said, so I went along with it.

"So, for the 15 years that we had the boat, she leaked continuously at sea. We couldn't stop it. I spent all my substance and most of my hard labor trying to fix her. But nothing would stop it. And what we discovered was that so long as you were confident, you could pump it out a lot quicker than it was coming in. So, there was really nothing to worry about. As long as the equation was in your favor, you weren't going to sink.

"And it led me to the conclusion that the modern world has developed a very bourgeois attitude towards leaky boats. People can't take it. They can't take a joke."

After making a couple of small changes to the rig, Tom and Ros set off from Scotland with four-year-old Hannah and two friends on May 1, 1983. They sailed up to Bergen, Norway, and from there retraced the route the Vikings are thought to have taken across the North Atlantic to North America, via Iceland and Greenland, where ice prevented a landing. They finished the crossing at L'Anse aux Meadows, Newfoundland, where Leif Erikson is thought to have landed late in the 10th century.

From there, they headed down the East Coast of the United States to Newport, Rhode Island, and witnessed a peak moment in yachting history as AUSTRALIA II became the first non-American boat to win the AMERICA's

HIRTA's prominent role in the BBC Two TV series *Island Race* helped to raise the profile of gaff-rigged boats in Great Britain.

ROS CUNLIFFE

Cup. They then headed to Mystic Seaport Museum and on to New York, where HIRTA was chartered to act as committee boat for the Mayor's Cup schooner race. All went well until the end of the race when the 128′ three-masted schooner VENDREDI TREIZE (skippered by Jean-Yves Terlain in the 1972 OSTAR) rammed into HIRTA as she crossed the finish line. The repairs were costly, and it took nine months for them to settle the matter through the American courts.

The Cunliffes made many friends while they were in the United States, including journalist Jack Somer, who introduced Tom to the staff of *Yachting* magazine. And it was while HIRTA was impounded in New York that he wrote his first magazine article for that publication, thereby launching his career as yachting journalist.

Once free of the courts, they sailed south to the Caribbean and across the Atlantic, arriving home in England three years after they had set off. The experience provided the material for Tom's first book, *Topsail and Battleaxe*, published in 1988, which won the Best Book of the Sea Award for that year.

Many other adventures followed, including sailing to Leningrad (now St. Petersburg) in the late 1980s—making HIRTA only the third western yacht to visit the Soviet Union since the Russian Revolution of 1917, or so Tom believes. In 1992, he wrote *Hand, Reef and Steer*, which would become a definitive guide to gaff rig. The book was an important step forward in the development

of the rig, not simply wallowing in nostalgia but explaining how to set it up and use it more efficiently, thereby making it relevant to the modern sailor.

Given both Tom and HIRTA's high profile at this time, it wasn't surprising that when the BBC was looking to make a TV series about sailing around Britain, they chartered both the boat and the man to lead the expedition. The stars of the show, first aired in 1994, were supposed to be comedian Sandi Toksvig and former Beirut hostage John McCarthy, but any sailor watching knew that the real celebrities were Tom and HIRTA.

WESTERNMAN, 40′ Gaff Cutter

By the mid-1990s, Tom and Ros were in their 50s, and hoisting 1,400 sq ft of sail singlehanded (as Tom used to do in his younger days) was starting to take its toll. With HIRTA lighting up the nation's TV screens, there could be no better time to sell her. But what boat could possibly replace such a beloved old friend?

It so happened that Tom's old friend Nigel Irens, having designed some of the fastest multihulls for some of the best sailors in the world, including Ellen MacArthur's record-breaking trimaran B&Q/CASTORAMA, was toying with the idea of designing a "modern" lugger for himself. He wanted some advice from Tom, and soon the pair were discussing the idea of a "modern" gaffer too. In characteristic style, Nigel sketched some ideas on the back of an envelope, which were then turned into digital files by Ed Burnett, his right-hand man at the time. Nigel and Ed worked together to tweak the design, then Nigel carved the shape out of wood. And it was in this tactile, handmade form that Tom and Ros first saw their next boat.

"I was very interested in the midship section," Tom says. "Because I was fancying something like SAARI, with a lovely wineglass section, only a bit bigger so I could walk around. But this boat had a brutal West Country, soft bilge. And I said, 'What's all this, Nigel?' He said, 'There's less wetted area than there is if it's going all the way around. So it'll go better in light air, you'll see. And you've got all that lovely displacement, which you want.' I said, 'I do.' And he said, 'You can put things in it and she won't even notice it. You can carry a ton of water. How does that sound?' I said, 'Yeah, that'll do.' And so there it was. And I said, 'Can I have another foot of beam?' And he said, 'Well, I like them long and narrow.' I said, 'Yeah, of course, but to me this looks like it wants another foot of beam.' And so he gave me another foot of beam."

The result was a design that looked as traditional as you like at first glance but took advantage of modern materials, which resulted in repurposing some of that heavy displacement as ballast placed low in the hull. That would allow for a larger sail area, which in turn would result in an overall better turn of speed. Construction was of strip-plank cedar and epoxy, which produced a strong, low-maintenance hull without any risk of developing the "prodigious" HIRTA leaking. Tom, it seemed, had become bourgeois in his middle age.

LESTER MCCARTHY

Designed by Nigel Irens, the 40' WESTERNMAN was a "rocket ship," according to Tom. She's shown here with mainsail triced to reduce sail area in a blow.

The Cunliffes called their new boat WESTERNMAN, the name given to the men who once took the pilots out to the ships in any weather in the Bristol Channel. The name was also given to the ensuing class. They entrusted the construction of the boat to the Covey Island Boatworks in Nova Scotia, who would build several other renditions of the same design.

While the boat was being built, Tom and Ros embarked on a long-dreamed-of motorcycle trip across America, Tom on his Harley-Davidson soft-tail BLACK MADONNA and Ros on her Harley-Davidson 883 Sportster BETTY BOOP, complete with leather tassels, buckhorn bars, and shiny drag pipes. The eventual outcome was Tom's only non-nautical book, *Good Vibrations, Coast to Coast by Harley*, published in 2000.

WESTERNMAN, launched in summer 1997, proved every bit as fast as Nigel had said she would be.

"She was a rocket ship. Nothing could catch her," Tom says. "The big difference compared to HIRTA was sail-carrying power. She had a big rig and 7 tons of lead bolted through on the bottom. When the wind blew, you could put more rag on, and she just went faster. And you could not get the covering board in the water. She was so powerful. And that was a two-edged sword, really, because it was great that you could go fast if you wanted and you had plenty of young men with something to prove on board. But if it was you and the lady wife, it made her quite hefty to sail, because the sheet loads were very high."

CHRISTOPHER THORNHILL

With her high ballast-to-displacement ratio, WESTERNMAN is able to carry a lot more sail than a traditional gaffer. Her rig was designed by Ed Burnett.

Despite the boat being a handful in a blow, Tom and Ros sailed WESTERNMAN extensively over the next 13 years. They returned to North America, and when they sailed once again to Mystic, Connecticut, they found that, amazingly, the iron mainsheet horse they had taken off HIRTA was available and they had it fashioned into a tiller for their new boat. Then they headed back across the Atlantic to England. They had, by then, bought a cottage outside Salisbury, and kept the boat on a mooring on the Beaulieu River some 50 miles away, using her for some gentle summer cruising, such as sailing to the Lofoten Islands in Norway's Arctic (2,500 miles there and back), North Africa (2,400 miles) as well as Scotland and Ireland. "We just kicked around, really," Tom says with a chuckle.

Finally, in 2013, they decided to "quit while we were ahead" and, rather than watch WESTERNMAN slowly deteriorate, they made the momentous decision to sell her and buy their first boat not built of wood. And yet again, their quest took them to America, where they found a Mason 44 designed by the former John Alden protégé Al Mason, at a good price in Miami, Florida. Significantly, this time they had the boat shipped to England rather than sailing it over themselves, since Tom didn't trust the rigging. It turned out he was right, and the boat had to be completely rerigged on arrival in the U.K.

There's no doubt that Tom loves his new boat, which he and Ros have sailed extensively, mostly around Scandinavia. Yet, 15 years on, he still sounds slightly apologetic whenever he talks about her. After all, this is the man who built his entire career on sailing solid wooden gaffers with fearless abandon, showing they could do the job just as well as any of the modern plastic fandangos. The recent obsession with Bristol Channel pilot cutters in particular can at least partly be traced back to his well-publicised adventures on HIRTA. Which doubtless explains why he sounds so nostalgic when talking about these boats.

"WESTERNMAN was very much making a statement: don't forget the lessons of history. This boat will sail as well as any of your fiberglass boats. See how much more beautiful it is. See how much more skill it requires to do it, and therefore how much more satisfaction for the people who are sailing it. Just go in that saloon and look what a nice place it is to be, and then have a look at your airport-terminal production yacht. Because there is something nice about being in a wooden boat, knowing that it's grown from an acorn in the forest and that in the end—after you've had your time in it, after all the skill that's gone into converting from a tree into this marvellous artifact—that in the fullness of time it will return to where it came. And you've been in it for part of its life. I like that feeling. It's easy to forget it, but it's unwise to forget it."

Tom Cunliffe's first novel, Hurricane Force, *is available from Amazon or, during winter months, order signed copies at www.tomcunliffe.com.*

Nic Compton is a regular contributor to WoodenBoat.

MALCOLM WHITE

Tom on a teaching cruise in the Caribbean. These days, he is much in demand as a speaker, teacher, and general wise old man of the sea.

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Shad Boats

Icons of North Carolina

ED TUPPER

by Paul Molyneaux

The North Carolina shad boat is emblematic of the post-Civil War–era South. It embodies innumerable aspects of this period of its region's historical resource use and development patterns. The changes it has gone through in design, power, and function perfectly mirror a unique slice of Americana.

A shad boat is a utilitarian, carvel-planked workboat built on a carved "bottom piece" as opposed to a standard keel. Usually about 24′ long, they were adaptations of earlier dugouts called *kunners*. The original shad boats of the late 1870s were designed for sail, but later versions were adapted for inboard engines; combined with a shortage of materials such as naturally crooked knees, these powered shad boats began to take on the qualities of a "deadrise" hull type. This evolution has led to some controversy as to whether the later versions are, in fact, shad boats, deadrise shad boats, or round-chined deadrises. Most people on Roanoke Island tend to lean toward a broad definition and embrace all versions as the shad boats that have become an important part of their identity.

George Washington Creef of Wanchese, North Carolina, is credited with designing and building the first shad boat in the late 1870s. Various builders around the tidewaters of Dare County continued to build shad boats and tweak the design for 50 years or more, marking the shift from the age of sail to that of the internal combustion engine, and in 1987 the state legislature designated it the Official State Historic Boat of North Carolina. While shad boats have been employed in many of the state's tidewater fisheries, they are more than just utilitarian workhorses for artisanal fishermen. Ingrained in their sweeping lines and seakindly forms are myriad influences that go back thousands of years to the Croatoan tribe of the Outer Banks.

Ben Brown of Wanchese has a passion for shad boats that goes back to his childhood, which wasn't so long ago. "I have been studying them since I was little boy," says the 23-year-old fisherman and boat carpenter. "I don't know what it is; something about them."

Brown recalls his father buying him an old skiff when he was 12 years old, and he credits that boat with teaching

***Above*—Shad boats, which are the Official State Historic Boat of North Carolina, were first conceived as small sailing vessels after the Civil War and shifted to power in the early 20th century. While their use has diminished, their broad utility as powerful open workboats—and cultural emblems—still attracts passionate watermen.**

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION ARCHIVES

George Washington Creef likely designed and built the first shad boat in the late 1870s. He is shown here at his Wanchese, North Carolina, shop with two shad boats in progress.

him most of what he knows about boat carpentry. "It was one disaster after another. One time I was digging rot out of the side, and I dug out so much I didn't know how I could fix it, and I fell down on the floor and I was crying and my dad grabbed me and said, 'You got this. You'll figure it out.' And I did. I learned a lot from that boat. I learned there's always a way to fix something."

When he heard his uncle was selling a shad boat built in 1980, Brown went over to the mainland to talk to him. "I told him I wanted to buy it. He had another one but hadn't been using it. So, it was in bad shape. It had some rot in the false deck, and the engine box was all rotted. We made a deal, and I brought it home around June of 2020, and was hoping to have it ready by Fourth of July." Brown spent a solid week scraping the layers of old paint off the 30′-long, 7′-wide boat. "I never want to see that baby-blue color again," he says.

After replacing the rotten decking and building a new engine box using closed-cell foam, Brown had the boat in the water by late August. "I filled the seams with epoxy and fiberglassed the top of the washboards," he says. "It looked like it had a coaming at one time, and I thought about putting that back on, but I changed my mind." Brown painted the inside gray, the outside white, and the bottom red. He added a dark-blue stripe under the toerail. He named it the MISS MARSHA, after his grandmother. "I think the world of her," he says. "She saw it in the water, but I never did get to give her a ride in it before she died."

In 2023, ribbonfish showed up off the coast of North Carolina, and fishermen were getting more than $3 per pound for them. Brown took his shad boat out to catch what he could. "Every day I went out there, they'd be talking about my boat on the radio," he says. As far as Brown knows, the boat came from Buxton. "That's down near Cape Hatteras. Mike Scott built it," he says. "I think of it more as a replica. But I've never actually talked to him about it."

With the MISS MARSHA in the water, Brown bought a second shad boat, a 23-footer built in 1928. "An older woman told me that Belov Tillit built it. I think that's how you spell his name." Brown adds that he likes the lines a lot better. "It's more of the classic shad-boat shape," he says. "One side of the engine bed was rotten. Once I get that fixed I'm going to put a 350 marinized Chevy in her. I don't mind having lots of power."

Shad boats are built on a carved Y-shaped keel—the "bottom piece"—made of cypress. Builders fasten sawn frames, generally of white cedar—known locally as juniper—to the wings of the bottom piece, as the keel is called. The frames can be made of multiple overlapping pieces to maintain strength around the turn of the bilge, and the hulls are carvel-planked with juniper. Shad boats usually are fitted with wide washboards—or lookouts, as Brown calls them—supported by knees.

The classic shad boat is radically different from the types of workboats George Washington Creef had been building before the 1870s, but within its design and construction can be found traces of earlier tidewater

NORTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES

Shad boats at a dock at Manteo, North Carolina, around 1910.

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

ED TUPPER

***Above left*—The 24′ shad boat ELLA VIEW, which is now on display at Roanoke Island Maritime Museum in Manteo, was built in 1883 by George Washington Creef. As her heart-shaped stern and outboard rudder suggest, she was built to sail. *Above right*—Contrast ELLA VIEW's stern with that of MISS MARSHA, which is equipped with "hobbles," or primitive trim tabs, to assist her in planing.**

boats, including the Croatoan dugouts. Archaeologists in the region have discovered dugouts from 2500 B.C. John White arrived on Roanoke Island in 1587 to re-establish Sir Walter Raleigh's colony, which Governor Ralph Lane had abandoned a year earlier. White was something of an artist, and he drew pictures of Croatoans using dugouts to fish and tend their weirs. His drawings show them catching drum, hammerhead sharks, shad, pompano, and other species; chroniclers of the time state that Native fishermen could fill a basket with fish in less than an hour.

White's drawings also show the Native boatbuilders using fire and stone adzes to shape dugout canoes from the massive cypress trees that once grew in the swamps around the sounds. These were the boats that the Colonial boatbuilders used as the basis for their adaptations. Two split cypress trees fastened to a central keel created a wider, deeper boat known as a *periauger*. Often fitted with two masts, periaugers served as the transport vessel of choice in Colonial times. Plantation owners used them to carry cotton and tobacco to coastal ports, and they were likely used in the emerging shad fishery.

Before building shad boats, Creef reportedly built kunners, which the historian David Bennett refers to as a smaller version of the periauger. A kunner on display at the North Carolina Maritime Museum in Beaufort offers an example of the method of fastening two carved split cypress logs to a center piece that served to widen the boat and sometimes formed a keel. The museum's kunner has a shaft bored through the center log, indicating it was still being used when fishermen moved from sail to internal combustion in the early 20th century.

Up until August 2025, I had only seen photos of shad boats, but one hot day, as Hurricane Erin churned east across the Atlantic, I found myself aboard a broken-down fishing boat, the 46′ gillnetter LANDON BLAKE, lying on anchor a mile off Hatteras Island. The problem turned out to be a blocked fuel line, and after jury-rigging a fuel supply line to the engine, her owner, Tommy Danchise, got us back to Wanchese on Roanoke Island. "I hate being towed," he said.

While waiting for a mechanic, Mr. Tommy, as the locals call him, invited me to jump into his truck. We drove down the road a couple of miles and pulled into the yard of Jay Hooper. Up on blocks sat a shad boat beyond repair, a couple of canvas straps were all that held it together. But all the pieces were there, more or less, including the carved cypress keel. "Calvin Paine and a man named Pierce built that in 1945. My father had it," Hooper said.

Next stop on Tommy's shad-boat tour was the Roanoke Island Maritime Museum in Manteo for a look at the ELLA VIEW, a true classic shad boat, built in 1883 by G.W. Creef himself. The 24′ ELLA VIEW has a rounded hull with frames cut from juniper stumps where the roots turn out, capturing those natural curves. It has a centerboard trunk, and a large rudder hangs from a raked heart-shaped transom.

She has a lot of what Brown and others call "tuck," where the bottom rises up to the transom, and the vessel is clearly built for sail. From the top, she looks like most of the shad boats that would be built after her, widest just forward of amidships, and with a wide washboard and a short coaming. There is a hole in the forward

"thot" as the locals call the thwart, and a maststep on the cypress keel. Like most shad boats, the ELLA VIEW has a gentle sheer and a sharp stem raked to form a crisp obtuse angle where it meets the keel.

A photo exists of Creef in his yard, adze in hand, flanked by two finished shad boats and a cypress keel he is carving. The ELLA VIEW is one of "Wash" Creef's earliest boats, and thus a model for the thousands of shad boats that came after her, although design changes occurred driven by availability of material, cost of construction, and the shift to inboard engines.

Like the ELLA VIEW, shad boats averaged about 24′, though some, like the MISS MARSHA, reached 28′ or 30′. They were the workboat of the common man and filled a need in the post–Civil War fisheries of eastern North Carolina.

Before what historian Charles Heath calls the War between the States, North Carolina's shad fishery was a major enterprise. In his 1997 paper, *A Cultural History of River Herring and Shad Fisheries in Eastern North Carolina*, Heath documents the development of the fishery from small-scale to an industrial enterprise. "Commercial fisheries slowly developed in Colonial North Carolina," he wrote. "By the end of the 1760s, however, commercial river-herring fisheries were well established in the Albemarle region, particularly in the Edenton area and on the Roanoke, Chowan, Neuse, and Meherrin Rivers."

Heath, drawing from earlier research, told the story of large-plantation owners along the shores where shad passed, using hand-hauled seines as early as 1762. By the early 1800s, he noted, fishermen had started to use windlasses to haul the seines and started landing larger and larger quantities of shad. The plantation owners invested what today would be millions of dollars in their haul-seine fisheries.

In his paper, Heath cited the 1840 census, which records that haul-seine fisheries in the Albemarle Sound region produced 63,185 barrels of shad and river herring. He noted that chroniclers of the mid-19th century fishery all described large-scale river and sound fisheries that regularly landed 300,000 to 500,000 river herring in single hauls.

"In the 1850 Federal census, Bertie County alone claimed seven large-scale haul-seine fisheries with an annual production of approximately 11,000 barrels of fish, primarily shad and river herring," Heath wrote. "By 1852 there were a total of 70 large-scale and small-scale haul seine operations on the Albemarle Sound and its tributary rivers. Twenty-eight haul-seine operations on the Albemarle Sound purportedly employed a seasonal work force in excess of 5,000 laborers."

But fishing pressure and habitat loss took their toll on the fishery. By 1850, Heath noted, production had declined by 30 percent to 42,197 barrels, and by the 1860 census the numbers were way down, with only 13 fisheries around the sound producing just 7,513 barrels.

Then came the Civil War and the blockade of the South, known as the Anaconda Plan. In August 1861, a joint U.S. Navy and Army operation captured Fort Hatteras and Fort Clark, closing Hatteras Inlet. Then, in February 1862, another combined Army and Navy operation, the Burnside Expedition, took control of

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Ben Brown of Wanchese is a 23-year-old fisherman and carpenter with a passion for shad boats. He recently rehabilitated one, which he named MISS MARSHA, and is currently at work on another.

ED TUPPER

ED TUPPER

Brown's current project is a sweet-lined 23-footer likely built by Belov Tillit in 1928.

Albemarle Sound and Pamlico Sound. According to Heath, "Many fishing operations of the commercial variety were temporarily, but effectively, terminated."

Heath noted that the occupation of eastern North Carolina by Union forces limited the Confederate army's access to the fisheries there. Union forces reportedly destroyed much of the infrastructure, burning nets, boats, and shoreside buildings. But then, in 1863, the North Carolina government itself "prohibited haul-seining operations for the duration of hostilities," Heath wrote. "The authorities feared that catches of river herring and shad would either be confiscated by Federal troops or openly sold to them by northern sympathizers, who resided in many areas along the coast."

The trajectory of the shad fishery before the Civil War was not unusual. Overcapitalization by wealthy plantation owners led to overexploitation at the same time that dams were being built and habitat lost. Shad stocks were crashing hard in 1860, but the war led to a rebound in demand and a ban on haul-seines led to a need for more boats to meet it. This is when the door for the shad boat began to open.

The haul-seine fishery continued but struggled due to a lack of labor in the postwar economy. Steam-powered windlasses came into use as the haul-seine fishery became industrialized. At the same time, John Pentrose Hettrick, along with his brother William, brought the pound-net fishery—by which fish are gathered into stationary nets—to North Carolina. In 1869 Hettrick, who had worked pound nets in the Great Lakes before the war, settled in Edenton, and started pound-netting near Sandy Point. The new gear he introduced provided small-scale fishermen with a means of landing large quantities of shad with a much smaller investment than needed for a haul-seine fishery. Pound nets started to account for a growing percentage of the annual shad and herring landings and as they took over the fishery, small-scale fishermen needed boats suited to the gear.

"In response to the growth and demands of the pound-net fisheries in the rough waters of Albemarle and Pamlico Sounds, North Carolina boatbuilders designed a unique work boat during the late 1870s," Heath wrote. The specialized fishing boat came to be known as the "shad boat" or "Albemarle Sound boat."

ED TUPPER (BOTH)

***Far left*—Brown's 23-footer has the characteristic hobbles of a powered shad boat, which will support the weight and force of the marinized 350 Chevy V-8 that he will eventually install. *Left*—Before the motor can be installed, Brown will have structural work to do, including the repair of a rotted engine bedlog.**

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ED TUPPER

Ben Brown on an outing near Wanchese in December 2025.

While George Washington Creef gets the credit for inventing the shad boat, the renowned shad-boat experts Mike Alford and Earl Willis believe he was just one of several builders working on a similar idea and sharing insights. In those post–Civil War days, the big cypress and juniper trees used for dugouts, periaugers, and kunners had become hard to find, and boatbuilders needed a design they could build with materials that were more readily available.

Alford and Willis interviewed the last of the shad-boat builders and are considered the best sources for information on the craft. "Wash Creef was building kunners," Willis says. "But he couldn't get the big juniper logs anymore. At the time he was doing some coastal trading down as far as the Bahamas and out to Bermuda, and we believe he saw boats like the Bahama dinghy and Bermuda sloop. He saw that plank-and-frame construction and realized that was what he needed, so he brought those ideas home."

Willis observes that Wash Creef, as he is locally known, married the carvel plank-on-frame construction method to his long experience with kunners. "A lot of people think that fastening the frames to the bottom piece was a weakness in the design, but it turned out to be the strength of these boats," Willis says.

"They used the natural-bend juniper root frames," Willis says, noting that even some of those pieces were becoming scarce. He adds that sometimes shad-boat builders looked for days before finding juniper stumps that would produce knees with the right size and curvature for the boat they intended to build. "That was no easy task when, as was often the case, they had to trod through waist-deep water in search of the stumps. At most they could cut two root knees suitable for shad-boat frames from a juniper stump."

According to Willis, the true shad boat is the original, rounded design that Creef developed. "The later boats are what we call the round-chine deadrise," he says. Another shad boat expert, David Bennett, calls the later models "deadrise shad boats."

"I think the round-chine deadrise is more accurate," Willis says.

ED TUPPER

The scarcity of suitable materials and the shift from sail power to the internal combustion engine compelled builders to modify Creef's design. "They had to take away the tuck," Willis says, referring to the rise of the bottom to the raked, heart-shaped transom. "Once you lose that, it's not a shad boat anymore," he says. "When they went to motors, they needed to widen the transom, so it wouldn't squat. And because they couldn't find the juniper root knees, they had to piece the frames together. There's a fellow named Scott Whitesides who built a real shad boat and launched it in 2003. I call it ROANOKE ISLAND, but the real name is the SPIRIT OF ROANOKE ISLAND. He glued pieces of wood together in the shape he wanted to make the frames."

Whitesides inherited the project in spring 2002. "That's when I came to work for the North Carolina Maritime Museum," he says. "They had the funding to build it. At that point they had the keel laid and the frames set up with the transom and stem and ribbands holding the shape."

Whitesides' predecessors had laminated the frames, taking the shapes from the lofting. "They weren't going to try and find the juniper or cypress buttresses to saw the frames from,"

Shad boats have worked in many of North Carolina's tidewater fisheries. Although their design was conceived in the mid to late 1800s, they have roots going back thousands of years to the Croatoan tribe of the Outer Banks.

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Shad boats might never again be the workhorses of North Carolina's sounds, because the fish themselves have become rare. To conserve stocks, there is only a short fishing season in March each year.

ED TUPPER

he says. "The same with the keel, they laminated several pieces of cypress together and then carved it out in the traditional way."

Doing their best to hold to traditional shad-boat building practices, albeit using power tools, Whitesides sought to plank SPIRIT OF ROANOKE ISLAND the way the old-timers did it, working up from the bottom piece and down from the sheer to a point where they filled in the final gap with a shutter plank. "There's no garboard. There's no rabbet to fit the garboard into on the keel. With the bottom piece, the first plank just butts up against it like any plank, which does create some leak problems. You have to keep it caulked. We started there and worked up a few planks, but we put the shutter plank in the bottom, not in the middle like they used to. Putting it in the bottom made it a little easier to press it in, because there's a reverse curve and you really have to bend it in."

Over in Manns Harbor, Lee Craddock still fishes a few pound nets and builds boats. "I started fishing with my kin in the 1960s," Craddock says. "I remember one time, my father and uncle came and got me out of school to help fish the pound nets. We filled one 24′ deadrise and half of another. It was about 3,000 lbs from two nets." That's the most shad Craddock ever saw from a fishery that had played a vital role in feeding people on the East Coast for thousands of years. "But that was nothing compared to what they said they got in the '40s and '50s."

In Craddock's yard sits a deadrise he built. "I built this one with the bottom stave planked," he says pointing to the short planks running athwartships from the keelson to the chine. "That's how they do it up on the Chesapeake.

"I had a shad boat that George Washington Creef built that I got from my great uncle, but it wasn't big enough for my pound nets, so I sold it. Now I wish I hadn't. But if you want to see a shad boat there's one hauled out over on the bank I can show you."

About a mile away, the late Cecil Midgette's old shad boat rested on the grass in front of the little house now owned by his daughter, Becky Midgette Basnight. "It was built in 1936 or '37 by Calvin Paine," she says. "I just never could sell it." Standing on the porch, Basnight shows us photos of her father, in his hip boots, working the boat in its prime. Midgette's boat would not fit Willis's definition of a true shad boat, but Craddock refers to a round-sided shad boat as a "real shad boat." Midgette's has the sawn frames overlapping to create something of a rounded hull. "Looks like he fastened it with copper rivets," says Craddock, studying the details from a boatbuilder's perspective.

While SPIRIT OF ROANOKE ISLAND is on display at the Roanoke Island Maritime Museum in Manteo, the thousands of shad boats and derivatives built over the decades have, in most cases, rotted away. Part of a shad boat keel was recovered during a dredging project on Shallowbag Bay off Manteo. Others, among them Jay Hooper's and Becky Basnight's, molder away in the dooryards of the children of their former owners.

On a little dirt road in Manteo, Ben Brown just can't stop saving shad boats. He relaunched his 1980 deadrise shadboat—or round-sided deadrise, depending on if you want to use the terminology of Bennett or Willis—so now he is focusing on his 1928 boat. Willis, looking at a photo of the interior, remarks that it is neither a deadrise nor a shad boat, by his strict definition. "It's something in between," he says.

Fishermen of the late 19th century reported that they would leave for the pound nets at dawn, and if they had good wind, they would be home before dark; otherwise they would have to "use our wooden sails"—row, that is—and get home at 9 or 10 p.m.

By the time Brown's boat was built in 1928, shad boats were firmly committed to engine power. Brown's boat shows no signs of ever having a centerboard trunk, though in those years it may have had a maststep for a sprit rig to use in fair winds or an emergency. The 23′ boat was built with engine bedlogs and the keel bored for a shaft, but the hull shape still seems intended for sailing.

"It still has a lot of tuck," Brown says. "That's why it has the hobbles." The hobbles are like early trim tabs that kept sailboat hulls from squatting. "They have to have'm," Brown says. "Once you get up to a certain speed, they set down and don't plane right."

According to Craddock, Brown's boat originally had a rounded stern, but the previous owner had a local

ED TUPPER

"Ben Brown," writes author Paul Molyneaux, "just can't stop saving shad boats."

boatbuilder, Bug Tillit, change it to a square stern and add the hobbles. "Bug's brother, Belov Tillit, also built shad boats and bigger boats," he adds.

While Brown's boat has more of the round-sided shape of the Creef shad boat than later models, it is not built with the cypress or juniper root frames. Even by 1928, those had become rare. The frames on Brown's boat appear to have been pieced together with as many as three short frames overlapping at their ends to form one frame, fastened in the shad-boat style to the bottom piece.

"There's a few I have to replace," Brown says. "And some of the cross frames. You can see where I already took some out and those square nails are sticking up." Several of the cross frames, or floor timbers, have noticeable rot. "I don't know how deep it goes. I might be able to save some of the frame."

Brown notes that these cross-pieces are difficult to remove because they are sometimes bolted down through the arms of the bottom piece. "And I need to replace one side of the engine bed," he says. "I have a 350 marinized Chevy I'm going to put in there. It's a lot for this size boat, but I like to have the power."

Brown is largely self-taught and learning as he goes—confident that there is always a way to fix something. As he pieces together his project, he pieces together the history of these boats by talking to the old timers. While museums in North Carolina display shad boats from the past, their future is in the hands of people, such as Brown, who have a passion for shad boats as working craft.

Not that shad boats will ever be the workhorses of the sounds again; like the boats, the shad have become rare. As in the 1860s, North Carolina's shad stocks have shrunk to the point that there is only a short season in March when they can be taken. The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission, which regulates shad, requires states to have an approved sustainable fishery management plan in place to try to restore the fishery, and North Carolina's is very strict. But American shad in North Carolina are not bouncing back as fast as had been hoped. "You'd think with the restrictions we've had in place since 2014 in Albemarle Sound, that they would have come back stronger," says Holly White, a biologist with the North Carolina Division of Marine Fisheries. "But we're not seeing that here, yet. There have been improvements to passage through dam removals along the East Coast, but many impediments remain, preventing passage upstream."

Even if the shad do come back, another problem is finding people who want to eat them. I recall that in the 1960s in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, a neighbor called my father over to show him two skeins of shad roe in a sheet of butcher paper folded over in his hand, his eyes twinkling as if he were showing off diamonds. But he is long gone now, and those of us who grew up picking our way through these oily, bony fish are getting older. Times change; the shad, we shad eaters, and shad boats have become scarce, yet somehow we're all still here.

Paul Molyneaux is a regular contributor to WoodenBoat.

A Boat-Trailer Catwalk

Making launching easy—and dry

by Harry Bryan

MARTHA BRYAN

My present boat, an 18′ launch, is the first boat I have owned that lives continually on a trailer and is launched and retrieved for each use. When I first used the trailer, I found it inconvenient to stand on the tongue underwater while releasing the winch strap, and difficult to balance on the trailer frame while climbing aboard the boat. During retrieval, it was even more awkward to step from the boat to the trailer to attach the winch strap.

My solution has been to add a catwalk to one side of the trailer. The attachment is meant not only to keep the boat centered on the trailer but also to make it easy to get in and out of the boat. It has been an unqualified success.

I made the catwalk from an 8″-wide rough-sawn spruce board fully 1″ thick. To stiffen the piece, I fastened a 3½″-wide spruce board, also fully 1″ thick, on edge underneath the catwalk and extending for most of its length. (Pine would work as well, but if I had used pine I would have increased the stiffener's width to 4″.) I took care to make no part of this structure extend outboard of the trailer's wheels.

The horizontal cross members supporting each end of the catwalk are made from 1½″ × 3½″ hardwood clamped to the trailer's frame with ⅜″ carriage bolts. The design for the brace supporting the catwalk's after end emphasizes light weight and rigidity but also open airflow to avoid drag while going down the road. A 1″ × 2½″ post is incorporated into the after brace as a handhold for getting into or out of the boat.

Soft material—dinghy gunwale guard serves the purpose—covers the after inboard edge of the catwalk. That edge is where the hull nudges while getting the boat centered for haulout, so the padding prevents abrasion damage to the planking. I also rounded the exposed after corner of the catwalk plank, as visible in the photos.

Each trailer and boat setup is unique, so dimensions may need adjustment and the concept as shown may need modification to suit individual needs. I hope the installation shown here can serve as an inspiration, and my experience—together with the comments I have heard at launching ramps—indicate that others may find this solution useful.

Harry Bryan is a contributing editor to WoodenBoat.

HARRY BRYAN

***Top*—The author's catwalk helps him stay dry-footed and secure while launching or retrieving his 18′ launch. *Right*—Braces attached to the trailer's metal frame form the catwalk's foundation.**

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Scottish Yachting Archives

A vast repository goes public

by Evelyn Ansel

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF SCOTTISH YACHTING ARCHIVES

***Left*—Dr. William Collier's interest in preserving the U.K.'s extraordinary historic vessels has extended over time to include yachts that have been physically lost and largely forgotten—but for their presence on paper, in model form, in paintings, or in photographs. Restored yachts are survivors by pure chance; for every successful restoration, there are a hundred equally worthy possible resurrections waiting in the archives.**

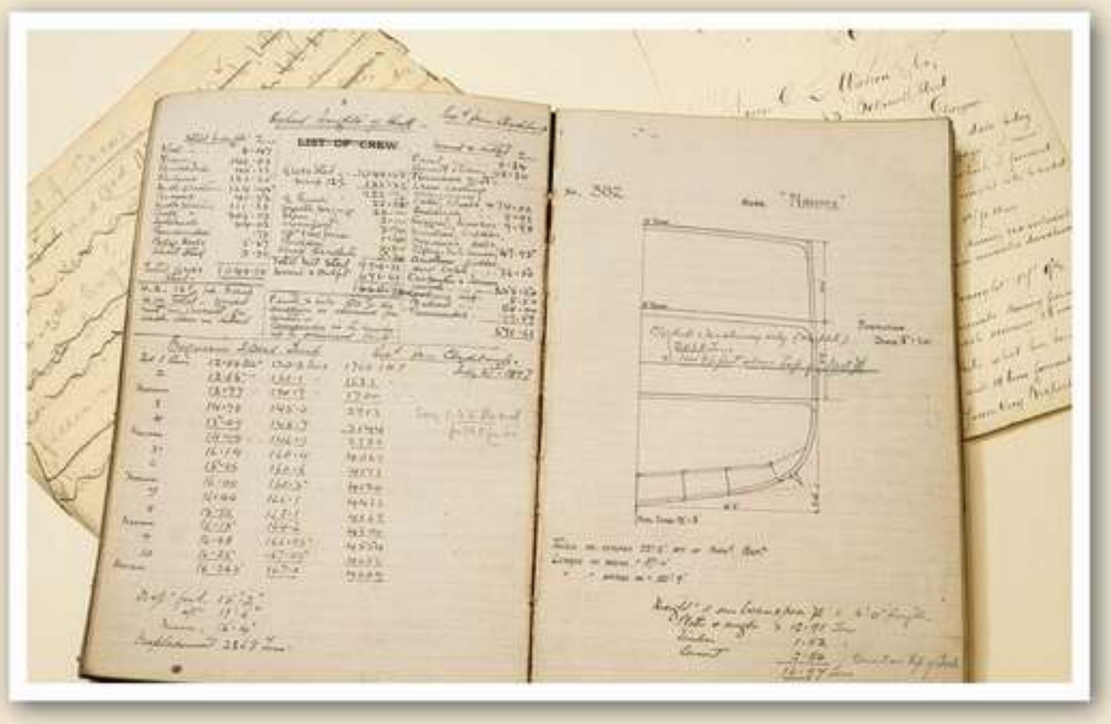
Imagine a bustling light-filled drafting office somewhere in a humming Scottish riverside city in 1903. It's filled with activity: pencils sharp and ink flying; a balcony for blueprinting a few steps away; the rustle of hundreds of drawings being stamped, revised, shuffled, copied, and studied. There's a naval architect looking over a draftsman's shoulder, signing off the exquisitely executed details inked on luminous and translucent starched or waxed linen, copied from penciled drafts on crisp, white, cotton-rag paper.

Blink, and it's 2025. Now those thousands of precious drawings are cataloged, cleaned, and numbered in neat pencil lettering, stored in pristine (and expensive) oversized flat files, digitally accessible, physically protected by alarms and HVAC systems, surveilled by cameras behind locked doors in a museum vault. What happened in the decades between their heyday and their preservation?

In an ideal scenario, a shipyard or design firm on the brink of closure recognizes the value of its corporate archive, and, if lucky, finds an institution that agrees and has the resources to receive it. Just as often, it can be decades between the active life of a naval architecture or commercial photography repository and its eventual conversion into an accessioned collection—if it happens at all. The transition may take decades. Then, a stressful (but surprisingly common) call might suddenly arrive: "Come today, come now. It all goes to the trash tomorrow!" A scramble ensues, often involving an emergency van rental.

Every curator or archivist has a story of an emergency collections acquisition—of that one time when they climbed into a dumpster or delicately picked around animal carcasses or went, fully masked and suited up, into a recently flooded basement. And no matter how a collection arrives at an archive's doorstep, that's just the beginning. Next come the months or years of physical labor and resources required to process and conserve it for the public access.

Opposite page—Oversized files store the largest plans in the collection flat and in the best possible condition for their long-term preservation. Conservation is ongoing, though 50 percent of the Fife archive has been cleaned, humidified, flattened, and repaired—a critical first step. The entire Watson archive has been put through this process. Both the Watson and Fife collections also contain a number of decorative half and full models in addition to design models, some of which are on display here in the archive.



Detailed construction notes in a G.L. Watson yard book for the palatial 306′ steel-hulled steamer NAHMA, which was built by J.G. Johnson on the Clyde for the New York businessman Robert Goelet in 1896. His brother, Ogden Goelet, commissioned the 320′ steam yacht MAYFLOWER from Watson the same year. MAYFLOWER went on to become the first U.S. Presidential Yacht in 1902 and served in this capacity until 1929.

Above—**The Fife collection includes around 10,000 drawings, books of offsets, calculation books, account books, a few photographs, one scrapbook, half models, and many small artifacts such as these tiny planes that Fife III used for half-model carving.**
Below—**The collection also has a precious number of tiny half models (possibly preliminary "sketches") that escaped being burned for firewood after their removal from the yard.**

No one is more keenly aware than William Collier of the foresight and stubborn persistence required to save and preserve a collection, or the precariousness of "the time in between" for a potential archive. He and partner Antony Harrison direct the Glasgow-based Scottish Yachting Archives (SYA). The SYA mission is "to collect, maintain, and preserve records which document the design, construction and use of yachts in Scotland and the people associated with this." Currently, the archive consists of some 20,000 drawings and more than 500′ (155m) of shelving containing yard books, correspondence, photo albums, half and full models, paintings, tools, and ephemera. It is rapidly growing. The archives were formally established as a separate entity from parent company G.L. Watson Ltd. in 2020 and were awarded nonprofit status as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation in October 2025, but the journey to public-facing archive has been in the making for more than three decades.

Collier began his career in 1988 at the Camper & Nicholsons brokerage office in Cannes, France. In those pre-internet days, he was already aware of the value of the firm's overlooked files not yet recognized as a goldmine of historical data. He discovered that no one else in the office was referencing the old brokerage files, stored 200 yards away from the main office and dismissively called "the dead" by staff. They turned out to be an incredibly rich untapped resource: "The dead" included records of any vessel listed and sold by Camper & Nicholsons from the mid-1930s on. "By going through those files," he told me, "you could see every time the boat had come up on the market, and sometimes what its fate was, if it had been destroyed… so that gave me a lot of leads in terms of where boats might be. I used that archive as a tool to find classic yachts, many of which I was able to save and are now sailing again." The files included details rarely recorded after the initial design and construction of a yacht:

Left—This drawing is one of many charming and evocative scenes sketched by Robert Cree Crawford in BLOODHOUND's logbooks, which are now part of the Fife collection held by SYA. It shows William Fife II (in the bowler) after his retirement in the 1880s aboard the famous cutter BLOODHOUND, seated alongside his friend Andrew Bain.

Below—The SYA is uniquely placed to tell, in a fresh and fascinating light, the story of the relationship between George Watson and William Fife III and their transatlantic counterparts Edward Burgess and Nathanael Herreshoff in the bid for the AMERICA's Cup. This image of the Burgess-designed 1885 American defender PURITAN, for example, is part of a set of clandestine photographs solicited and collected by Watson of American defenders. Watson went on to design the 1887 challenger, THISTLE.

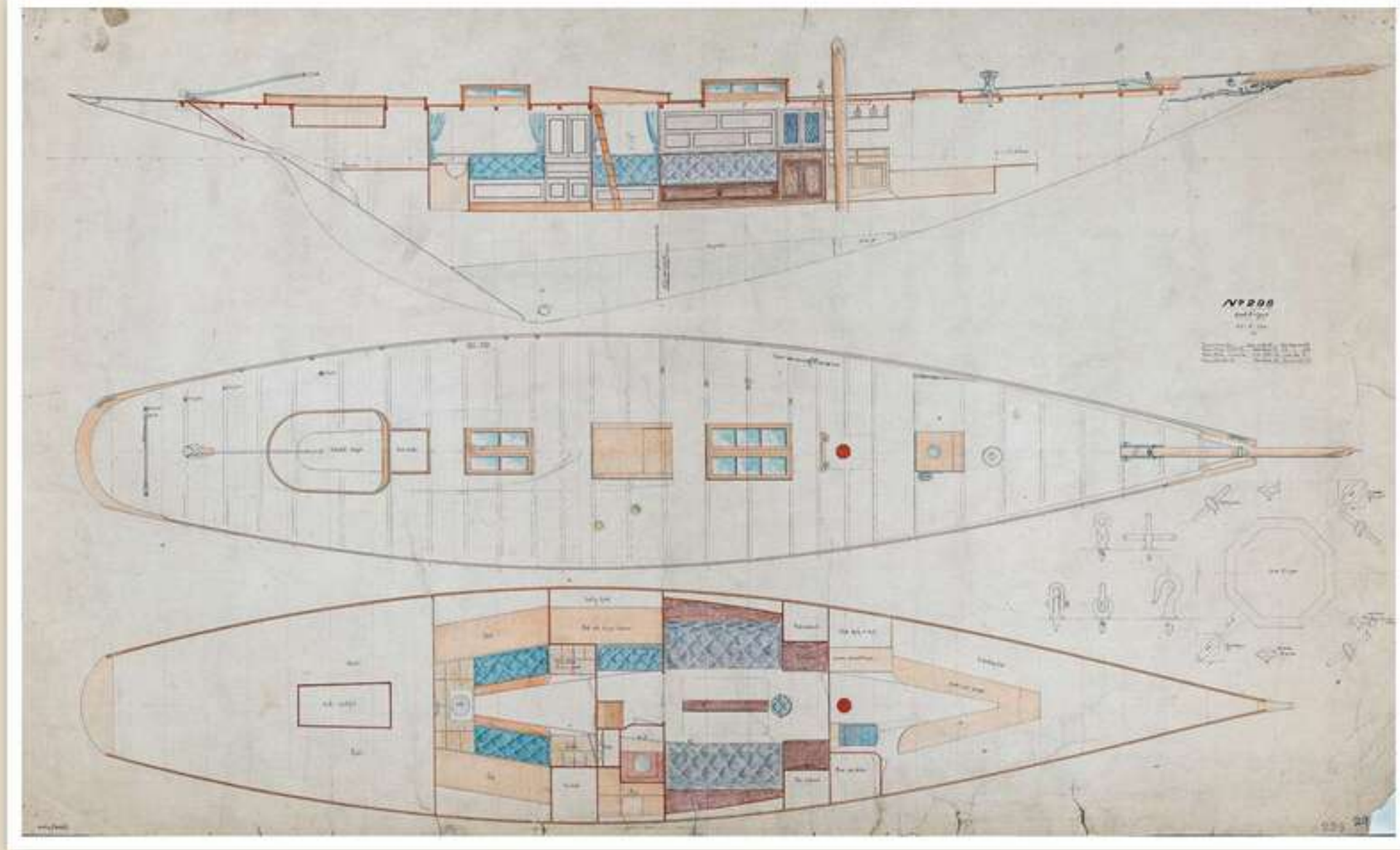
Above—This view of the Fife yard shows both the benefits and challenges of the flat tidal landscape at Fairlie. Large, deep-draft yachts had to be launched via pontoon. In this image (ca. 1875), Fife II's brother Allan stands at right amid dunnage and with an unidentified yacht in the background.

"lots of interior photos, surveys, communication with owners… you could also use them to establish values, which was very interesting, because we have very few financial records on what boats cost and what they are perceived to be worth." The list Collier developed out of these files would evolve into a career-making global hunt tracking down derelicts on the brink of destruction and matching them with prospective owners for increasingly high-profile restorations (see WB No. 157).

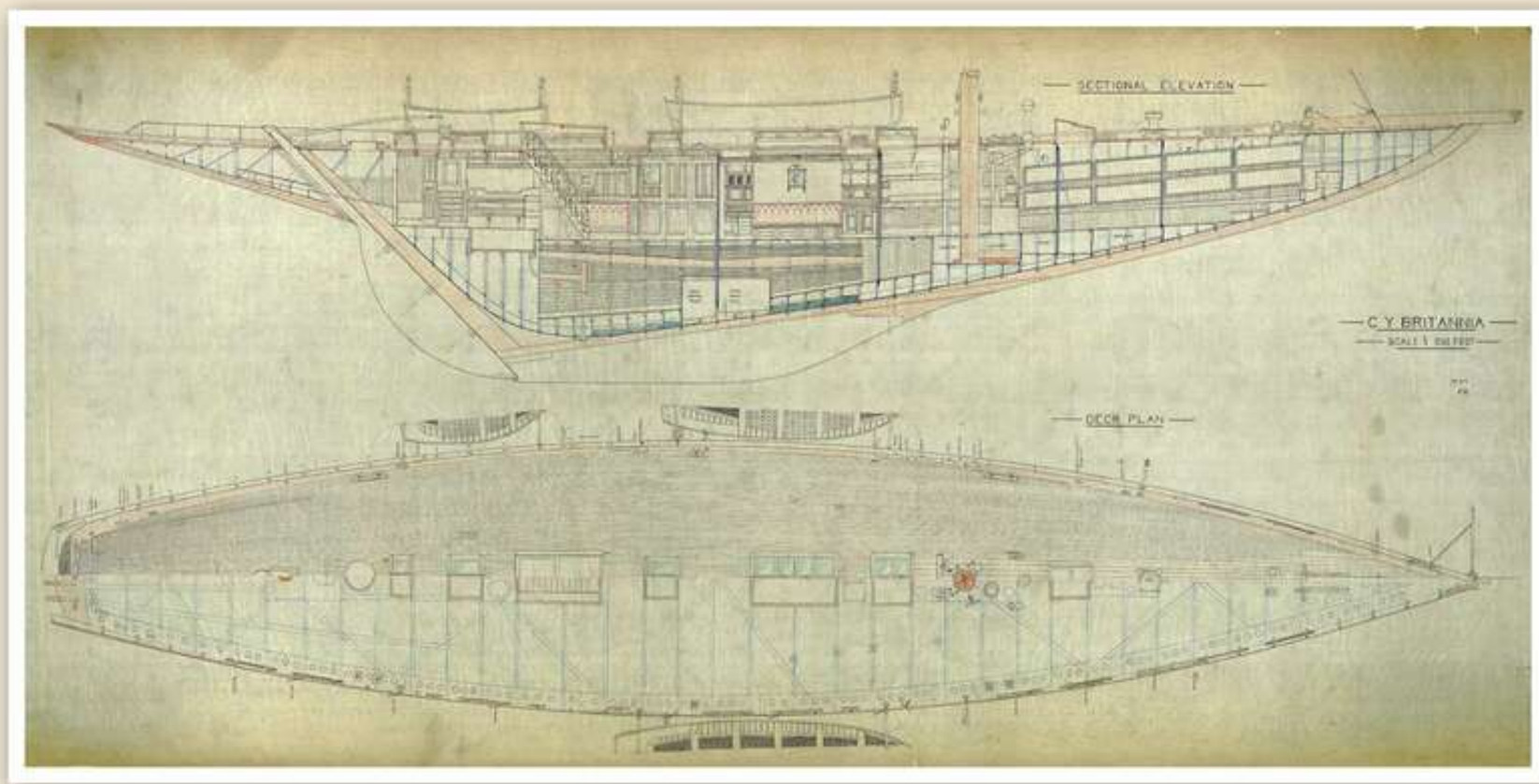
Between 1993 and 1996, Collier earned a PhD at the University of Liverpool. His thesis focused on the business history of the Camper & Nicholsons yard from its earliest inception in the late 18th century through World War II and was among the first PhDs ever awarded on the subject of yachting. From there, he set up on his own but worked very closely with Fairlie Restorations, based out of Port Hamble in Southampton, Hampshire, England.

Fairlie Restorations was established in October of 1989 by Albert Obrist, owner of ALTAIR (1931) and TUIGA (1909). The company was named for the original location of the William Fife & Son yard, some 475 miles north on the River Clyde in Scotland. Working closely with Collier, Obrist had acquired several important Fifes in need of restoration, including MARIQUITA, THE LADY ANNE, and FULMAR. In 1991, Obrist took ALTAIR back to Fairlie to celebrate her 60th birthday. While he was there, he persuaded Archie MacMillan, the last owner of the Fife yard, to sell him the surviving Fife archives. MacMillan had saved the key drawings from the offices after selling the yard for redevelopment and had stored them in a large shed in his garden. Obrist took the collection to Port Hamble and used it intermittently over the next years in service of Fife restorations.

In 1993, Fairlie Restorations began a long association with Ernst Klaus, for whom they restored FULMAR and KENTRA, Klaus employed Collier in 1997 to catalog the archive. Up to that point, Fairlie Restorations had only mined the collection for yachts they were interested in restoring. The Fife design office originally filed the drawings by size and shape—long lines plans



The 1890s were a high point of presentation with fine detail and watercolor enhancements. This drawing shows William Fife III's design No. 298, ZINITA, an 1893 20-rater. The plan, showing longitudinal section, deck plan, and general arrangement, is typical for Fife III, and they exist for virtually all his designs.

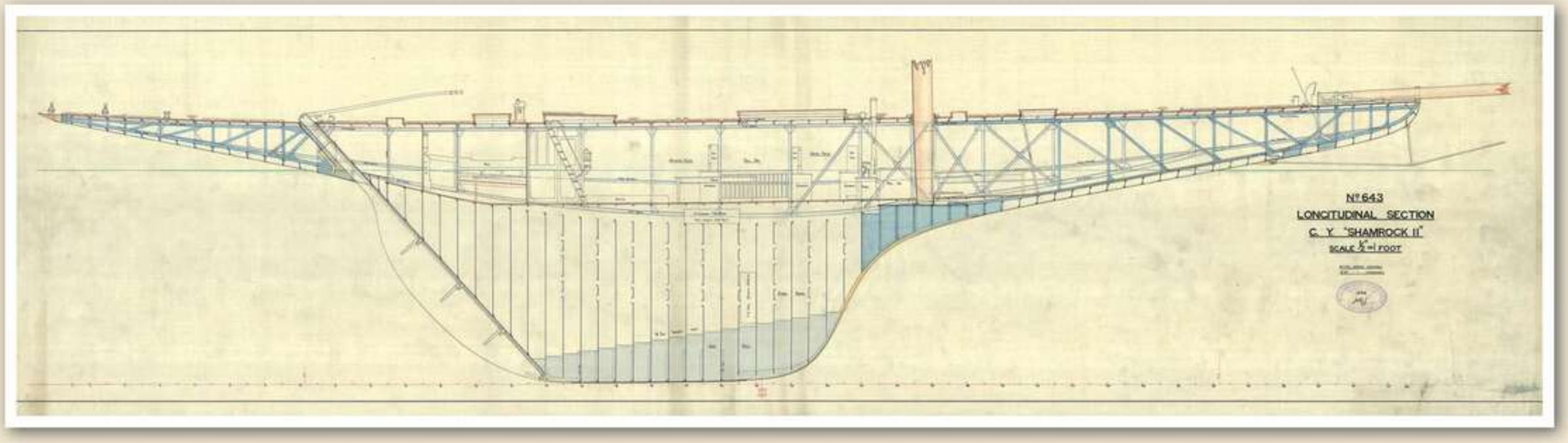


Interior layout and deck plan for the legendary BRITANNIA, designed by G.L. Watson for Edward VII as Prince of Wales. Like other legendary yacht designers of the era, good business sense and a desire to push the boundaries of design outweighed patriotic feeling; Watson also designed rival yachts for Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and Prince Luigi Amadeo, Duke of the Abruzzi. BRITANNIA though, happily for Watson, was still one of the most successful racing yachts of all time and continued to race very competitively for 30 years after Watson's death.

stored together, square sail plans together. This might have been practical at some point, but "there was quite a lot of chaos in those drawings; you might find something from the 1950s right next to something from the 1890s." A decision was made to reorganize the collection by boat. Collier said it was as an exciting time: "You would have no idea if you had a complete set of drawings for a specific boat or not, and then all of a sudden you realized you had a happy family...." The physical processing was a challenge, and the facilities were less than ideal, however. "I was processing the collection with David Ryder-Turner, and they didn't have a building, so the archive was stored in a refrigerated container with very limited physical space to lay anything out. We spent three months in this container together. We produced a catalog from it for the company, and all the drawings ended up on shelves in acid-free folders where they lived for a very long time...."

Pursuing both his PhD and subsequent restoration projects put Collier in contact with all manner of archives in addition to the Fife collection. As a formally trained historian, he strongly believed that finding the original drawings and documentation for these historic yachts was imperative to their revival. It wasn't enough to simply make things look vintage during a restoration; they had to be correct. "In the 1980s," he said, "there were some very generic yacht restorations going on; if it looked 'old-world,' that was 'a restoration.' But that's like putting a Rolls-Royce engine in a BMW. The problem was that people didn't have the information, so the question becomes, where is the information?"

The state of maritime historical preservation from the final days of large-scale wooden boatbuilding differed widely in the United Kingdom and the United States. Nearly all major port cities in Great Britain had been bombed during the world wars, leading to the dispersal or outright loss of many shipyard archives. Yachting repositories in the United States at institutions such as MIT, the Peabody-Essex Museum, Mystic Seaport Museum, and the Smithsonian Institution, had companies donate their corporate archives upon their



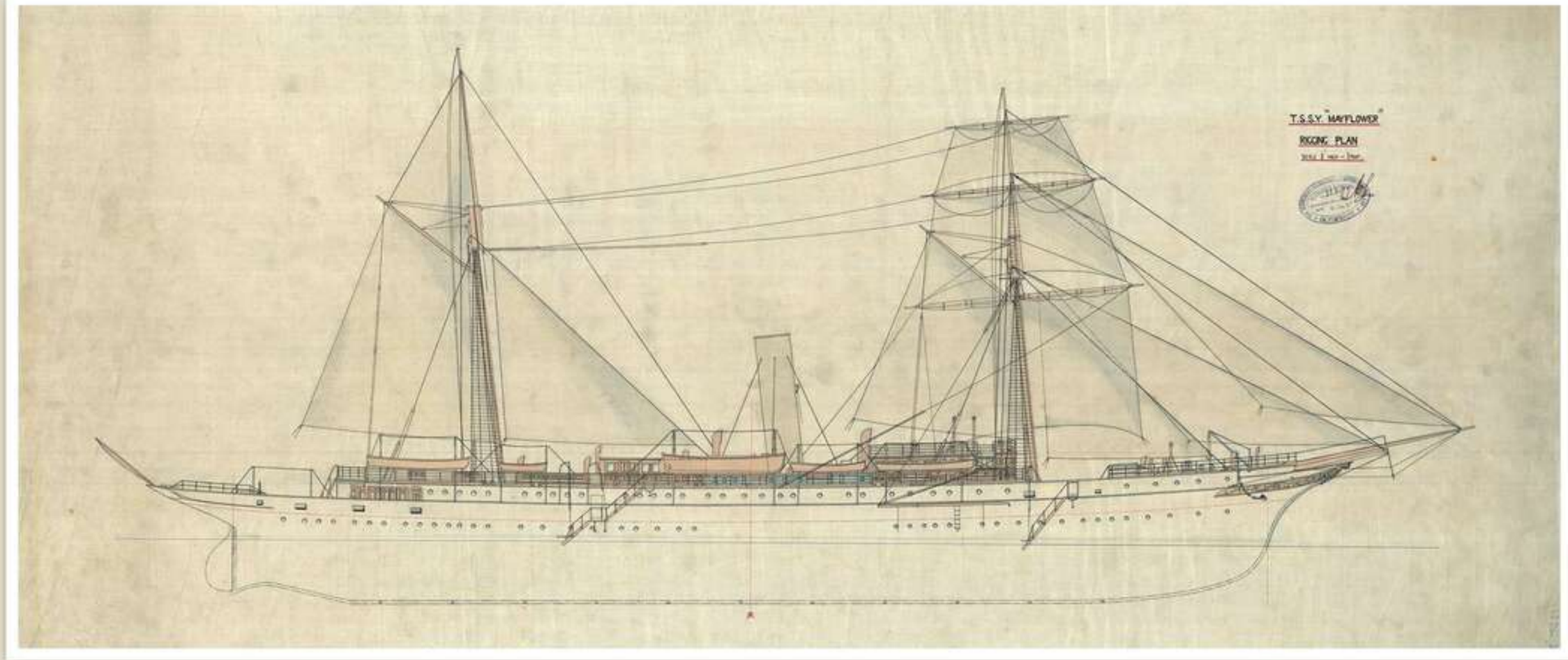
This is a longitudinal section of the AMERICA's Cup challenger SHAMROCK II, designed in 1901 by G.L. Watson for Sir Thomas Lipton to race against N.G. Herreshoff's new CONSTITUTION. In SHAMROCK II's design, Watson pioneered tank testing with leeway and heel, a technological breakthrough that was subsequently lost until redeveloped more than 30 years later by Olin Stephens and Starling Burgess.

This image gives a fabulous sense of the social history of Fairlie and the village's relationship with the Fife yard, which is visible in the background. The local population was deeply connected to the yard and the sense of pride and ownership felt in the yachts launched from their own beach extends to their local descendants today. Material relating to the Fife yard that has been passed down through generations of local families is currently surfacing and being donated to SYA.

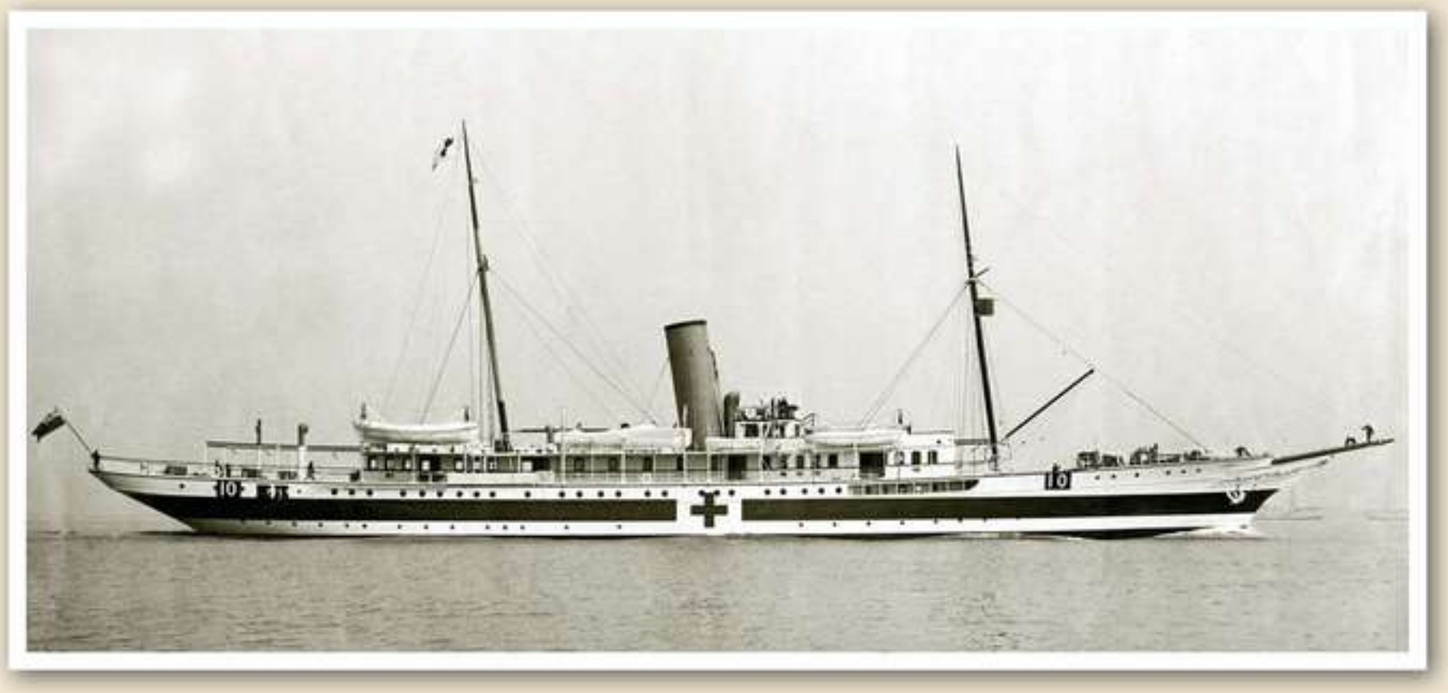
closure, and U.S. ports were never bombed during World War II. The situation in the U.K. was more often a salvage operation. This was a combined result of historical circumstance and attitude. For example, *Yachting Monthly* magazine recounted Camper & Nicholsons' bombing by the Luftwaffe during WWII: "In the files of the Gosport yard lay the records of [Charles Nicholson's] life's work in yacht design; then, during one night of war, they perished in flames. His chief draughtsman went to meet him on his way to the yard the following morning and with some hesitation broke the news. Charles Nicholson, after a moment's pause, said: 'Never mind. Think how much rubbish was lost as well.'"

The industry's wartime attitude toward its own history was further illuminated by Boyd Baird, grandson of the last manager of William Fife & Son in Fairlie, who recalled, "In 1940 the Navy took over the yard and grandfather was charged with closing the yard up. He took all the administrative papers home and they remained with him for many years. He was told to empty out the [half] model store. Two horse drawn cart loads were needed to deliver them all to where we lived. They were used as firewood through two winters." In part these are tragedies induced by wartime privation, but even outside the extremes of war, it was a common attitude. William Fife III, for example, threw out all his father's drawings when he took over the yard in the 1890s.

The broader deindustrialization of the U.K. in the 1980s led to interest in preserving a vanishing industrial heritage, but a line was often drawn at the stories of the upper class. "There wasn't an awareness on the part of the custodians, liquidators, or families of these companies [dedicated to yacht building] that they should protect these business histories, so it was all very ad-hoc…." During research for his PhD and while consulting for Fairlie Restorations through the 1990s, Collier realized that a substantial portion of the U.K.'s (and particularly, Scotland's) surviving yachting heritage existed on paper outside formal institutions or within institutions whose focus was so broad that the yachting portion of their collection barely registered in their larger missions. "In terms of institutions, archives,



Ogden Goelet, a New York real estate magnate, commissioned the 320′ steel-hulled steam yacht MAYFLOWER from Watson in 1896. MAYFLOWER went on to become the first U.S. Presidential Yacht under Theodore Roosevelt in 1902 and served five administrations until 1929; her subsequently checkered career ended after World War II, when, in a greatly diminished state, she made two trips carrying Holocaust survivors from the south of France to the new state of Israel. The 306′ steamer NAHMA was ordered the same year by Ogden's brother, Robert Goelet.



The archive holds nearly 100,000 images, of which a sizable proportion are in the Watson collection. Here, the Watson-designed LIBERTY is painted for use as a hospital ship during WWI, when she ferried the wounded from the Western Front back to Britain. The 286′ steam yacht was built in Leith in 1908 for American newspaper magnate Joseph Pulitzer, but like many yachts of the era was volunteered for service during the war.

and museums, yachting is not seen as a serious subject. The navy and national security issues are clearly worthy of preservation in museums, as well as trade and wealth and breakthroughs in technology, but people have forgotten that in the early 19th century yachting *was* a venue for breakthroughs in technology…but the perception of yachting was all too often that it's something frivolous enjoyed by rich people." He is quick to point out that this blind spot for yachting leads to "the abandoning of the histories of whole communities and of the tens of thousands of people involved with the construction, maintenance, and operation of yachts" and this is "not just preserving the talismans of rich people, we're preserving the memories of whole communities." A 19th-century Clyde yard might, for example, be the economic mainstay of a whole village and involve such engagement that it had to shut down for the whole of Clyde Week because everyone wanted to go watch or race.

After cataloging the Fife collection and working on many restoration projects for Fairlie and others, a project Collier initiated back in 1989 gained traction. He had had his eye on the 300′ 1930 steam yacht NAHLIN since discovering records of her in "the dead" at Camper & Nicholsons, and he tracked her down in then-communist Romania. The yacht was designed by G.L. Watson & Co. and built by John Brown & Company in Clydebank, Glasgow, arguably Scotland's greatest shipyard. Scotland had an extraordinary role in global shipbuilding in the 19th and 20th centuries: around the time of the First World War, fully one third of the world's ships had been built on the Clyde. By the turn of the millennium, NAHLIN was the only John Brown–built vessel still in commission. In 1999, Collier engineered her return to the U.K. to be restored, and it was with her arrival in England that the partnership with IT engineer and project manager Antony Harrison began. The story of NAHLIN's recovery from Romania and subsequent restoration deserves a book unto itself, but the project also resulted in the first major acquisition for what would become the Scottish Yachting Archives almost 20 years later.

William Durrant is believed to be the first professional photographer to specialize in yacht photography. He was active in Torquay, England, from the late 1860s, and although he was not Scottish, his images are often the only ones of large Scottish yachts visiting the South Coast to compete in English regattas. William Fife II designed CUCKOO, which was owned by Lord Henry Lennox. SYA has been actively tracing Durrant's yachting images.

Right—Although one could argue that many of the plans and photographs in the collection are fine art, the majority of material in the SYA consists of traditional archival material—which is to say, primary source documents largely used for research purposes. This spectacular portrait of G.L. Watson, however, is undeniably fine art; it was painted by Sir James Guthrie, a leading painter associated with the 19th-century realism art group called the Glasgow Boys. The painting was purchased by SYA in 2006 from the Watson family.

Left—The SYA photo archives hold nearly 100,000 images dating from the very earliest known photographs ever taken of yachts up through the modern era.

Collier spent years seeking to obtain a license to use NAHLIN's drawings, and in 2001, he sat down with Greg Copley, the then-owner of G.L. Watson & Co. At that point, NAHLIN "was in a beautiful old dry-dock, looking relatively shiny.... I knew Copley through the business, and I invited him to come and see her. I thought he should see her, because his company designed her, and not many people have been able to see a 300′ steam yacht in dry-dock, relatively untouched. And then I took him to lunch, I approached the subject of the drawings, and it became apparent that he wanted to sell the company. So, the conversation moved from buying the drawings...to buying the entire company." By the end of the meal, they had a handshake agreement. "It had never occurred to me before that lunch that I might purchase G.L. Watson & Co.— it was certainly not part of the plan! I had just bought a house... and I thought to myself, 'How are we going to find the money?'" To pull it off, Collier partnered with Harrison and Feargus Bryan. Though now working full-time in yacht restoration, he became, for the first time, not just a researcher or a cataloger but an *owner* of a substantial paper archive in need of serious care.

At the time of the company's purchase, the G.L. Watson drawings were not housed at their offices but were instead stored in the Glasgow city archive, where they had been held since the 1970s, accessible to the public. When Collier visited to survey their acquisition, it became clear that the collection was only partly cataloged and required conservation and improved housing. Frequent requests for the most celebrated Watson yachts by casual visitors were leading to the rapid deterioration of some of the most significant drawings in the archive. As a privately owned collection within a public institution with many other responsibilities, the Watson collection was, unfortunately but understandably, low on the priority list for collections care. At one point in discussions over access and care, Collier suggested, in some frustration, "What if I just took it off your hands?" To his slight surprise, the archivist

James Coats Jr. of Coats & Clark thread fame was the most active yacht owner in a family that commissioned more than 100 yachts in the pre–World War II era; most of these were from Watson and Fife, and included racing yachts of all sizes, palatial steam yachts, and several steam tenders built just to tow large sailing yachts. Here, EXPRESS tows Coats's MARJORIE and her competitor, VANDUARA; all three were designed by G. L. Watson.

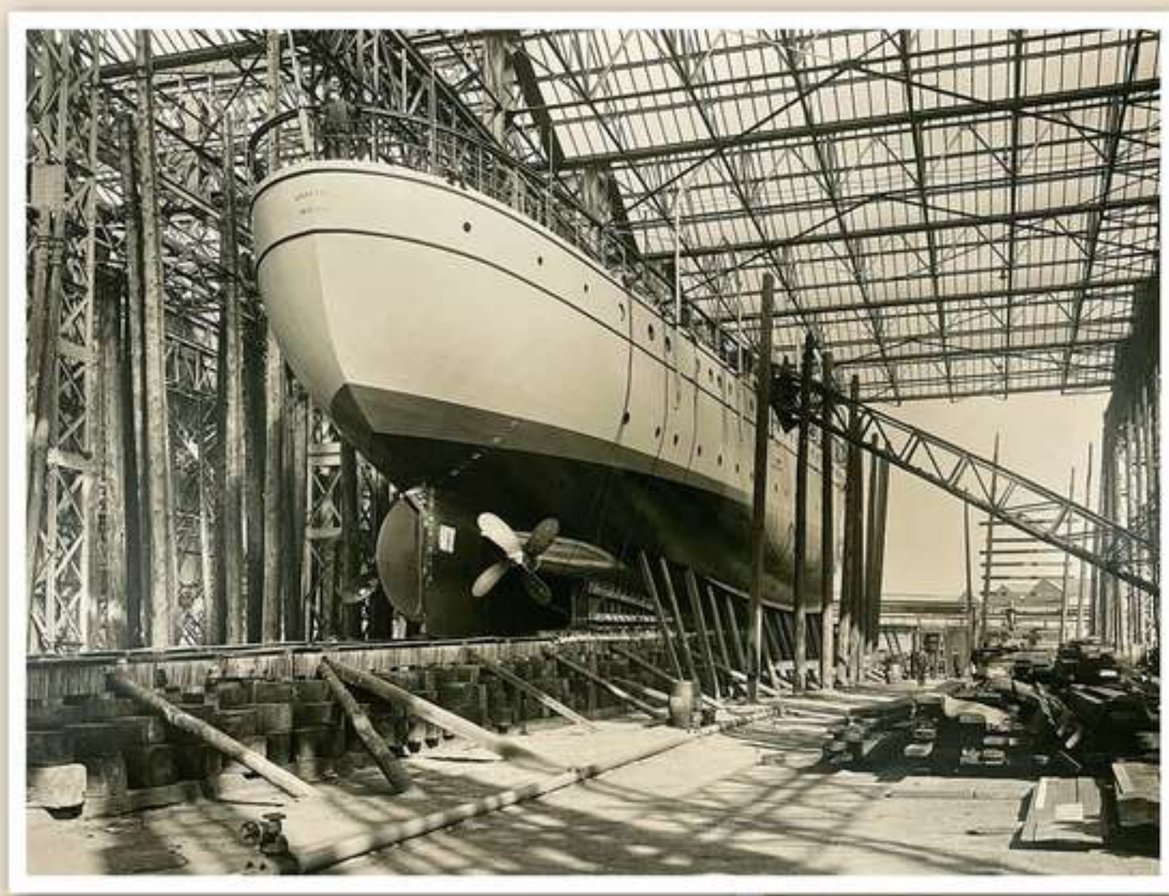
Among recent additions to the collection is the yachting section of the photo library of one of the major Scottish papers. This panoramic photo by George Outram is among the thousands of yet to be cataloged images features a knockout cast: LULWORTH, WHITE HEATHER II, BRITANNIA, WESTWARD, and SHAMROCK—all drifting off Hunter's Quay in the summer of 1926, waiting for a breeze.

replied, "That would certainly save us a lot of space." By this time the company was based in Liverpool, and so the archive was moved there.

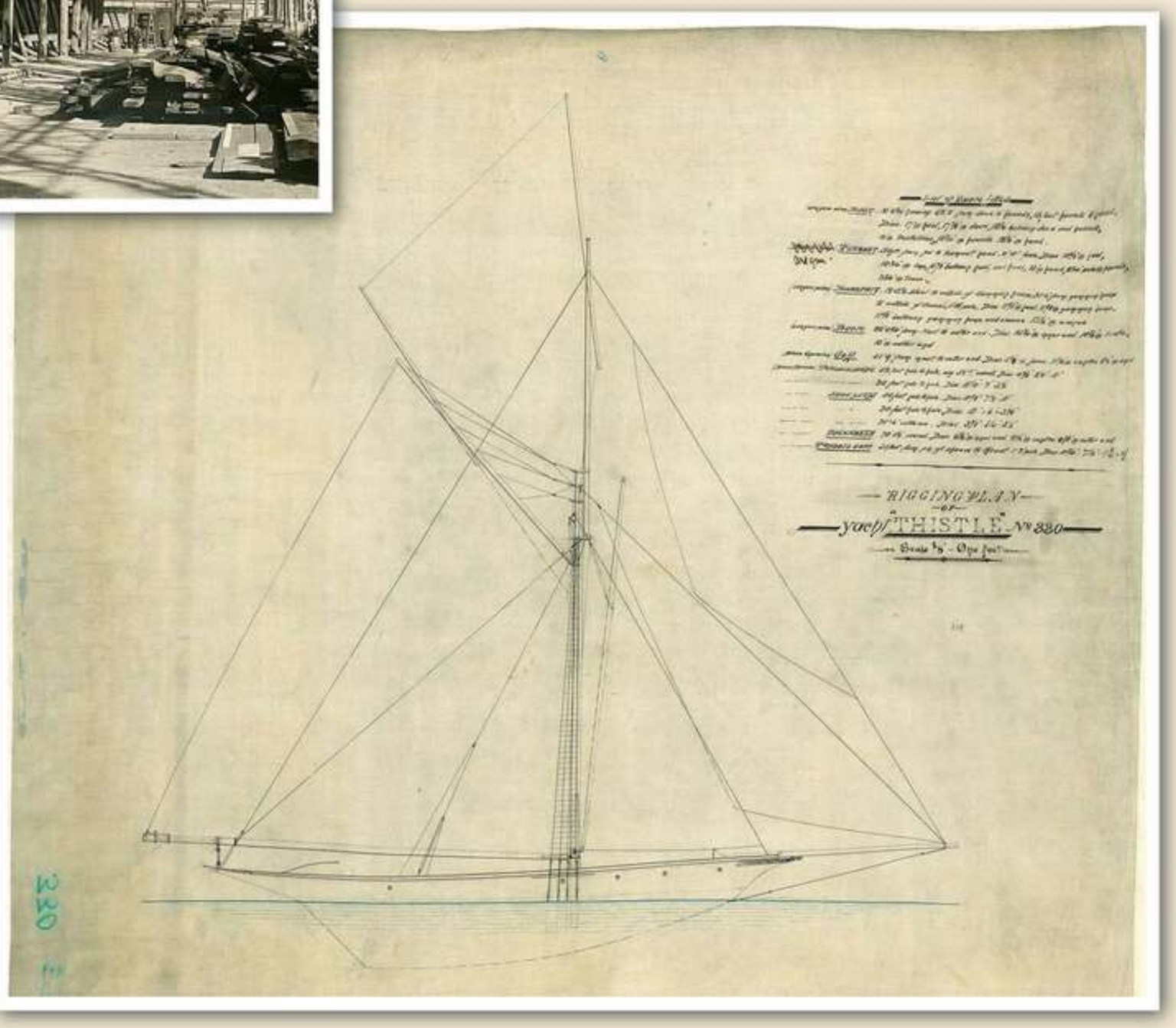
The venerable G.L. Watson & Co. Ltd. had been revitalized as a specialist design and project-management company for large classic-yacht restoration projects. BLUE BIRD was redelivered in 2007, NAHLIN in 2010, to be followed by MALAHNE, CACOUNA, and others including several Fife designs. In 2006, additional Watson materials had come up at auction after the sale of the Watson family home, and they, too, were added to the collection. Then, in 2016, Collier got word that Camper & Nicholsons was closing an office and planned to dispose of "the dead"—the brokerage files that had helped launch his career. It was soon agreed that if he arranged the shipping, the collection was his. "I didn't have a particularly clear idea of what we could do with it," Coillier admits, "and, truthfully, it is somewhat anomalous in the collection today, but it was ridiculous that it would get thrown away." Around the same time, Fairlie Restorations came under financial stress, and concern began to grow within the community of Fife owners that the Fife collection was at risk, needed to be preserved, and should return to Scotland.

In 2020, two critical things occurred: G.L. Watson relocated from Liverpool to its historic seat in Glasgow, and the firm agreed to the acquisition of the Fife Archive from Ernst Klaus, who had stepped in to save it from creditors after the demise of Fairlie Restorations. The Fife Archive had heightened an awareness of the risks that owning archives within trading companies can bring; it also did not sit naturally within G.L. Watson & Co. To resolve this a new ringfenced company, Scottish Yachting Archives Ltd. (SYA), was formed and the Fife Archive was its first acquisition. The archival assets of G.L. Watson & Co. were then passed to the new entity. Suddenly, the SYA owned two of the most significant collections of Scottish yachting history.

At this point, SYA was still funded out of the business, and the collection continued to grow. This was the



This spectacular photograph gives a sense of the scale of construction on the Clyde during the 19th and 20th centuries. More famous for building liners such as QUEEN MARY and battleships such as HMS HOOD, John Brown's shipyard had an entire photographic department that documented activity in the yard and vessels they built. This 1923 image shows THALASSA under construction in a covered slip—one of several primarily used for large yachts.

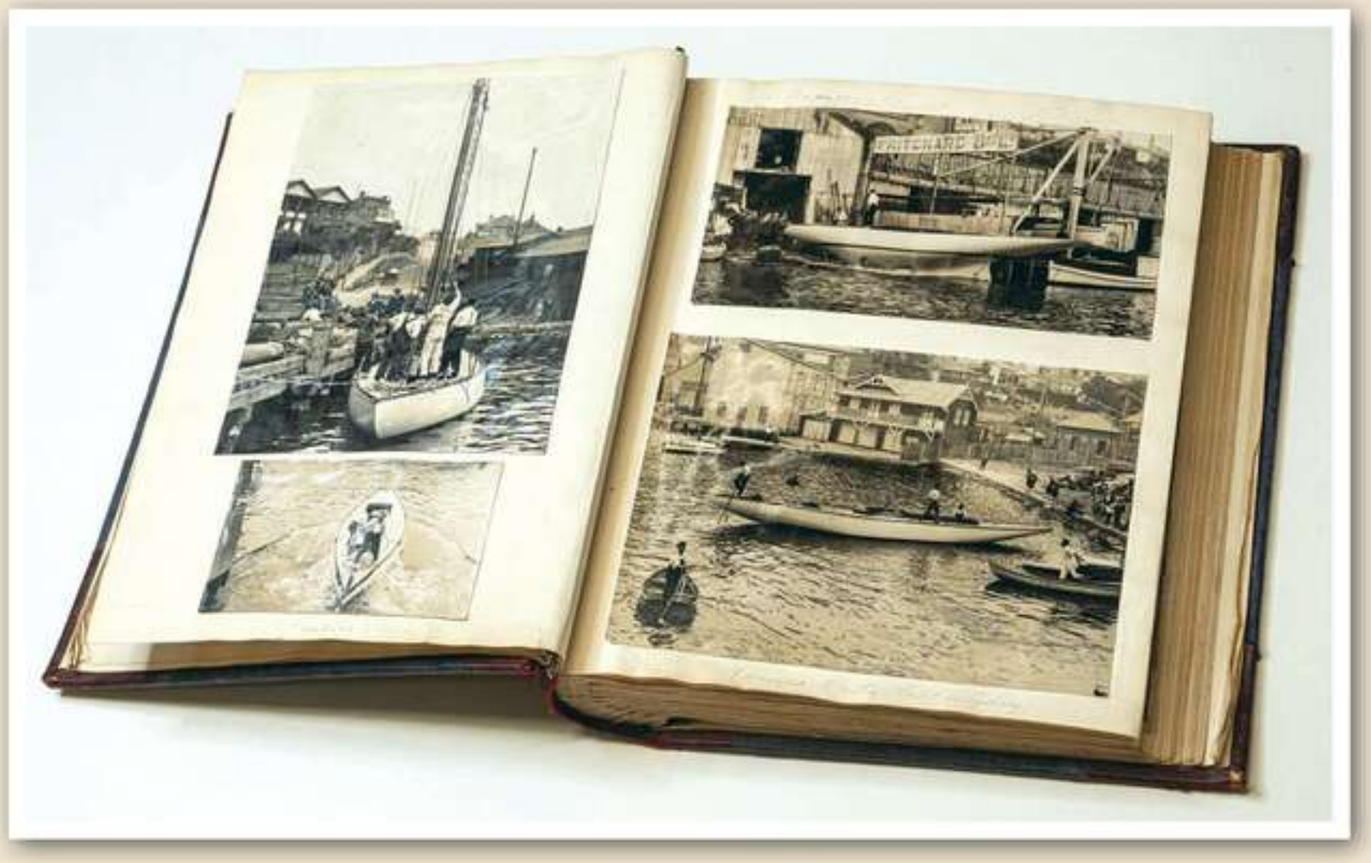


The sail plan for Watson's 1887 AMERICA's Cup challenger THISTLE (design No. 330) includes a full spar list.

result of salvage and acquisition activities and not any competition with already-established museums and archives. "Since the crash in 2008 and the introduction of austerity politics," Collier said, "every British museum has lost over 50 percent of its public funding. The implications for staff and the maintenance of collections and buildings are enormous. The direct effect is that these museums, which already weren't very proactive in the yachting arena, can't do much because they're fighting to survive at all." The SYA's intent is not to compete or duplicate the efforts of peer institutions but to begin where those other organizations end. Then again, Collier acknowledges that "collections don't come in the door by magic" and nor do you want them to, "but they're not at risk with their hands up saying, 'come save me'; generally you have to go find them." But, as the collections grow, he is adamant that the archive cannot take on material that it cannot care for to its high self-imposed standards.

Collier and Harrison gradually arrived at the decision, over the past five years, to reorganize as a nonprofit organization. "Becoming a nonprofit doesn't change anything for the quality of care, but what it does change is recognizing we won't live forever and that the organization is still reacting to the need to save a vast amount of material that is at risk. It also helps the organization's need to grow with the appointment of a board. Importantly, it resolves the issue that private ownership is not appropriate for internationally significant historical archives. The point was never to own the material but to save it. More prosaically, if it's going to keep growing we need to find other sources of funding, because we've been funding it out of the business beyond what is reasonable." Knowing something will be held in the public trust is also a great motivator for the donation of artifacts.

SYA operates as an archive, not a museum, which is to say it has no gallery with exhibits or regular hours for public access. Researchers are encouraged to write with requests or make a research appointment. A long-term goal is to make the collections increasingly accessible online. Collier does envision galleries or some sort of heritage center as one possible future for the organization. He is currently negotiating the deposit



This is the only known surviving scrapbook from the Fife yard; it contains images of Fife designs built around the world. The album is open to photographs showing the 8-Meter VANESSA, built in Sydney, Australia, in 1927.

All of the pre-war G.L. Watson & Co. drawings have been professionally conserved, and the William Fife collection of drawings is currently undergoing treatment. Historic naval architecture repositories present unique challenges to the archivist, researcher, and conservator. These collections are frequently oversized with some drawings exceeding 8′ in length, making them particularly susceptible to damage when handling. Historically, lines plans were often rolled for storage (again due to their inconvenient size requiring massive drawers to store flat) and large fragile rolled drawings are an enormous challenge to handle safely on a regular basis. Materials such as tracing paper commonly employed in late-19th and early-20th-century drafting offices often exhibit what is called "inherent vice"—that is, they become acidic over time and would self-destruct if left untreated. SYA has committed significant resources towards ensuring the best state of storage and preservation possible for its collections.

of a collection that has well as over 50 boxes of papers, includes paintings that record the years of Scottish yachting before photography, and includes nearly 100 models. This will substantially change the nature of the archive's holdings, with much potential if there were a properly run venue where some of the material could be shown. However, that will also depend on the direction of SYA's board and future fundraising. Before embarking on development plans, current projects must be advanced. A key one is the deployment of a new catalog system that will allow better collections care. More digitization is on the horizon, but for now the emphasis is on conservation. The major initiative now is the Fife archive, which includes many frail and damaged drawings. All can be made good, the project is well advanced, and Collier has started appealing to Fife yacht owners to help bear the cost. Responses have been positive.

For every drawing or photograph safely stored at the SYA today, thousands have disappeared. The transition from working object to outdated file taking up needed office space to precious artifact is a perilous one; from fire to floods, pests, or the industrious and well-meaning person intent on "cleaning this place up," or just the natural tendency for collections to disperse, the risks are infinite, and the survivors are the lucky few. Untold half models have ended up as firewood, and countless waxed-linen drawings have been taken home and boiled down so their fabric could be reused as rags.

For every plans collection that is preserved in a public-facing institution today, at some point one or two people looked at the pile of drawings gathering dust and said, "these are far too important to be allowed to disappear." We are fortunate that William Collier and Antony Harrison are two such individuals.

Evelyn Ansel is a long-time WoodenBoat *contributor and maritime curator with a particular focus on digitization and collections accessibility. She has previously worked at Mystic Seaport Museum, the Vasa Museum, the MIT Museum, and the Herreshoff Marine Museum. She currently lives in Providence, Rhode Island, with her boatbuilding partner and their sardine-loving cat.*

Rescuing a Cape Cod Rescue Surfboat

A years-long volunteer project

Text by Tony Davis
Photographs by Don Stucke

A famous old adage, "Only cowards and fools leave a sinking ship," was close to the heart of the lifesaving surfmen of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, over a century ago. In those days, extensive shoals along the Atlantic coast of Cape Cod ran parallel to the beaches, and storms often caused sailing ships to run aground, sometimes after poor navigation left them trapped between sandbars. Their crews were most likely to survive if they stayed with the ship rather than attempting to negotiate the frigid and roiling surf to get ashore. It was far better for them to await rescue by the surfmen who patrolled the beaches day and night during winter months.

In December 1891, the lumber schooner DANIEL B. FEARING's shrouds gave way in a northeaster off the coast of the Cape, and she grounded on the Outer Bar. When crews at the lifesaving station at Cahoon Hollow in Wellfleet spotted the ship, they knew from long experience that she was doomed. The surfmen readied their Cape Cod–style surfboat and—recalling their mantra, "You have to go, but you don't have to come back"—headed to the crippled ship. The six rowers, under the mastery of skipper Dan Cole on the steering oar, battled breaking seas to reach the wreck. After loading the crew onto the boat, they learned that the cook was missing; he had gone to the galley to rescue his pet cat. The slight delay in waiting for the cook and his cat to board enabled the skipper to catch a perfect wave that carried the surfboat safely back to shore.

The Search for a Better Surfboat

The rescue of the DANIEL B. FEARING's crew was successful even though the surfmen held a low opinion of their rescue craft. From the 1871 inception of the U.S.

***Above*—In 2025, a 1944 rescue surfboat restored in a years-long project at the Cape Cod Maritime Museum in Hyannis, Massachusetts, took to the water for the first time in 70 years, with a restoration volunteer, Bill Stirling, at the steering sweep and others at the oars.**

***Above left*—The surfboat had been displayed for years at the Cape Cod National Seashore's Salt Pond Visitor Center in Eastham but was removed from public exhibition because of her deterioration, which was evident when Cape Cod Maritime Museum volunteers examined her. *Above right*—Because of the boat's rarity, the volunteers agreed to take on the restoration and moved it into a covered workspace adjacent to the museum's boatshop.**

Life-Saving Service, which eventually had 13 stations on Cape Cod between Monomoy Island and Provincetown, that style of surfboat was the government-issued boat for inshore rescues. Among surfmen, however, the type's difficult handling in rough surf—which they attributed to design flaws including a short waterline length, too little sheer height forward, and heavy displacement—made it widely unpopular. Their experience spurred the search for a better rescue surfboat. In Provincetown, surfman George Bickers of the Race Point Life-Saving Station worked with boatbuilder Charles Gardner in 1894 to design and build a prototype for a new boat, which became known as the Race Point type, 24′6″ long with more sheer forward and lighter displacement than the earlier type. Their design quickly gained favor and eventually replaced the Cape Cod boat as the surfboat of choice at rescue stations not only on the Cape but also across the United States.

By the 1920s, Charles Gardner had died, and the surfboats that had been built on Cape Cod were wearing out. The U.S. Life-Saving Service had merged with the U.S. Revenue Cutter Service in 1915 to form the U.S. Coast Guard, and as a result the responsibility for the construction of rescue surfboats was transferred to the U.S. Coast Guard Yard at Curtis Bay, Maryland. Until that change, surfboats had been built without plans, but in 1922 Ralph Winslow of Quincy, Massachusetts, drew up a proper set of plans along the lines of the Race Point type to make the construction molds for boats built at Curtis Bay. The boats were 24′6″ long with a beam of 6′2″ and displacement of 1,200 lbs. They were lapstrake-planked with cypress over oak frames. By 1931, the much-admired Race Point boat was standardized, and all future surfboats were built at the Coast Guard Yard; the last one of the type was constructed there in 1958.

One of a Handful of Survivors

By the end of the 20th century, Race Point boats were rare. In 2005, Mark Wilkins and Cathrine Macort of the Cape Cod Maritime Museum (CCMM) in Hyannis learned of a 1944 Race Point surfboat that was stored uncovered in the woods on the grounds of the Cape Cod National Seashore's Salt Pond Visitor Center in Eastham. She was surfboat 24467, which had been stationed at Cahoon Hollow. After years of enduring the elements, the boat was moved off exhibit due to her deterioration. When Mark and Cathrine saw her, the plank fastenings at the forward and after stems had failed. Planks were springing from the stems, especially forward. The stemheads and breasthooks forward and aft had rot pockets, which had also gotten into the sheer clamps, keel, and many plank hood ends. If something wasn't done soon, she was sure to rot away, and her iconic history would be lost.

Plank hood ends had sprung away from the stem forward.

TONY DAVIS (RIGHT PHOTO ONLY)

***Right*—The restoration plan involved making exterior station molds to restore and stabilize the hull's shape. *Far right*—A plumb bob assures alignment with the new keel's centerline to work out the twist.**

The CCMM staff was able to negotiate an agreement with the National Park Service to take the boat to their museum on loan and allow volunteers to shore up and preserve her shape until more extensive restoration work could start. She was one of seven known surviving Race Point surfboats, so restoring her would preserve the design of the boat and the history of lifesaving on the ocean side of Cape Cod.

In 2017, space became available to start the surfboat project, and I examined the boat to advise about what to do. I had not looked at her closely in 12 years; she was tucked away in a discreet outdoor storage location on the museum property. I found that there were now trees growing in her and all the planks had sprung from the rabbet. The keel and garboards had completely rotted. The stern was in better shape than the bow, and tighter, but rot was showing everywhere. At a board meeting, I reported that a restoration was not feasible. Instead, I proposed a "faux restoration," which meant making her look seaworthy for display on land.

That idea did not go over well with the museum's board members, who were adamant that they wanted a seaworthy Race Point surfboat that could be used in the water to demonstrate this unique aspect of Cape Cod maritime history to the public. They again requested that I help, along with the other museum volunteers, to restore her to her original seaworthiness. I was not obligated in any way to agree to this seemingly impossible task, but the enthusiasm to restore a boat that represented such an important aspect of maritime history was irresistible. I agreed.

From the Start, a Sense of Commitment

On February 18, 2018, museum volunteers, led by board member Bill Stirling, who along with Jon Aborn managed the museum's rowing and boatbuilding programs, gathered the crew—all retired men with a love of wooden boats and boatbuilding. Among the volunteers were an engineer, military personnel, an artist, an auto-body-shop owner, a contractor, a cabinetmaker, a tech executive, a salesman, an auto mechanic, and a schoolteacher. Together, we carefully moved the boat from her 12-year storage location on a shored-up cradle and into the museum's outdoor, lean-to-style, roofed workspace, which was close enough to the museum's boatshop to permit efficient work.

For an undertaking such as this to be successful, we needed a solid, step-by-step plan that we all agreed on before we removed anything from the boat. It was critical that we not lose any more of her original shape; her hull already had a very noticeable twist to port forward of amidships.

Our first step was meeting with Richard Boonisar, a New England expert on the Race Point surfboats. In 2007, Richard had Pert Lowell Co. of Newbury, Massachusetts, restore Race Point surfboat 24472 for display at his Life-Saving Station at Gurnet Point in Plymouth, Massachusetts. We visited the station and took notes and photos of Richard's restored

***Far left*—Alan Reed steam-bent white-oak frames over bending jigs taken from the hull lofting. *Left*—He also fitted new laminated stems to the replacement keel.**

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Aboard: MAURETANIA

A Hollywood icon

Text by Randall Peffer · Photographs by Steve Jost

"This is not a 'kiss and tell' boat, as we are committed to protecting the privacy of our clients," says Jack Bost with a sly grin on his face as he delivers his punchline: "However, I will tell you this. There were at least three murders aboard MAURETANIA one year…on location shoots for the TV series *NCIS: Criminal Minds*, and *Without a Trace*." The yacht has also hosted *Melrose Place*, *90210*, *Comedy Central*, and others. Film credits include *Boggerman*, *Thief* (1979 with Gleun Ford, Jean Simmons, and Lynn Redgrave), and *Action Jackson* (1988 with Carl Weathers, Vanity, and Sharon Stone).

Bost and his wife, Ann, have been MAURETANIA's owners for the past 45 years, and the team that has made her a darling of the California film industry both on and off the silver screen. Even before the yacht began seducing Hollywood she led a charmed life. MAURETANIA is one of renowned designer-builder John Trumpy's glamorous motor yachts (such as the longtime U.S. presidential yacht SEQUOIA), which *The New York Times* called "the Rolls Royce of American motor yachts."

Trumpy, a Norwegian immigrant, called these designs "houseboats" because you can walk the length of the main deck without going up or down a step. But the "houseboat" moniker is typical Trumpy understatement. At 80' LOA and 18' beam, MAURETANIA is palatial. Trumpy designed the yacht and many of her sisters in the 1930s with the plumb bow, bareback cabinsides, and fully varnished house typical of those times, and with shallow draft—4'6" in MAURETANIA's case—so their wealthy owners could navigate the Intracoastal Waterway in leisurely style from their summer homes on Long Island Sound to their winter compounds at Palm Beach, Florida.

Trumpy built the yacht at the Mathis-Trumpy yard at Gloucester, New Jersey, in 1947 with white-oak framing, longleaf-pine planking, and teak decking. She was the yard's contract No. 329, built for Col. Frederick Pope, a senior official in President Franklin Roosevelt's administration. Pope reportedly named the vessel after his wife, Marilyn (actually Mary Stockton McLaughlin). The name was changed several times, and in 1979 a new owner wanted an elegant name for the elegant yacht and changed it to MAURETANIA.

Trumpy houseboats have been celebrated for their refined, spacious interiors. MAURETANIA has a large main saloon, three staterooms for guests, and an expansive galley and pantry. Accessed by a staircase off the butler's pantry, the crew's quarters include a dining space, berths, and a head. As configured today, MAURETANIA is not only a backdrop for television and film shoots but also a vehicle for private celebrity escapes to quiet coves at Santa Catalina Island, 29 miles off the coast of Southern California, and Paradise Cove, north of Malibu. The yacht is a U.S. Coast Guard–inspected charter vessel that can host up to 60 guests. She cruises at a stately 10 knots, keeping fuel usage to about 10 gallons per hour.

Above—The 80' Trumpy houseboat MAURETANIA was built for cruising the Intracoastal waterway on the East Coast. For the past 43 years, she has hailed from Southern California, where she is active in the charter trade.

Secretary

A secretary aft in the main saloon is comfortable. It is by silver sconces, only one of which is visible in this photograph. It is adjacent to a roll-up window with a Pullman-style scissor lift. A distinctive bronze scallop shell centered under the window covers the lift mechanism and is a recognized Trumpy trademark. Mahogany paneling and accents give MAURETANIA an opulent feel.

Autopilot Control

The 1950s-era Benelix Marine Autopilot still makes navigation comfortable while underway. Owners Jack and Ann Bost have made a point of keeping MAURETANIA as original as possible with the help of their "sidekick" Mary Bernsmen, master carpenter Mark Schoettler, and Ryan Richards and his team at Wilmington Iron Works. The ground tackle, J.L. Mott plumbing fixtures, and H.S. Geter cabinet and door hardware are all original. MAURETANIA was built in an era when equipment was maintained and repaired, not replaced.

Helm St

MAURETANIA's classic wheel, binnacle (with its original Danforth-White Constellation compass), and Sperry Hydraulics manual hydraulic transmission and throttle controls are the centerpieces of the pilothouse. The clutch mechanism lever at the bottom engages the autopilot system. The 60' steering cable can give the helmsman a workout

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***Far left*—New hood ends scarfed to the existing topside planks allowed much original planking to be saved. Here, the author is fitting a plank to the installed stem; Bill Stirling is at left and Peter Cross at right. *Left*—Jeff Silcox installs frames, which had been steam-bent over molds ahead of time.**

boat. He supplied us with an original set of plans and, in addition to being one of the volunteers, served as our in-house historian. Throughout the seven-year restoration, his guidance helped us keep every detail true to the original, ensuring that the result of our efforts would be authentic.

Our next step was to inventory all hardware. Don Stucke, the museum's curator and an artist, got started photographing and archiving the existing boat, which he continued to do through photos and notes throughout the project. Once we had photos and written inventory done, we started removing what we could save, including the floorboards and keelson. We kept the thwarts and thwart knees in place, because they, along with what was left of the full-width frames, were the only pieces holding the hull together from port to starboard. It was obvious that if we removed the thwarts and rotten frames, she would become impossible to restore.

At a February 2018 exhibitors' party, which the museum hosted for the Boat Builders Show on Cape Cod, volunteers Alan Reed, Bill Stirling, Don Chapin, and I hatched the idea that instead of making molds to fit the *inside* of the boat, we would use the table of offsets and program Don's CNC machine to cut the molds for the *outside* of the hull, factoring in the plank thickness plus 1″ to allow wedges to be driven where needed to nudge her back into shape. During this planning stage, we also discovered that on the topsides, only the hood ends of many of the cypress planks had rot, so we decided we would scarf-in new cypress lapstrake plank ends with the appropriate gains instead of replacing the entire planks. Finally, we knew we needed a new keel, forward stem, after stem, garboards, and broadstrakes, so we started hunting down the needed material.

Our last task was to create a work schedule for the volunteers. We decided to meet every Wednesday afternoon for four to five hours until she was done. While the exterior molds were being cut by Don, Bill, and Alan, the old keel and garboards were removed and a new keel was made in the Cook Boat Shop, along with the 2″-thick × 3½″-wide white-oak forward and after stems, which were steamed and bent on a jig we had fabricated from our lofting work, just as they were done originally.

The dedication to this project persisted through six winters in a partially enclosed outdoor environment, at times dealing with cold and blowing snow, though it was not nearly as bad as the conditions the surfmen would have experienced at their coastal stations in winter. Whitney Wright was in charge of wedging the hull back into shape and getting her plumb fore-and-aft. The effort was to get her as close to her original offsets as possible, which were clearly marked on the molds. Alan Reed and Ray Ward fitted and fastened the new after stem to the new keel and began scarfing plank ends and fitting them to the now perfectly plumb after stem. Bill Stirling, Jeff Silcox, and Bruce Colvin did the same at the forward stem, which was a

***Right*—After the watertight compartments forward and aft were built, Peter Cross (right) and Jeff Silcox (left) painted the interior forward and Whitney Wright painted the after end. *Far right*—Ken Kolbe, (right) works with Whitney Wright to fit steam-bent thwart knees.**

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***Right*—With the interior structure largely completed, the boat could be turned over to focus on the bottom planking. *Far right*—First, the new keel was beveled to receive the garboard planks.**

bit more difficult because we had to plumb the stem carefully in order to get the twist out of the hull. With these planks in place and acting as rib-bands, the hull was held together.

Next, we needed to install as many new white-oak frames as possible, fitting and fastening them with copper rivets before we could roll the hull over to repair bottom planks, which we could not get to with the hull right-side up. Jeff Silcox was key in designing and building a jig that allowed us to eventually steam-bend the 32 white-oak frames and many of the 28 floors outside of the boat. After enough frames were in place and cross spalls were added, the hull was sound enough to roll over.

Persistence Equals Progress

Jeff Silcox and the team engineered a way to carefully roll the hull over so Jeff could spile and fit the new cypress garboards, which were cut from a 20″-wide, 100-year-old cypress plank that museum board member Craig Ashworth had set aside after completing a local barn restoration. With garboards in place, we now had her in position for the laborious task of finishing riveting all the new frames and floors to the lapstrake planking.

***Far left*—The original garboards were too far gone to be reused, so they were replaced. *Left*—New broadstrakes also replaced the deteriorated original ones.**

Years passed, but the dedication to meeting every Wednesday was consistent. Slowly, we could see our surfboat taking on a new life. Peter Cross became a riveting specialist, and he and others sealed all the new wood with thinned-down primer paint and red lead to prevent the wood from drying excessively in the summer sun.

When all the work was done in her upside-down setup, we carefully rolled her back over. Jeff spiled and fit the new cypress sheer planks, allowing us to set the final frame rivets, and Peter and the team installed hundreds of new rivets in the plank laps.

During the winter 2024–25, we could see that the end was in sight. I have always found that setting a launching date months from completion can help with motivation to get the project done. Therefore, we decided our launch date would be June 25, 2025, and we would debut our work at The WoodenBoat Show at Mystic Seaport Museum, Connecticut.

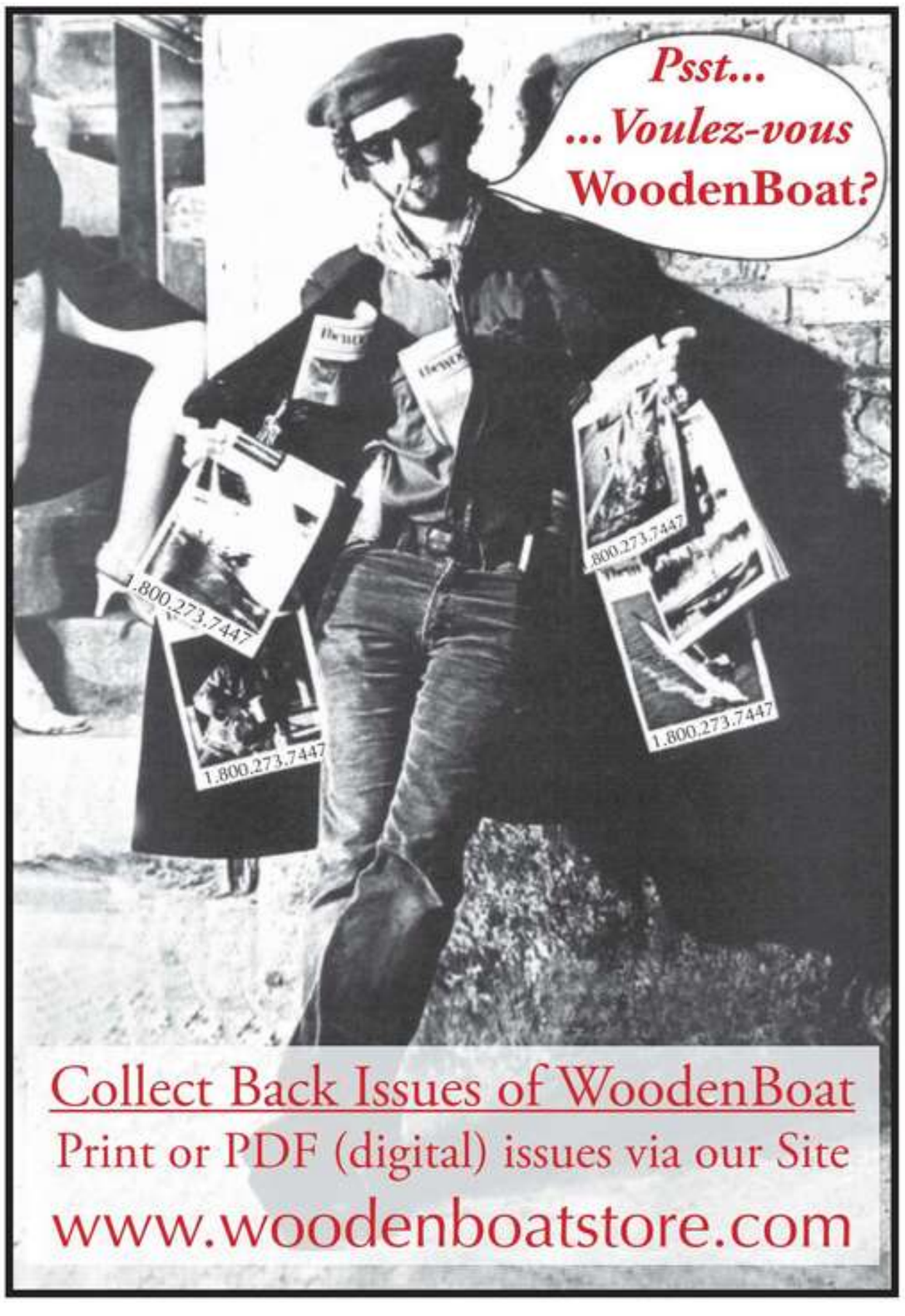
Over the years, the team was never at odds over any particular task that needed doing. It was all seamlessly happening, tackling the annoying tasks and sharing the more fulfilling ones. Ken Kolbe, our newest volunteer, was a huge help with all the sanding, priming, and painting needed inside and out, along with countless additional hours of riveting that still needed to be done.

***Far left*—Garboard-seam caulking was the last task before painting the bottom. *Left*—Fully repainted, the boat was ready for exhibit and relaunching.**

Dick Hersey's machine shop in Orleans volunteered their time and equipment to machine the bronze oarlocks we had cast. Peter and Whitney refitted four of the five original thwarts and made one new one that they skillfully weathered and stained to match the ones dating to 1944. The original keelson, which we were able to save, was sanded, sealed, and installed. The new oak thwart knees were all steamed on a jig and riveted in place and stained to match the 1944 look. We poured flotation foam into place before enclosing the forward and after water-tight air chambers. Lifting hardware was installed according to the specifications of our 1944 plans. Meanwhile, a Thursday-evening volunteer group led by Carl Lubelezyk with Phil Scholomiti, Dick Peterson, Liam Henry, and Jeff Ham built the four ash oars and the 20′ steering oar in time for the launching date.

We reached our goal; she became an award-winning entry at The WoodenBoat Show. The interest she received was gratifying, especially from retired and active Coast Guard men and women. Today, the successors to the Life-Saving Service surfmen are trained at the U.S. Coast Guard National Motor Lifeboat School in Ilwaco, Washington, on high-tech powerboats. Seeing their appreciation of this preserved history meant a lot to all of us.

On September 5, 2025, surfboat 24467 was relaunched for the first time in over 70 years. Despite a strong southwest breeze and rough conditions that day, we discovered after much anticipation that we had a sound and seaworthy surfboat with only shop dust



The dedication and persistence of a cadre of volunteers brought the restoration to a successful conclusion: the surfboat was relaunched September 5, 2025, after being shown at The WoodenBoat Show at Mystic Seaport Museum in late June.

in the bilge. To our knowledge, of the 143 Race Point surfboats built, she is the only one still seaworthy today.

I am very proud of all the 40 or more wooden boats I have built and restored at Arey's Pond Boat Yard in South Orleans on Cape Cod over the years, working alongside great friends and colleagues. But this surfboat, now complete and ready to row, has been the most rewarding of all, not because we restored a boat that many boatbuilders, including me, initially said could not be restored, but because of the dedication of this volunteer group of very skilled craftsmen. They were new to a project of this complexity but never doubted it could be done and contributed great ideas on how to do it. The experience reminded me of that saying among surfboat men of a century ago: "Only cowards and fools leave a sinking ship."

Tony Davis owns and operates Arey's Pond Boat Yard in South Orleans, Massachusetts; see www.areyspondboatyard.com. Cape Cod Maritime Museum, 135 South St., Hyannis, MA 02601; www.capecodmaritimemuseum.org.

For further reading, see American Coastal Rescue Craft *(University Press of Florida, 2009) by William D. Wilkinson and Cmdr. Timothy R. Dring, U.S. Naval Reserve, retired.*

ALL PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY OF CHESAPEAKE LIGHT CRAFT

John Harris and Chesapeake Light Craft

Innovators in kits for capable plywood-epoxy boats

by Joe Evans

In the 25 years that John Harris has owned and operated Chesapeake Light Craft (CLC) of Annapolis, Maryland, the company has delivered more than 45,000 boat kits to aspiring builders in about 70 countries. The company's offerings have expanded from a couple of easy-to-build kayaks with basic templates, precut parts, and blueprints to 120 designs for paddling, rowing, sailing, and power.

Over the years, customer support has broadened to include robust technical assistance and easy-to-follow instruction manuals and videos. Also, each boat kit includes everything needed to complete a project, which in addition to precut plywood parts can include—depending on the chosen boat—sandpaper, sanding blocks, finishing tools, gloves, paint, varnish, fiberglass fabric, stainless-steel fastenings, cordage and rigging essentials, sails, oars, paddles, vinyl lettering, laser-cut nameplates, brushes, rollers, respirators and filters, mixing cups, masking tape, squeegees, flotation foam, sliding seats, foot braces, oarlocks, oar leathers, trailers, cartop racks, life jackets, a build-it-yourself tool box, safety gear, bailing sponges and pumps, and even waterproof beanie caps, socks, and gloves. It's pretty much everything except the launching ramp and open water.

Along the way, CLC has built tow-tank models for the U.S. Navy and shipyard contractors; keels, centerboards, and rudders for sailboat manufacturers; airplane parts; computer desks; school woodshop projects; large architectural elements; thousands of scale-model boats; crash-test dummies; surgical masks during the

***Above*—John Harris, shown here at the helm of one of his creations, the Skerry Skiff, has greatly broadened and deepened the kit catalog of Chesapeake Light Craft, the company he has led for 25 years.**

***Left*—Harris recalls always building things in his youth, including this tethered glider he developed at age 10. *Far left—WoodenBoat*'s Launchings section mentioned a rowing shell that Harris designed and built as a teenager, which encouraged him to build this, his second boat—a Phil Bolger–designed Teal—before graduating from high school.**

Covid-19 pandemic; and "whatever keeps the CNC machine busy," Harris says. In 2015, he designed an ultralight marine-plywood Teardrop Camper trailer light enough to be towed by an ordinary car and outfitted for road travel with a queen-sized bed and a tailgate galley. CLC has delivered nearly 1,000 of those kits so far.

CLC has dealer and support relationships with companies in England, France, Germany, Australia, and Japan. The CLC staff hosts weeklong boatbuilding classes in Annapolis; at WoodenBoat School in Brooklin, Maine; and in Washington State at the Center for Wooden Boats in Seattle and the Northwest Maritime Center in Port Townsend. Between classes, the staff stays busy with custom boatbuilding and design commissions. CLC also makes Nutshell Pram and Shellback Dinghy kits for The WoodenBoat Store.

An Obsession with Boats

Harris's earliest memories are of his obsession with boats. His father was a keen sailor and PhD engineer at the U.S. Department of Energy's Savannah River National Laboratory in Aiken, South Carolina. As part of his work, he often traveled to national laboratories, including the one at Los Alamos, New Mexico, and the Lawrence Livermore lab in California. "I'm still not sure what he did there," Harris says, "but I know he helped build things like the radioisotope thermoelectric generators for NASA's deep-space probes." His father also built whatever the family needed at home: furniture, a Heathkit color television, and even an air compressor, which is still in use. "I grew up with the ethic that if you wanted something, you built it," Harris recalls.

By age 10, Harris was cleared for solo outings in the family's Sunfish sailboat. He read and reread Robert Manry's *Tinkerbelle* and Gerry Speiss's *Alone Against the Atlantic*, stories about ordinary people who built small boats and went adventuring. "I was, and still am, absorbed by the notion of building a boat in the garage and sailing away."

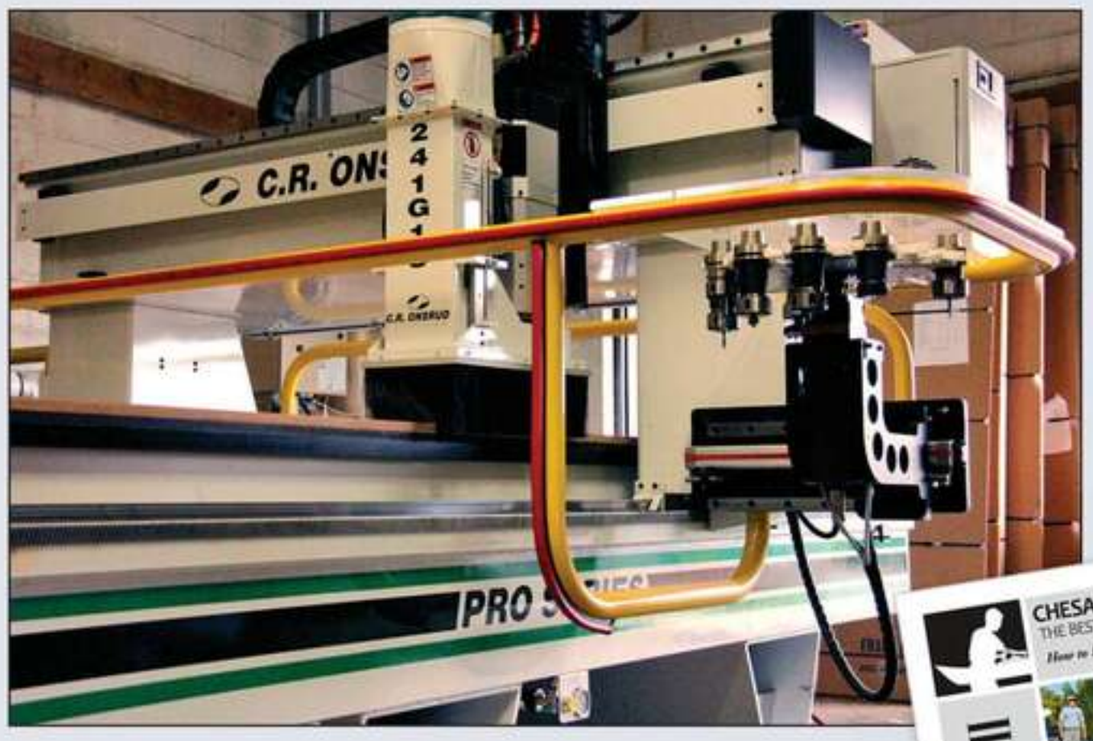
In 1984, the family transferred to Wilmington, Delaware, a seafaring town wedged between the Delaware River and upper Chesapeake Bay. "The libraries and bookstores had robust maritime collections, where I discovered Howard Chapelle, Harold 'Dynamite' Payson, Philip C. Bolger, John Gardner, *WoodenBoat* magazine, and *The Small Boat Journal*," he recalls. "When it came to boats, I had the 'rage to learn' thing. But, long before it was a familiar diagnosis, ADHD [attention deficit, hyperactivity disorder] wrecked my classroom experience. I could recite long passages from books on naval architecture, but I couldn't do my homework." He sketched boats day and night, read L. Francis Herreshoff and William Atkin, and practiced making scarf joints in his dad's shop.

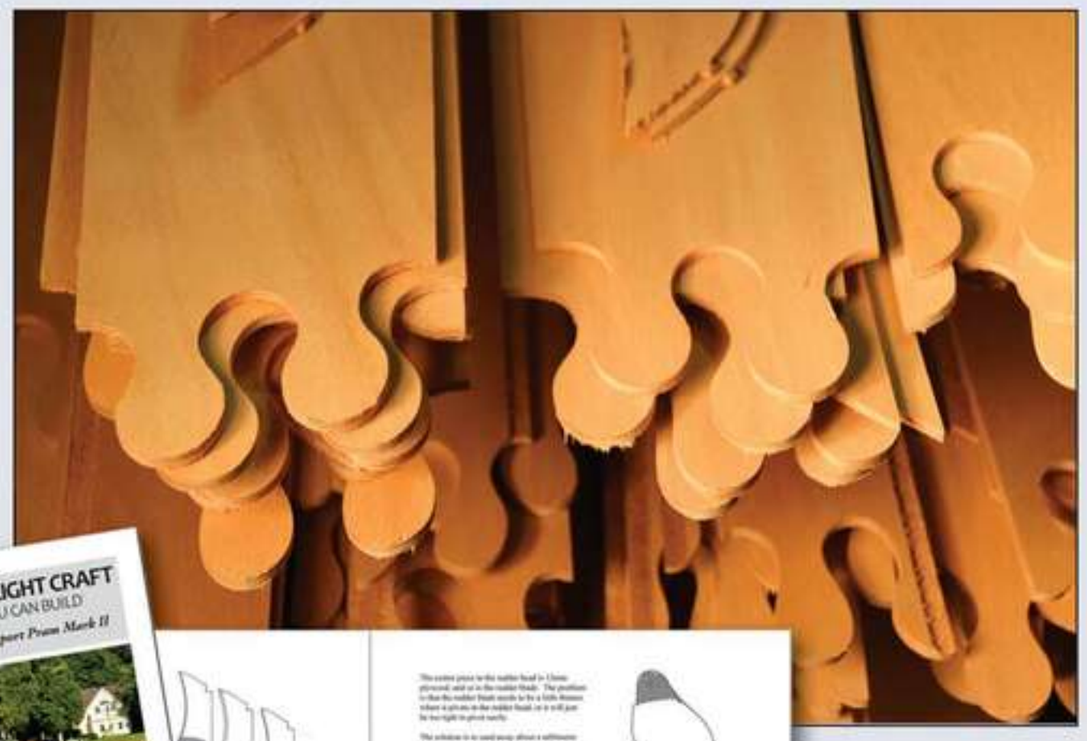
Harris took up the trombone in middle school. "I was reasonably good at it, and, unlike boat design, music was a sanctioned academic subject." Good grades in music helped drag his grade-point average off the shoals, but his academic struggles were attributed to his boat obsession. His parents barred him from boatbuilding, which triggered a singular teenaged rebellion: "I secretly cut out parts for my first boat design—a dreadful rowing shell—and hid the parts in the crawl space of the house." He waited until his parents were away, then dragged the parts into the garage and quickly assembled the hull while calculating—correctly—that his parents would be angry, but not so much as to make him cut up the boat.

The shell floated and could be rowed, after a fashion, with home-built oars and a sliding-seat apparatus he made with furniture casters. *WoodenBoat*'s Launchings section mentioned the boat, which encouraged him to begin another clandestine project with an "Instant Boat" design from Phil Bolger and Dynamite Payson. When it was finished, he sewed up a cockpit tent and explored the upper Chesapeake, once finding himself sharing an anchorage with small-boat legend Frank Dye in his Wayfarer dinghy.

As high-school graduation approached, Harris reckoned his logical path would be to find a boatbuilding apprenticeship program of some kind. His parents disagreed. The compromise was Washington College along the Chester River on Maryland's Eastern Shore. The school had a sailing team, a highly regarded writing program, and a music department in need of trombone players. The campus was also near notable boatyards that Harris had read about in *WoodenBoat*.

Harris regards his classical-music education as a template for functioning in an artistic realm similar to small-boat design. "There's the discipline—I really did practice for 10,000 hours in the early years," he says. "Working musicians toil in obscurity but follow a simple formula: If you have chops, you get work. If you don't have chops, then no work. And it helps to be a decent person. A jerk with chops might be tolerated, but jerks with no chops don't work." For Harris, "*discipline, chops, and be nice*" became a working principle.





Harris worked at CLC as an employee, cutting kit parts on CNC machines, before buying the company in 2000. He also taught himself computer-aided design. Both skills served him well as he refined the company's cutting processes for a high-end three-axis machine (top left); reimagined the kit components, as for a Wood Duck 12 kayak (left); adapted puzzle-form scarf joints (top right); and heeded customer questions and feedback to clarify CLC's instruction manuals (above).

"I conjured up a vision of my dream career," he recalls. "I would design and build wooden boats, but I would need to cultivate some kind of production line to pay the rent. I had no idea what this might be, but the custom-boat-design feast-or-famine cycle terrified me.

"Bolger once remarked that he liked projects for amateurs, in contrast to production boatbuilders, because they have the most interesting design briefs. And the boats actually get built," Harris says. For Bolger, this was fertile ground for experimentation, but Harris noted that many of Bolger's published designs were never actually built. Harris saw this as a flaw in the system. Just as he had wanted to compose music and conduct it, too, he had a vision: "I imagined a small-boat atelier where I could design the boats, oversee the prototypes, refine as necessary, and release polished designs."

In college, Harris built a portfolio of boatbuilding projects, worked as a rigger, and labored by the hour in boatyards. He heeded Herreshoff's recommendation that design students should do as much freehand drawing as possible to gain an appreciation of proportion, and he spent hundreds of hours developing a coherent drafting style. He built up his chops.

The CLC Connection

Upon graduation in 1994, he landed an $8-per-hour boatyard job. It was a bare-bones operation surviving from one small project to the next, but over in one corner the business was cutting and shipping kayak kits for a Virginia-based company: Chesapeake Light Craft. Harris's job was to make patterns, cut the parts, and package the kits. Kayak popularity was exploding at the time, and Harris realized that the kit-boat contract was carrying his employer's business. He thought, "Could this fuel a career as a boat designer?"

In 1995, Chesapeake Light Craft's founder, Chris Kulczycki, hired Harris to move kit production to a dedicated shop in Annapolis. The margins were good. "Our most popular kayak comprised less than a cubic foot of wood," Harris recalls. "With epoxy and fiberglass, the kit cost us $288 in labor and materials, and we sold it for $694." CLC eventually shipped hundreds, even thousands, of kits. Soon there were more employees, and the company bought a big CNC machine to cut the kit parts out of marine plywood panels and keep up with demand. Harris taught himself computer-aided design (CAD) by lofting a Washington County peapod from Howard I. Chapelle's *American Small Sailing Craft.*

"Most backyard boatbuilders of the 1990s were resourceful enough to read blueprints and use a scale ruler," he says. "They were handy with tools and glue." But the company's success in courting first-timers meant that they were reaching customers who had never given a thought to building a boat. "For those builders, our kits and assembly manuals weren't good enough," he recalls. With the arrival of widespread

Kayaks were a natural fit for boat-kit projects early in CLC's history, and Eric Schade's designs for the Shearwater Sport (top), Petrel (above), and Wood Duck 12 (bottom left) have been among CLC's most popular boats. With their light weight, they are easily cartopped and launched; the middle left photo shows a Wood Duck 12 on the ground and a Wood Duck 10 slung over a shoulder.

computer communications, "Customers and potential customers were finding each other on the Internet and comparing notes. We needed to get a lot better."

In 1999, business remained brisk, and the timing looked good for the founder to sell the company. "I was the general manager and starting to flex my chops to solve the boat-kit design and assembly-manual issues, but it seemed likely that with the sale of the company, I would be replaced," he recalls. "I was 27 and had about $4,000 in the bank. But CLC's profit-and-loss numbers looked good, and the market for acquisitions was bullish. I could articulate a clear vision for CLC as a point of entry for amateurs. I found investors, and we bought the company."

In January 2000, Harris found himself at the helm of his dream job, with plans to "fix the 1990s-era kayak designs and figure out the assembly manuals," he says.

"Kayaks built CLC," Harris says. "I love the sleek, sculptural aspects of something that can be built in 80 hours, weighs 45 lbs, can be stored under the eaves of the house, and can be cartopped on a Honda Civic. You can load a kayak with 120 lbs of gear and disappear into the wilderness. Magical stuff." CLC's catalog lists more than 50 kayak designs. Pressured to pick his favorites, Harris chooses the Eric Schade–designed Shearwater Sport and the Wood Duck 12, marques that have grossed over $10 million in kit sales since 2005.

He bought a big truck and trailer and took a fleet of CLC samples on the road. "It seemed logical to me that someone undertaking a boatbuilding project might want to get a close look at a demo model first, even try it on the water." Harris reasoned that if CLC showed up with demo boats in the city where you lived, you were more likely to buy the CLC kit. Early venues were Sacramento, California; Pensacola, Florida; Hopkinton, Massachusetts; and Duluth, Minnesota—and hundreds more were added over the next 20 years. "To my knowledge, no other boat-kit company has ever traveled on such a scale," he says.

He also revisited his earlier design inspirations, for example with the Northeaster Dory of 2007, a rowing-sailing design 17′ long and weighing 120 lbs that fuses classic dories from books by Gardner and Chapelle. The design has been the most popular kit in CLC's catalog for years. It was optimized to go together easily in five-and-a-half-day classes and to look good in the process, thanks to refinements such as limiting the number of epoxy fillets. A builder working alone should be able to complete the boat in about 120 hours. CLC has shipped about 1,500 Northeaster kits so far, and there's a long scroll of options and add-ons for this highly evolved boat.

New Obsessions: Instructions and Marketing

Harris recalls that improving assembly manuals for CLC's catalog of designs became "a defining challenge." He put together a team to write new manuals from

Under Harris, CLC has had ambitious class, workshop, and demonstration schedules. At the 2012 WoodenBoat Show at Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut (top left), 16 families built glued-lapstrake 16′ Sassafras double-enders from kits over three days. CLC regularly displays a variety of boats at the Port Townsend (Washington) Wooden Boat Festival (top right). At the CLC headquarters in Annapolis, Maryland, classes focus on specific designs, including the popular Teardrop Camper (bottom left) and the 15′7″ Skerry Skiff (bottom right).

scratch. "And that was my first big mistake," he says. "Turns out, no one wants to read about how to build a boat. They want pictures and diagrams. Lots of them, and good ones too."

The first wave of improved manuals felt text-heavy to Harris and his customers. Meanwhile, the sales growth and technical-support pressure kept outpacing CLC's ability to staff up. Harris poured time and money into better guides, but progress was incremental. It was enough to aggravate investors but not enough to stay ahead of customer needs and expectations.

"A great assembly manual is a tricky thing," Harris says. He cites the example of a manual the company created in 2002 for the Arctic Hawk, a beautiful stitch-and-glue kayak designed by Mark Rogers: "People wanted detail, so we gave them a 450-page manual, with 1,600 staged photos." The effort cost $100,000, and it was an "abject failure," according to Harris. "The hull wasn't assembled until page 100. The deck wasn't installed until page 200. Customers told us that they got bored and found something quicker to build." Few Arctic Hawks were completed, and the design found no traction in the marketplace.

The lesson learned was that projects for first-time builders need to be accessible and achievable in a realistic time. The best manuals are illustrated, not written, which calls for professional photography, clear line art, and an obsession with concise, careful caption-writing.

Harris illustrates the challenge with a sentence from an early CLC manual:

Wait for the epoxy to dry, then move the side panel assemblies to sawhorses for the next step. "Epoxy doesn't dry. It *cures*, and if you move the part too soon, the bond might fail, and now you have an angry customer," Harris says. He reprinted the manual with *curing* in place of *drying*. But epoxy has a hard time curing in a 50-degree, wintertime garage. More customer question calls followed…and then it was back to the document to rewrite the text to read, *Allow the epoxy to cure for 24 hours at 70 degrees F, then move the side panels.…*

"Ah, but you aren't done," Harris says. The next page might direct builders to *apply a coat of clear epoxy resin and allow it to cure for 24 hours at 70 degrees F.* "Great," Harris says, "but some first-time boatbuilders will just brush on epoxy resin…without mixing in the hardener." Reprint the manuals to read, *Mix epoxy resin and hardener, without fillers, and then apply a second coat of epoxy, and allow it to cure for 24 hours at 70 degrees.*

"Eventually we found an artful balance," Harris says. "And you have to be incredibly patient. I've wondered if creating assembly manuals is punishment for something terrible I did in a past life."

Harris's initiatives took longer and cost more than expected. He recalls an investor remarking: "You're in a niche that's about an inch wide and a mile deep." The investors were patient, but they wanted to trim costs,

CLC's numerous small sail-and-oar boats include the new 13'5" Lighthouse Tender Peapod (top left); the 7'9" Eastport Pram (top right); the 18'10" Southwester Dory (middle right); the 10' Tenderly Dinghy (left); and the 10' Lake Union Swift (bottom right), designed as a variant of the Tenderly for The Center For Wooden Boats in Seattle, Washington.

and in the early 2000s the cuts took the legs out from under CLC's growth. In December 2004, Harris was able to convert investor ownership into a loan agreement. "They deserved better returns than they got, but CLC is an odd little business, and I just never generated private-equity-type returns," Harris says. By 2010 he had paid off the loans.

This investment in what Harris calls "the builder experience" is expensive. "The folks at CLC doing kit design and development and prototyping and assembly manuals aren't working for free, and if a new design is fun and a lot of them get built, it'll be the result of a lot of things you didn't think about."

Harris says that he is flooded with ideas and proposals for new kit boats. "Releasing a new boat kit is maybe 5- to 10-percent design work and prototyping. The rest is figuring out how to manufacture the kit affordably and creating explicit instructions for assembly. By the time a newly designed kit is packaged for shipping, product development costs are into six figures," he says. "We have to move a lot of those kits to amortize those costs."

CLC's best-selling kits tend to have long gestations and the best assembly manuals. Those costs add up and somehow must be accounted for in order to stay in business, which brings us to the "Harris Rule," a principle he developed early on: "You aren't going to sell many kits if there's something similar, cheaper, and already built for sale on Craigslist."

Using solid wood, as opposed to plywood, is an obstacle to simplifying assembly and keeping costs down. "Sourcing timber in the kind of industrial quantities CLC needs has always been a major challenge, and the bending characteristics of solid timber vary," he says. "Take two stitch-and-glue kit boats that have cypress sheer clamps, for example," Harris says, "and one pair of sheer clamps is drier or has more vertical grain. We're not building over a mold or strongback, so one boat is going to form up into a different plan-view shape than the other boat. The bulkheads fit in one boat but not the other, and now that's a tense email or a tech call." The CLC solution is to engineer stitch-and-glue kits so they don't depend on the various bending characteristics of solid wood components—and to limit millwork that can't be done quickly and efficiently on a CNC machine.

To that end, CLC has kept pace with advances in kit-boat technology. They've developed and trademarked a new and simpler "LapStitch" approach to lapstrake construction by combining stitch-and-glue techniques. In the LapStitch process, the plank shapes of a traditional hull form are unwrapped in CAD, as with any modern stitch-and-glue hull, but with the refinement of the plank overlaps being machined on the CNC table. The planks are wired together through predrilled holes so they neatly interlock, and the hull pops into its 3D shape with the help of a couple of bulkheads. Epoxy is injected into the plank seams, and when it has cured,

Harris built on the success of CLC to expand the company's line, which ranges from rowing boats such as the 17'9"solo Annapolis Wherry (top left) and behind it the 17' Northeaster Dory; the 18'5" cruising canoe yawl Autumn Leaves (top right); the 15'2' Peeler Skiff (bottom left); and the 14'9" runabout Rhode Runner (bottom right).

the stitches are removed. Thus, the LapStitch hulls are as stiff as any glued-lap design.

By the year 2000, when the Skerry was designed, the CLC design team had refined the LapStitch method of building lapstrake plywood hulls. According to Harris, "The Skerry is just good at everything: elegant, quick to build (120 hours, give or take), and affordable. She's that very rare boat that rows as well as she sails. In basic trim the interior is spartan, but it's easy to dress up with inwales and alternate rigs. About a thousand of them are afloat. These days a Skerry is $4,000 for a sailing version—cheaper than a Sunfish."

Harris says that he is not concerned that anyone might try to duplicate the method. "The LapStitch thing is full of hairy details that took us decades of repetition and heartburn to sort out."

Over the years, Harris has broadened and expanded his catalog, with everything from a boat inspired by the traditional proas of the Pacific islanders to an interpretation of a thousand-year-old Viking Age boat. One recent addition is his re-envisioned reinterpretation of a Maine double-ender.

In fact, Harris thinks his Lighthouse Tender Peapod, 13′5″ long, represents the state-of-the-art in DIY kit boats. It's elegant, stiff, quick, and fun to sail or row. Harris designed her to match the looks and functionality of the classic Maine lobstering and lighthouse-tender boats, which were robust, stable, and steady enough for lifting lobster traps over the rail. "The 250-lb Lighthouse Tender Peapod won't skitter out from under you at the dock," Harris says. "It's the first time I've ever deliberately made a boat heavier." For the builder, everything is there—IKEA-like parts with predrilled holes for wire stitches, planks with puzzle joints to assure alignment, and bulkheads tabbed and slotted to fit into place. "You don't need to own a tape measure, much less a scale rule, to build this boat," Harris says. There's a choice of a single lugsail or a cat-yawl rig. Kits start around $3,000; sailing-component kits will more or less double it.

Perfecting the Chops

When asked about CLC's future, Harris points to spiraling costs of shipping and materials. "Bigger and more complicated designs aren't going to be the answer." He remains dedicated to the "Harris Rule," that any boat kit project must represent a better value than something in the used-boat market. "Most amateurs building wooden boats in 2026 are doing it for the journey. Because it's fun. But they'll still do that calculation, especially if the kit is expensive," he says. "That's how we decide what goes in the catalog. The design has to be either a great value or there's just nothing like it out there."

"People want capable, lightweight boats that fit on trailers and can be towed by small cars—power and

Harris has taken on serious experimental design and kit-creation challenges. The best examples of these are the 22′6″ Faering Coastal Cruiser (top left); the 18′7″ Guider (top right) for performance coastal cruising and "raid" sailing; the 30′8″ Madness Pacific Proa (above) for fast cruising; and the 25′4″ CLC Gislinge Boat inspired by Viking Age craft (left). All require experience to build, and all pushed the envelope of kit-boat development.

sail in particular," Harris says. "Good thing we've been designing those for decades." There are electric boats in the pipeline, and CLC has partnered with several motor and battery manufacturers already. "And we're building tons of video content. I think we all work for YouTube now."

The biggest headache? "Email," he says. "That's how most people get in touch—10, 20, 30 emails a day. And for about 15 years I could keep up by working night shifts on top of the seven-day work weeks." Then came marriage, parenthood, and getting older. "I hate it when a company doesn't respond to my email. It's not nice, right? But even with all these smart people at CLC answering most of the email, I was still at the computer until 11 p.m., trying to keep up. Email on weekends, email while on vacation, email when my three-year-old wanted to play. About 10 years ago, I had to start triaging.

For Harris, getting on the water—as he is here at the helm of a Skerry Skiff—is crucial to continual experimentation.

"I'm proud that I've helped people build their own boats," Harris says. "People have been incredibly kind. I get photos from all over the world. Many say they were sad when they finished the project because they missed coming home to work on the boat every evening.

"I'd like to think that if you stripped away the millions of marketing dollars, the acres of ad copy, and you ignored my talking YouTube head, and just pinned my designs up on a wall, someone would walk by and say, 'Look at that. Nice work! This one has chops. And I hear he's a nice guy, too.'"

Joe Evans was a sail designer at North Sails before building performance boats, including designs by Bruce Farr, German Frers, and Rob Humphreys. He subsequently produced films and articles for National Geographic, CuriosityStream, HBO Max, and various fishing and sporting magazines. He served as editor-in-chief of Chesapeake Bay Magazine. *He has also been an Orvis-endorsed fly-fishing guide on Chesapeake Bay.*

Chesapeake Light Craft, 1805 George Ave., Annapolis, MD 21401; 410–267–0137; www.clcboats.com.

Densified Wood

After World War II, the world was inundated with an explosion of new technologies that had been developed as part of the war effort. New materials such as fiberglass-reinforced, petroleum-derived plastics began to compete with natural products, including wood. In response, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Products Laboratory (FPL) in Madison, Wisconsin, experimented with methods to modify wood in ways to compete with the new synthetic materials.

In March 1956, FPL chemists R.M. Seborg, M.A. Millett, and A.J. Stamm published report No. 1580, titled, "Heat-Stabilized Compressed Wood (Staypak)." While Staypak was never commercially produced, other compressed, densified wood products made from chips, shavings, or fibers soon appeared—among them particleboard, medium-density fiberboard (MDF), and high-density fiberboard (HDF), and all are now ubiquitous in the market. Even earlier, in the 1930s, German engineers produced a compressed-wood product called Lignostone. Patterning on that model, the FPL crew produced Compreg, which was intended for structural products such as aircraft propellers, connector plates, concrete forms, and other applications requiring high strength. Compreg is produced by cross-layering veneers slathered with phenol-formaldehyde resin and subjecting the panels to heat and high pressure. Think of it as compressed plywood.

While these compressed-wood products found some niche markets, the imagined high expectations were never realized, mostly because of their high cost. For example, the advantages of Compreg over greased plywood for concrete forms was not convincing in the marketplace when the price difference was factored in.

Step to the Present

As nonrenewable petrochemicals and metals have become more expensive, or less desired due to their climate harms, researchers in recent years have returned to renewable wood as a possible alternative—if modified in some way. This brings us to an email from Matthew B. Marsh, who wrote, "I just finished reading a very interesting paper by Dafang Huang et al., https://bit.ly/WB309ModifiedWood, who have produced a self-densified, high-strength wood without the use of hot pressing. I have considered using hot-compressed densified wood in a couple of boat designs that require extremely high strength-to-weight ratios. The problem, as you know, is that mechanically hot-compressed wood always ends up highly anisotropic, with one very weak axis...and presses capable of applying 3+ MPa to large pieces for days at a time are not cheap.

"Huang et al.'s process seems to have turned their basswood samples into something stronger than 5083 aluminum in most respects, without a hot press and yielding similar enhanced properties in both transverse axes. It would also appear, to my eye, that—while in the intermediate swollen or partly treated state with the cellulose fibrils unbound from the lignin—their wood must be very amenable to tight-radius bending, which would then become locked in as it dries and densifies. The reduction in lignin ratio and the collapse of the lumen pores would also suggest potentially higher rot-resistance.

"Apart from the obvious difficulty of needing to deal with 2.5 mol/L sodium hydroxide and N,N-dimethylacetamide, I am curious if this process might eventually become practical for wooden boats. The idea of being able to make bent-to-form frames and beams of easily workable wood, yet stronger than their dimensional equivalents in extruded aluminum and at half the weight of aluminum, is rather appealing."

The self-densified wood that Matthew Marsh finds appealing is just one of several potential modified wood products that have been developed in recent years—products with names such as Superstrong, Bio-Strong, Self-densified, Superwood, and MettleWood, to name a few. All have the goal of improving strength-to-weight ratios. Most involve partial delignification combined with densification.

Various strategies have been devised to partially digest lignin in the initial stages of wood densification. Traditional pulping chemicals such as sodium hydroxide and sodium sulphate are often employed, but one process (Bio-Strong) exploits a white-rot fungus to partially degrade lignin. And while Defang Huang's lab adds the organic solvent N,N-dimethylacetamide, other research groups add different chemicals such as amino-functionalized polyglycerol phosphate and disodium octa borate tetrahydrate for fire, insect, and decay resistance.

Other kinds of wood modification currently being explored are: (1) thermo-mechanical modification (TMD) using heat and pressure, alone, to improve mechanical properties; (2) impregnation with nanomaterials such as nanocrystalline iron oxyhydroxide to improve cell-wall strength; (3) impregnation with an aqueous solution of biochar followed by thermomechanical treatment to enhance mechanical strength and water resistance.

RICHARD JAGELS

This naturally occurring flattened and "densified" dawn redwood (*Metasequoia*) fossil was collected by the author from an Eocene-era site on Axel Heiberg Island at 50 degrees north latitude in Nunavut, Canada.

Help from Nature?

The Bio-Strong wood process employing fungi to partially degrade lignin makes the claim that 85 percent of the original mass is retained—which is higher than acid-delignified super woods—and requires "little solvent or energy beyond the press cycle" (Lu et al., Adv. II, eady 0183, 2025). The authors say the product "was inspired by ancient, buried wood, a naturally formed material after wood endures in microbial-rich and high-pressure environments for thousands of years." I have extracted fossilized wood of this kind in the high Arctic, as shown in the accompanying photograph. Geologists call it lignite or "brown coal," a substance that could become bituminous or anthracite coal with several million more years of increasing pressure. Denser than wood, fossilized wood may be stronger in compression, but unlike wood fresh from the tree, it is quite brittle (see Wood Technology, WB No. 139).

Commercial Prospects

Most of the new "super" woods are still in the experimental or prototype production stages. How many of these will ever reach the market will likely depend on how much start-up and promotion cash is pumped into the technology. Right now, wealthy investors seem to be dumping all their money into artificial intelligence, not wood products for the future. Even if any of these new modified-wood products reach the marketing stage, they may experience the same fate as Staypak and Compreg, falling by the wayside or finding a tiny niche market. I am skeptical that construction-sized dimensional planks or sheet products will be cost-effective enough to replace current materials, but I may be proved wrong. The most optimistic scenario, in my view, would need to combine very cheap wood sources with a low-energy manufacturing process. The self-densified product that Marsh cited might be a reasonable candidate.

Soon we will have a test case. The company Invent Wood has built an 88,971-sq-ft manufacturing plant in Frederick, Maryland, where they will manufacture a product they're calling MettleWood. The company has received a $20 million grant from the U.S. Department of Energy and claims that MettleWood is 80 percent lighter and 50 percent stronger than steel; is cheaper to manufacture; is sustainably sourced; and is highly resistant to moisture, infestation, and fire. Production was scheduled to begin in 2025, but I don't know if that goal has been met. Stay tuned.

Dr. Richard Jagels is an emeritus professor of forest biology at the University of Maine, Orono. Please send correspondence to Dr. Jagels by mail to the care of WoodenBoat, *or via e-mail to Senior Editor Tom Jackson, tom@woodenboat.com.*

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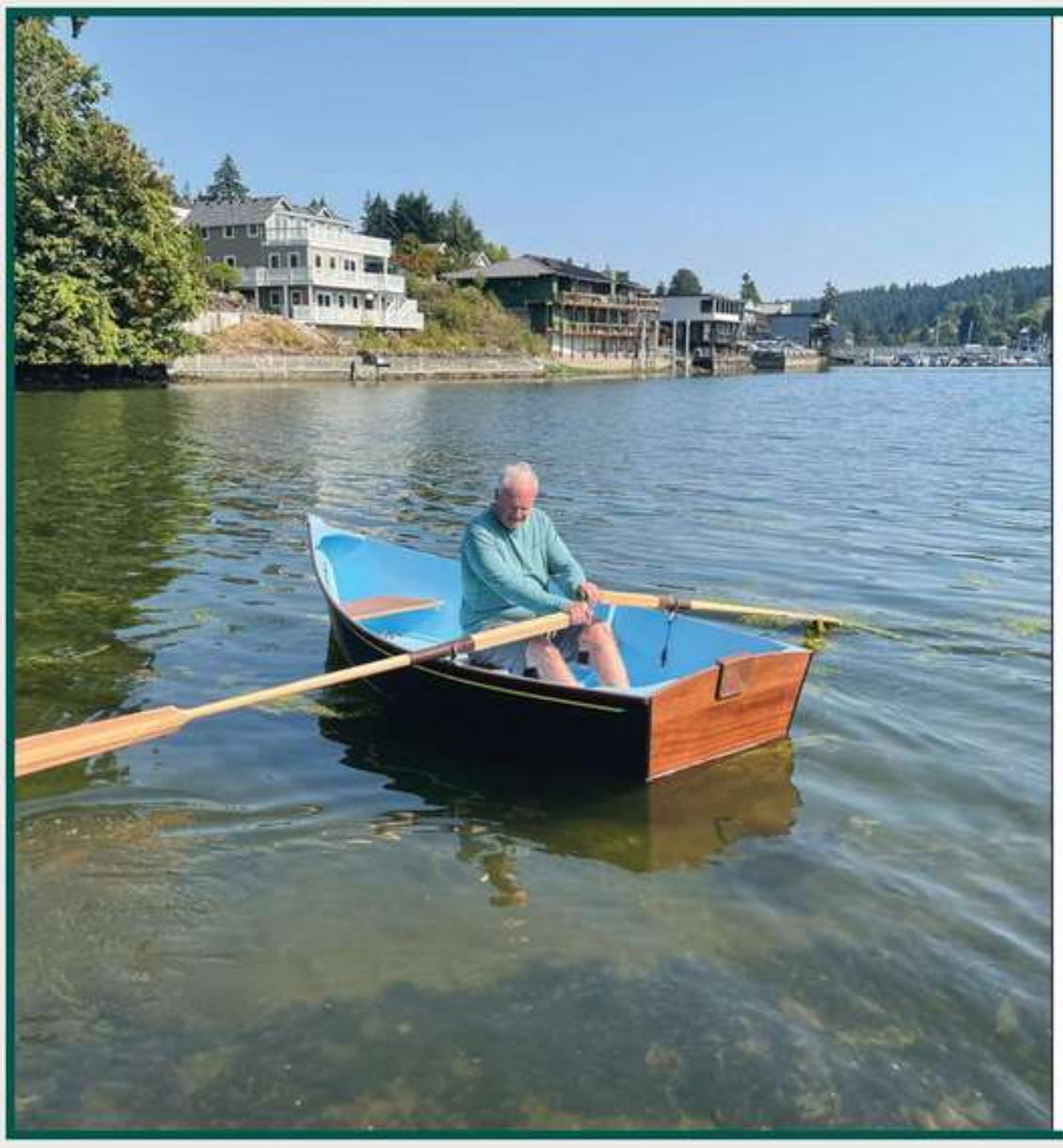
Launchings

Edited by Christopher Cunningham

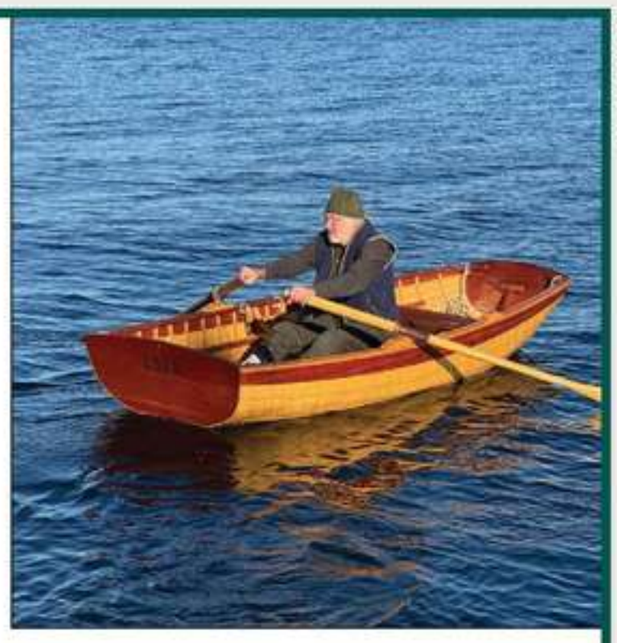
These pages, along with the Boat Launchings section of www.woodenboat.com, are dedicated to sharing recently launched wooden boats built or restored by our readers. If you've launched a boat within the past year, please email us at launchings@woodenboat.com, or write us at Launchings, WoodenBoat, P.O. Box 78, Brooklin, ME 04616.

Please include the following information: (1) your boat's name; (2) its length and beam; (3) the name of its design, class, or type; (4) the names of the designer, builder, and owner; (5) your email address, mailing address, and phone number; (6) the port or place of intended use; (7) the approximate date work began; (8) the date of launching; and (9) a brief description of your experience of the construction or restoration. Send no more than five high-resolution photographs, each with a file size between 700kb and 16mb, and the name of the photographer for each photo.



RILEY HALL

At the Harbor History Museum in Gig Harbor, Washington, the largest exhibition space, the Maritime Gallery, houses SHENANDOAH, a 65′ purse-seiner built in Gig Harbor in 1925. The ongoing restoration of the boat, led by shipwright Riley Hall, produces a lot of leftover plywood and offcuts of good lumber. To put them to good use, Riley designed the Salmon Skiff for the museum. As work on the 10′ flat-bottomed rowing skiff progressed, Riley and volunteers Duane Huan, Ken Hoy, and Curtis Hall employed a "three-man rule": whenever making any changes to the skiff's shape and aesthetic characteristics, all had to agree. The boat was painted with the same colors used for SHENANDOAH; it was finished after three weeks of work and left to sit for a week while the paint cured. On August 28, 2025, the skiff was launched and christened SOCKEYE after the salmon SHENANDOAH fished for.



RON BERRY

Jay Haavik of Seattle, Washington, has spent more than 50 years as a woodworker, making carvings in the Viking and Northwest Coast Native styles, but didn't build his first boat until he was 81 years old. He ordered plans from Jordan Boat Works for the Dulcibella design, a 10′ rowboat inspired by Norwegian prams. Having worked on Viking ships in Norway, Jay had a passing acquaintance with lapstrake construction, but to make sense of the plans and the boatbuilding manuals, he had to learn the language of boats and their construction. He followed the instructions for a traditional build—Alaska yellow cedar copper-riveted to steam-bent white-oak frames with mahogany for the transoms, keel, and sheerstrakes—and found that most of the mistakes he made were attributed to reading the text incorrectly. After 1,000 hours of work, Jay launched his pram, named CORA after his grandmother.

DENISE APPLETON

When Andrew Appleton of Kingston, Ontario, Canada, ordered plans for the 16′ Haven 12½ from The WoodenBoat Store, he didn't expect 15 years would pass before he finished building the gaff-rigged sloop designed by N.G. Herreshoff and Joel White. He took a leisurely approach to the project and let it idle for several years while he built another boat with a grandson and took another few years to cruise the Caribbean aboard a ketch that he'd restored. Andrew cold-molded the hull with three layers of ⅛″ western red cedar sheathed with fiberglass inside and out. He used modern stainless-steel fittings in lieu of bronze and fitted a roller-furler for the club-boomed jib. In June 2025, Andrew launched TREASURE, which he sails among the Thousand Islands on the Saint Lawrence River.

BUZZ KUHNS

The Lake Champlain Maritime Museum of Vergennes, Vermont, offers its Champlain Longboats program to introduce high-school students to boatbuilding and rowing. The project for 2025 was the construction of a four-oared 25′ rowing gig designed by Mike McEvoy. During the school year, 14 students from two high schools came to the museum workshop two or three times each week for the project. The first task was a visit to a forest to look at the kind of trees that would yield suitable lumber. Later, back at the museum, they helped a sawyer mill white-pine, white-oak, and black-locust logs with a portable horizontal bandsaw mill. The gig was planked with the pine and framed with steam-bent oak. The locust was laminated to make the stem and sternpost. The finished gig, RUTH M. KENNEDY, was launched in May 2025 and joined the museum's fleet of 18 gigs used in the Longboats program.

PATRICK WERNER

For the past eight years, Patrick Werner of St. Paul, Minnesota, has been helping kids build boats at the city's Linwood Community Recreation Center. Some years they build double-paddle solo canoes, others they build outboard-powered Mini-Max hydroplanes. For four days in summer 2025, eight kids aged 8 to 16 built eight 7′9″ prams. Patrick had drawn the plans over the previous winter and made a few modifications suggested by the kids before they began construction. The sides for each boat were cut from 8′ long 1×10 boards and ¼″ plywood was used for the bottom. The 22″-wide bow and stern transoms were cut from the 1″ stock and the thwart spreads the sides to a beam of 24″. The kids made double-bladed paddles using 1″ PVC pipe for the shafts and plywood for the blades. The boats were launched October 1, 2025, on McCarrons Lake, just north of St. Paul.

MENDI URRUZUNO

The Albaola Maritime Culture Factory is a Basque working shipyard museum situated in the Basque Country on the coast of the Bay of Biscay, between Spain and France. For the past 12 years, shipwrights there have been building a replica of the 92′ galleon SAN JUAN, a 16th-century Basque whaling ship that sank in Red Bay, Labrador, Canada, in 1565. The wreck was discovered in 1978 and the thousands of pieces that archaeologists found buried in the mud provided a wealth of information for the accurate replica. Construction of the new SAN JUAN began in 2013 with a 50′ beech keel and some 200 oak compass timbers harvested with shapes to match the ship's frames. The hull was planked with oak. The new SAN JUAN was launched on November 7, 2025. The spars, made from 20 fir trees felled for the project, have yet to be installed and rigged. The goal is to set sail for Red Bay in 2027.

LAUNCHINGS

JOEL PAGEL

For the past 30 years, the Door County Maritime Museum in Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin, has hosted an annual class to pass boatbuilding skills on to the local community. In October 2024, a class of seven, consisting of three returning students and four instructors, began work on a Rangeley Lake Trout Boat using plans from Newfound Woodworks of Bristol, New Hampshire. Aside from the western red cedar used for much of the strip-built hull, the builders used local wood species: white ash for the keel; cherry for the breasthook and transom; walnut and white oak for the seats; and maple for the inwales, outwales, and their spacers. For the oars, they used wormwood maple, and the boathook was laminated of spalted maple with a cherry center layer. The boat, launched unnamed at the museum in June 2025, was built to be raffled off to raise money for the museum's mission of preserving the county's rich maritime traditions.

RUSSELL KAYE

OUZEL, a 95′ sloop-rigged superyacht with a beam of 20′ 6″, was launched November 9, 2025. The boat was built by Rockport (Maine) Marine in collaboration with project managers at MCM of Newport, Rhode Island, naval architects and yacht designers at Langan Design Partners, also of Newport, and interior designer Mark Whiteley of Lymington, England. OUZEL's hull is cold-molded using western red cedar and Douglas-fir in combination with fiberglass, carbon fiber, and foam coring. Above the waterline, she has the look of a classic pilothouse cutter but below the hull is decidedly modern. The rudder is a deep high-aspect-ratio foil, and the fin keel carries a streamlined sand-cast-lead ballast bulb. The steel-framed and -sheathed fin serves as a tank for additional fuel for the 400-hp diesel engine. The owners, experienced sailors, will use OUZEL for wide-ranging cruising.

BRAD FLEENER

As a youth, Brett Joel helped his grandfather restore a decked canoe but hadn't done much woodworking since then, aside from a few rough-hewn tables and a Murphy bed. Inspired by reading *WoodenBoat* for years, in 2016 he attended WoodenBoat School in Brooklin, Maine, and learned about glued-lapstrake construction from Arch Davis. It was the first time Brett had used a bandsaw. After the class, he bought a new bandsaw, acquired a used tablesaw, and built a router table. Tooled up and recently retired, Brett set to work on a Penobscot 17, a 17′ sail-and-oar beach cruiser designed by Davis. He planked the hull of ¼″ meranti plywood on a keel and stringers of Douglas-fir. Using Sitka spruce, he made the two masts, their spars, and two pairs of oars. After working 2,000 hours over four years, Brett launched PUOLUKA—the Finnish word for lingonberry—and now sails and rows her on the inland waters of south central Alaska.

LAYNE BRENNICK ANTHONY (ABOVE), NICK IVANCOVICH (BELOW)

Dreams of building a boat don't die easily. Nick Ivancovich of Sedro-Woolley, Washington, kept his alive for 50 years. Through the 1970s, '80s, and '90s, he crewed on commercial fishing boats and ran a construction company. While remodeling a church, he salvaged lots of clear Douglas-fir 2×2s with vertical grain; other jobs supplied leftover tigerwood decking. All the while, he collected the tools and manuals he'd need to build a boat. When he retired, he bought plans for the San Juan Dory designed by Dave Roberts of Nexus Marine in Everett, Washington. When Nick began working on the 16′ flat-bottomed planing skiff in September 2024, he enjoyed adapting his woodworking skills to the challenges of boatbuilding. He launched ŽIVJELI, a Croatian toast meaning "live life," in June 2025 and now uses the skiff for crabbing and fishing around Puget Sound.

... AND RELAUNCHINGS

TYLER FIELDS

The 12-Meter-class sloop WEATHERLY was designed by Philip Rhodes and built by Luders Marine Construction in Stamford, Connecticut, to defend the AMERICA's Cup in 1958. She was eliminated in the trials that year but redeemed herself at the next contest, held in 1962, by winning the Cup. She competed three more times; after the 1970 challenge she was converted for offshore racing. Her current owner, Steve Eddleston of Bristol, Rhode Island, had her hauled out by Bristol Marine of Somerset, Massachusetts, for an extensive refit. The to-do list was a long one and included work on a damaged rudder, recaulking the garboards, replacing the deck and several deckbeams, rebuilding the original Barient coffee-grinder winches, and moving the helm forward. William Gammel of Grand Prix Resources provided project management for the refit, which spanned 22 months. WEATHERLY was relaunched in July 2025 and now races and charters out of Newport, Rhode Island.

MARGARET HORN

Michael Stevens was looking for a picnic boat in which he and his wife, Linda, could enjoy the waters around their home near Wilsonville in northwestern Oregon. In 2016, while scanning eBay, he found a classic-looking boat that he could restore and modify to serve their purpose. The boat was in Southern California, but he bought it sight unseen; his brother-in-law in San Diego was able to pick it up and later trailer it north. The launch, built in the late 1930s or early '40s by the Monson Boat Company in Seattle, Washington, looked to Michael like it would be better suited for burning than boating. However, the planking splines that he set with epoxy in the seams of the cedar-on-oak hull strengthened it and began to restore its integrity. The boat's Universal Atomic 4 gas engine, however, dated back to the late 1970s and was beyond restoring, so Michael made the conversion to an electric motor from Minnesota-based Electric Yacht. At the end of the six-year project, the addition of a surrey top completed the picnic-boat look. Since her relaunching, MID CENTURY RUMORS has been drawing admiring looks at boat shows.

Hints for taking good photos of your boat

1. Set your camera for high-resolution images. We prefer jpg format, with a file size between 700kb and 16mb.
2. Stow fenders and extraneous gear out of the camera's view. Ensure the deck is clean and uncluttered.
3. Take your photographs in mid-angle sunlight for best results. Mid-morning or mid-afternoon usually work well.
4. Keep the horizon level and the background simple and scenic so your boat stands out from its surroundings.
5. Take some pictures of the boat underway and some at rest. Horizontal framing is preferred, but a vertical format works well for sailboats. Shoot a lot of images, then send us your five favorites.

We enjoy learning of your work—it affirms the vitality of the wooden boat community. We receive so many submissions that there is not room in the magazine for all of them to be published. Additional launchings can be seen at www.woodenboat.com/boat-launchings.

Particulars	
LOA	28′
LWL	26′ 5″
Beam	8′ 6″
Draft (hull)	10″
Displacement (half load)	3,130 lbs
Cruising speed	20 knots
Power	60-hp outboard

Weekender 28

Blending original and traditional

Design by Kevin Dibley

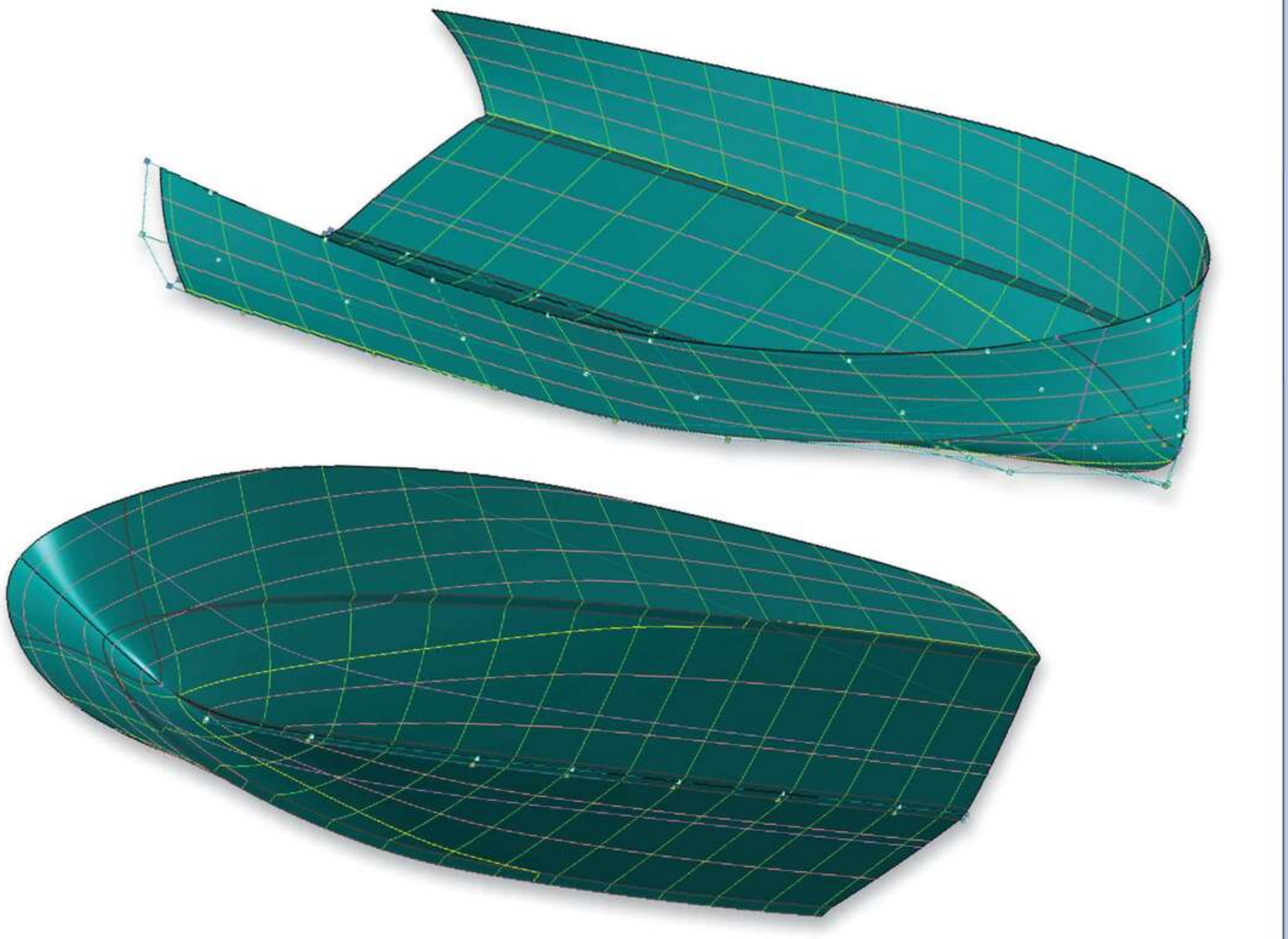
Review by Tad Roberts

Most designers struggle to keep up with changes in market demand, technology, and cultural trends. Very few are out in front, leading the way to something new. The sweet spot is somewhere in between, adapting to new technology and requirements while sympathetically updating traditional styles. Kevin Dibley's new Weekender 28 lands in this sweet middle ground; it is identifiably traditional but imitates nothing. It's a very attractive boat.

The coupling of sheathed plywood construction, moderate-sized outboard power, and a traditional sheerline with a dayboat's layout seems the perfect combination for our times. While many modern outboard boats are high-sided and aggressively hard-edged, the Weekender has relatively low freeboard and minimal superstructure with a soft, curving housetop. The graceful appearance makes a promise about performance; it will be comfortable and quiet. Obviously not intended for high-speed offshore distance runs, this boat will be perfect for day trips or evening cruises with family and friends in semi-protected coastwise waters. The Weekender raises visions of dropping the lines and idling out of the bay for a half-hour evening cruise in flat-calm summer weather, going no place, just being on the water.

This sheerline is worth some study. In profile, all the bend seems to be bunched up amidships. It's not what I would do, but luckily for us,

***Above*—The Kevin Dibley–designed Weekender 28 is traditional in its styling but imitates nothing. Moderate outboard power and a dayboat layout provide a perfect combination for current-day needs.**



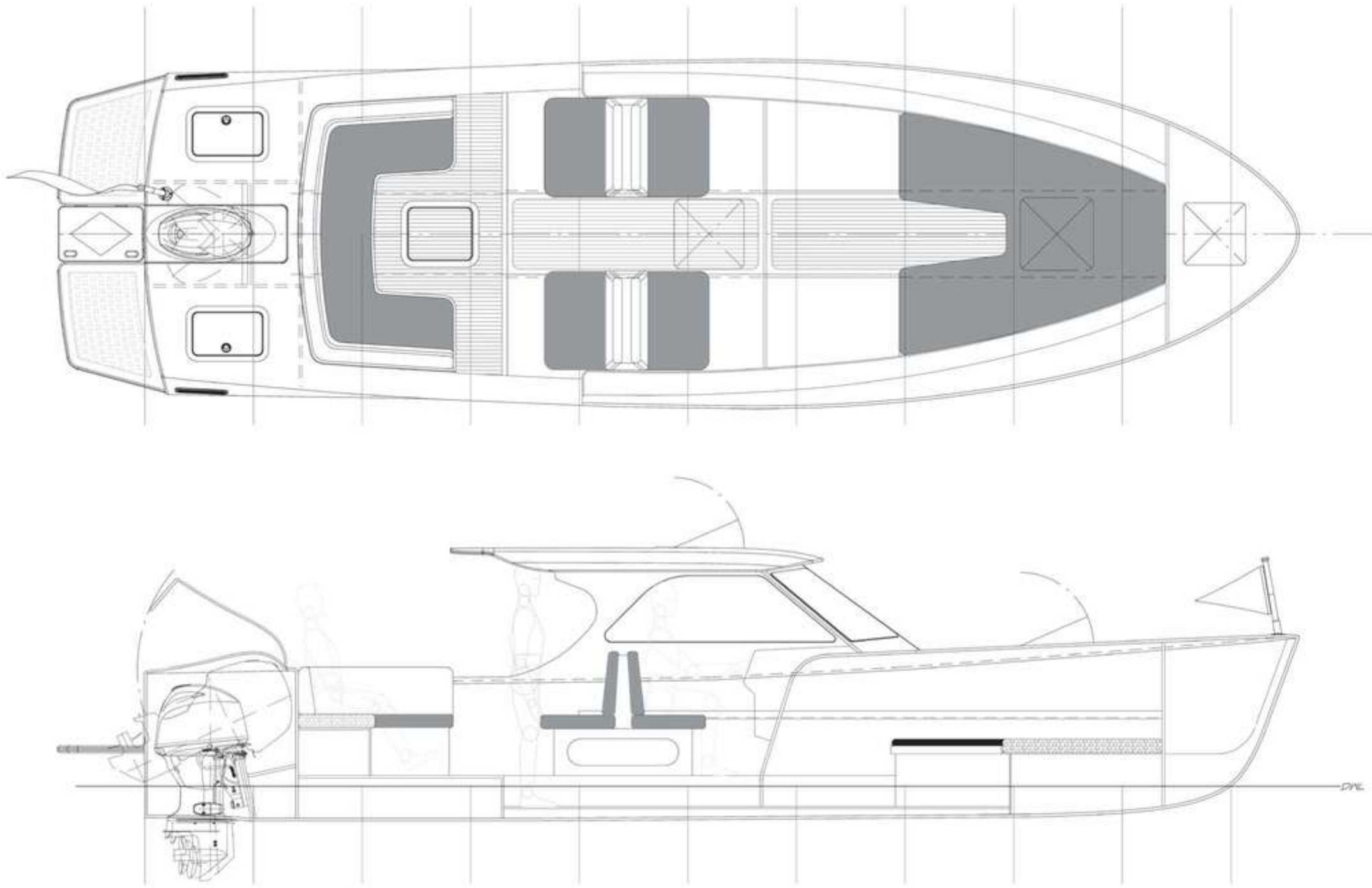
This will be an easy hull to propel, with its narrower-than-usual shape and light displacement.

creative talent is diverse and there are endless solutions to a given set of requirements. The computer renderings from the designer show that once our viewpoint moves forward or aft and above or below the straight profile, the sheerline becomes a sinuous and attractive S-curve. This magic is partly due to the Weekender's beam; the sheer is a three-dimensional curve, and beam changes how the ends of the sheer appear. A hull with moderate beam can have a flatter (when viewed in profile) sheer and still appear shapely.

Length-to-beam ratio for the Weekender's running bottom is 3.3:1, while today we often see runabouts with length-to-beam ratios of 3.0 or less. A narrower shape eases the boat's transition from displacement up through the speed range to full planing. Total weight or displacement also plays a role here, because weight will be commensurate with drag or resistance. The Weekender's displacement-to-length ratio at half load is a very low 76, again confirming the idea that this will be an easy hull to push through the water.

The low displacement was achieved through numerous fundamental decisions, key among them being a relatively small hull and superstructure, as well as low power by today's standards. The small hull and superstructure reduce weight by minimizing surface area, and smaller panels require less support, which in turn reduces the required framing. Also, bottom and topside loads increase with speed, so lower operating speeds reduce the need for heavy planking or framing.

Deadrise at the transom is about 13 or 14 degrees, which is entirely in character with the Weekender's use as a protected-water cruiser. There is no apparent twist to the after section of the hull bottom, and the buttock lines run dead straight and horizontal. This distribution of volume will keep the boat running flat without a lot of trim through the transition from displacement to planing speed. The forward bottom sections are noticeably convex, an idea that originated in the late 1950s. The convex surface sheds water and lifts the hull even when



The boat has comfortable seating for up to eight people and standing headroom in the cabin. There is crouching space forward under the deck.

sharply heeled, which is when it's needed.

This boat could benefit from a small full-length lifting strake about 10–12″ inboard of the chine flat. Because the hull is so light, it will lift easily and a sharp-cornered lifting strake would reduce wetted surface quickly, adding speed at no cost. I would also advocate adding a small external keel, maybe 2″ tall, just forward of the motor and tapering to nothing under the forefoot. It's a personal choice, but giving up a fraction of a knot in speed for some real directional stability is a worthwhile exchange when trying to dock in a crosswind or current.

The bottom planking is 12mm plywood, as are the bulkheads, stringers, cockpit sole, and berth flat. The topsides and deck are 8mm plywood. The entire hull and all structural members are fiberglass-sheathed inside and out, and this sheathing is doubled at the centerline and on the chines. Sheathing both sides adds stiffness to the panel and increases impact-resistance a great deal. A couple of the forward bulkheads have plywood doublers where they cross the centerline under the cabin sole; these act as substantial floor timbers and will be a comfort when banging over waves in a big tide rip.

The Weekender is designed around a 60-hp four-stroke outboard concealed in a well.

While the fuel-tank location is not indicated on these drawings, I would guess the designer is thinking of placing it under the after bench seat. That would probably be the best location for fuel weight at top speed, but another option might work better at 15–20 knot cruising speeds. Two big portable tanks under the midship seating at station 5.5 would get the weight forward enough to help reduce bow rise and keep the boat running flat for good visibility forward from the helm.

The Weekender is designed around a 60-hp four-stroke Yamaha outboard tucked neatly in a well under a cover forward of the transom. The well is open aft under the swim platform so hot air can exhaust that way, while a couple of clamshell intakes on the afterdeck would get fresh air into the engine space. Owners always seem to decide on a slightly larger motor; in this case, the 70-hp Yamaha could be used as it's the same physical size and only 5 lbs heavier.

The outboard motor is by far a market favorite today, but let's examine the choice for a moment. When up against an inboard diesel, the outboard is simple to install at minimal cost, but in my experience outboard service costs are rising significantly and parts availability is chancy at best. Today I own two outboards to do one job because if one stops running, I might wait a month for a replacement part, and we use the outboard every day.

Obviously, fitting an inboard diesel would be problematic in the Weekender with its current layout. Possibly a V-drive arrangement could be done, but weight would certainly go up, as would initial cost. Over the next few years, I'm sure that an electric outboard or steerable pod drive will become the usual power source for this type of boat. A battery under the cockpit sole and solar panels fitted to the cabintop and afterdeck would be the perfect system, again at considerable cost above the gasoline-fueled outboard.

With comfortable seating for six to eight people, the Weekender can take a crowd out for the afternoon. There is standing headroom in the cabin; its open below-waterline sole area is not self-bailing, and thus should be fitted with an oversized pumping system. A canvas cockpit cover would keep the rain out while the boat is moored. There is crouching space forward under the deck. If the head is a self-contained composting type, it could be used on the centerline between the berths, where there's just adequate headroom.

Dibley has given us a good design that is also very attractive; it's well suited to day or overnight use. One couldn't ask for better than to row home looking back at the pretty Weekender.

Tad Roberts designs boats on Gabriola Island in British Columbia, Canada.

For more information on the Weekender 28, visit www.dibleymarine.com.

WoodenBoat REVIEW

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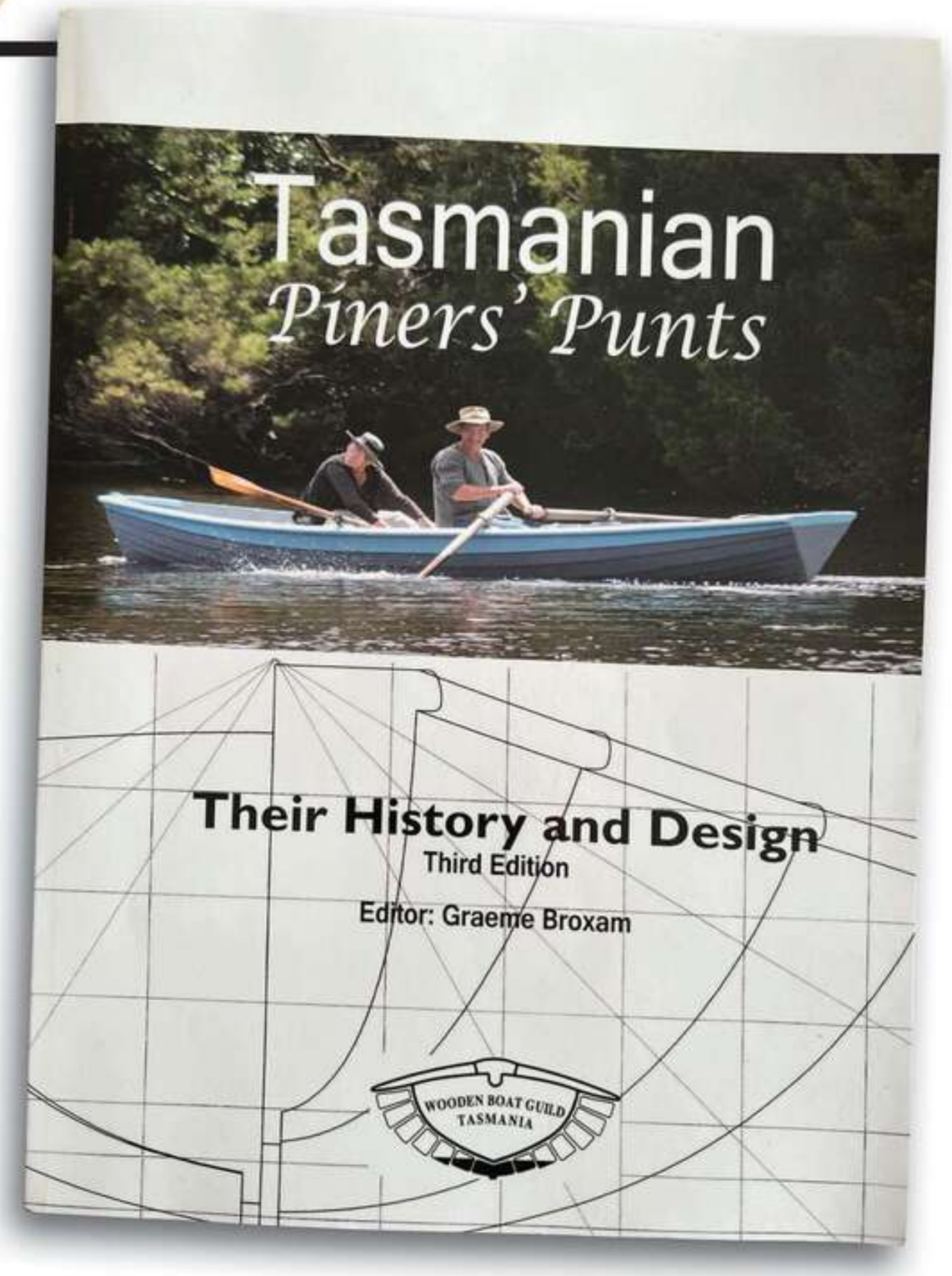
Three Histories of Local Boats

Reviewed by Tom Jackson

Tasmanian Piners' Punts: Their History and Design, Third Edition, 2023, Wooden Boat Guild of Tasmania, P.O. Box 28, Battery Point, TAS 7004, Australia; www.woodenboatguildtas.org.au. Paperback, 145 pp. Many photos and lines plans, three appendices, index. AU$25, from Navarine Publishing, www.navarine.net.

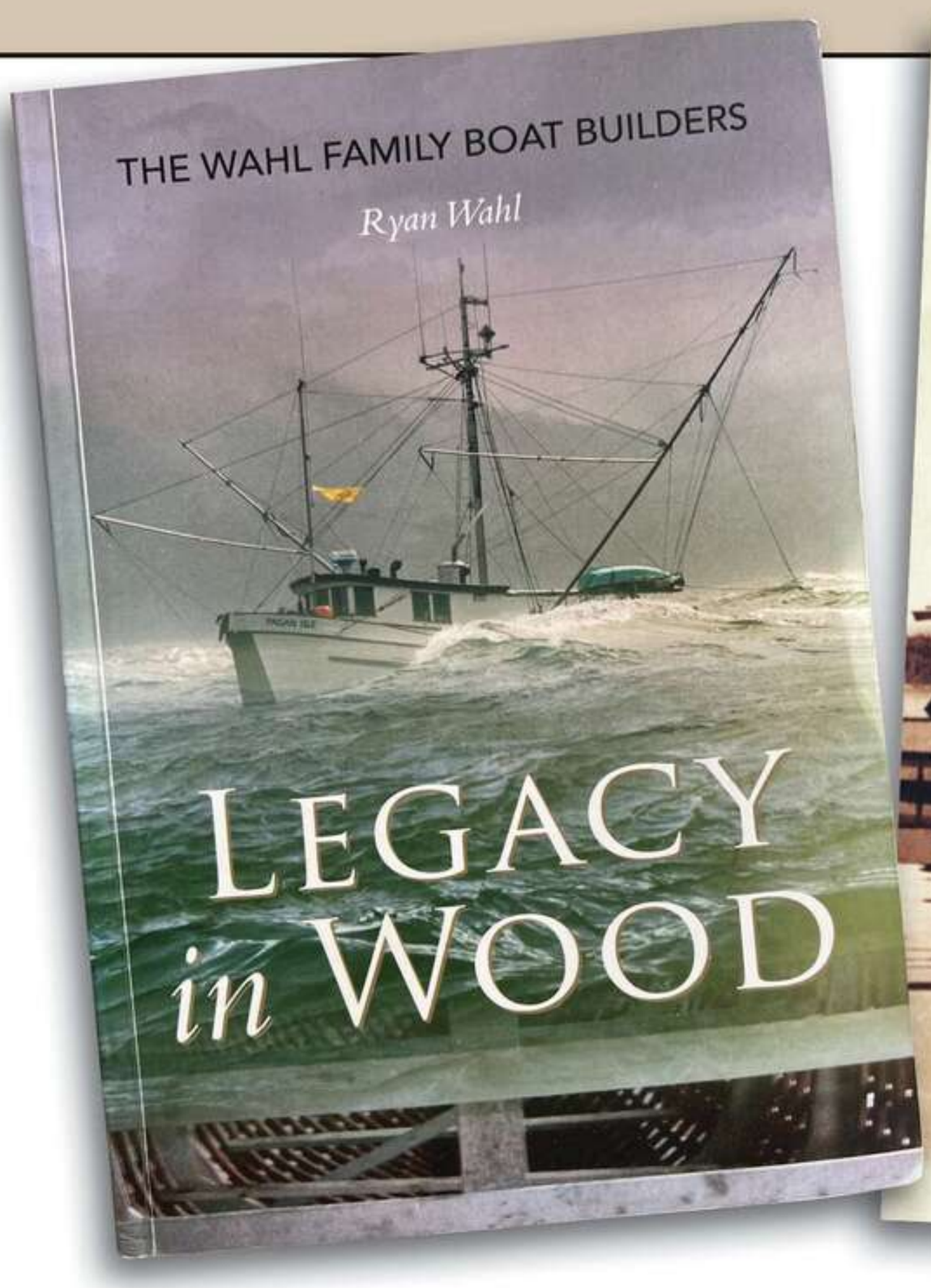
Legacy in Wood: The Wahl Family Boat Builders, by Ryan Wahl, Harbour Publishing, Madeira Park, British Columbia, 2008. Paperback, 222 pp. Black-and-white photos, bibliography, index. $24.95, www.harbourpublishing.com.

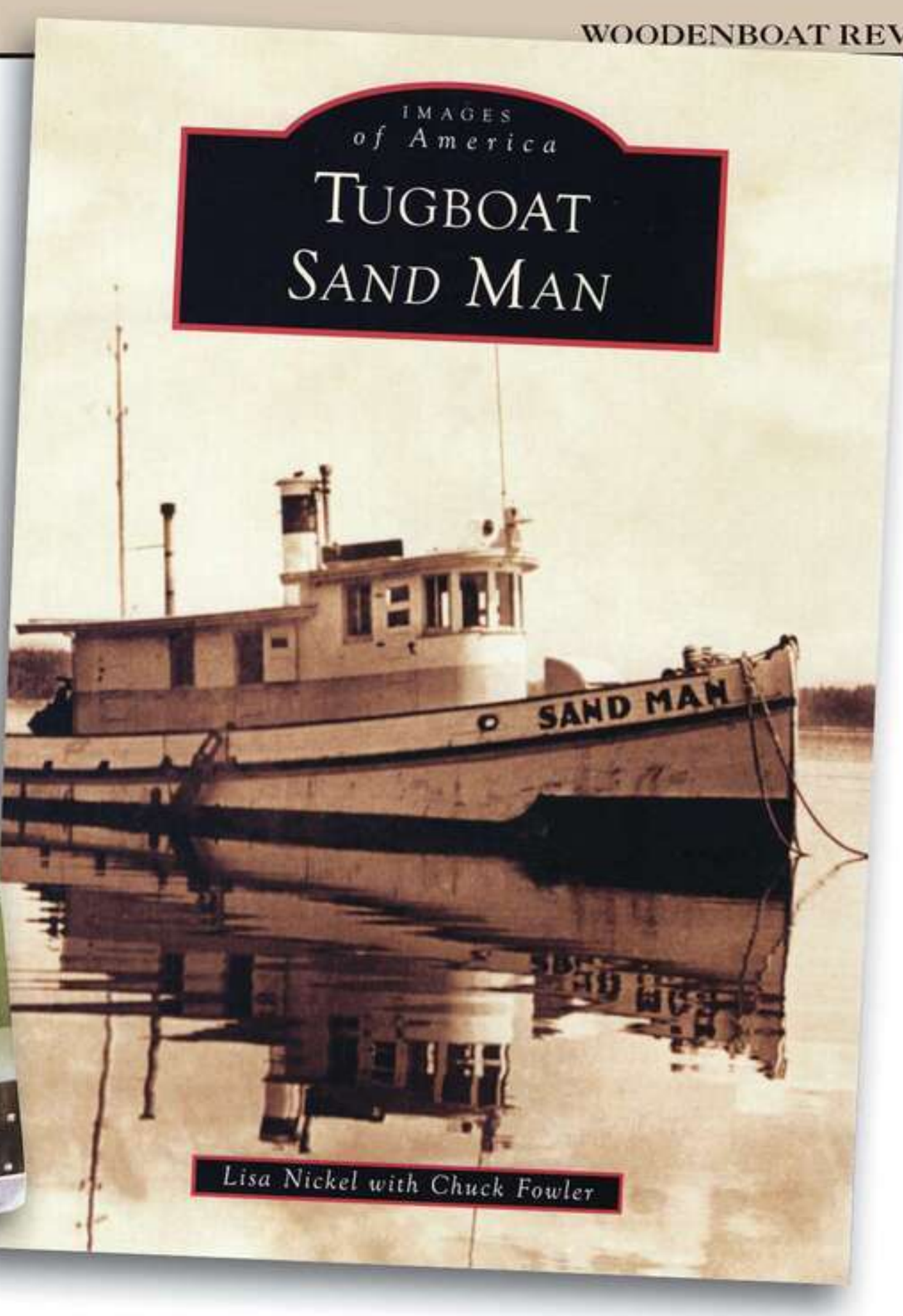
Tugboat SAND MAN, by Lisa Nickel, with Chuck Fowler, Arcadia Publishing, Charleston, South Carolina, 2025. Paperback, 127 pp. Black-and-white historical photographs, chapter introductions and captions. $24.99, www.arcadiapublishing.com.



Books have a habit of collecting on my desk, where they have a secondary habit of being buried under other stuff, sometimes for a long time. In a recent reshuffling, three of these books—all of which were given to me one way or another—stood out in an unusual way in that they share a focus on regional boats of specific types: in Tasmania, the small punts used on remote rivers by timbermen in the 19th century; in British Columbia, salmon trollers and gillnetters built by the Wahl family's boatyard near Prince Rupert; and in Washington State, a photo-driven account of the 1910 tugboat SAND MAN. What the boats that populate these pages have in common is how deeply they have been admired and loved in their own respective regions.

Such books seem most often to come via personal connection. I've twice attended the Australian Wooden Boat Festival in Hobart, Tasmania, where I met Peter Higgs of the Wooden Boat Guild of Tasmania (WBGT). The boats that are the entire focus of the guild's book, *Tasmanian Piners' Punts: Their History and Design*, figured prominently in the festival both years I was there. Like dories in New England, peapods in Maine, gillnetting boats on the Columbia River, canoes in Canada, lapstrake double-enders in Scandinavia—any list of comparables would be a very long one—these punts occupy an important cultural space in Tasmania. Their era is long past but still very much present in memories.

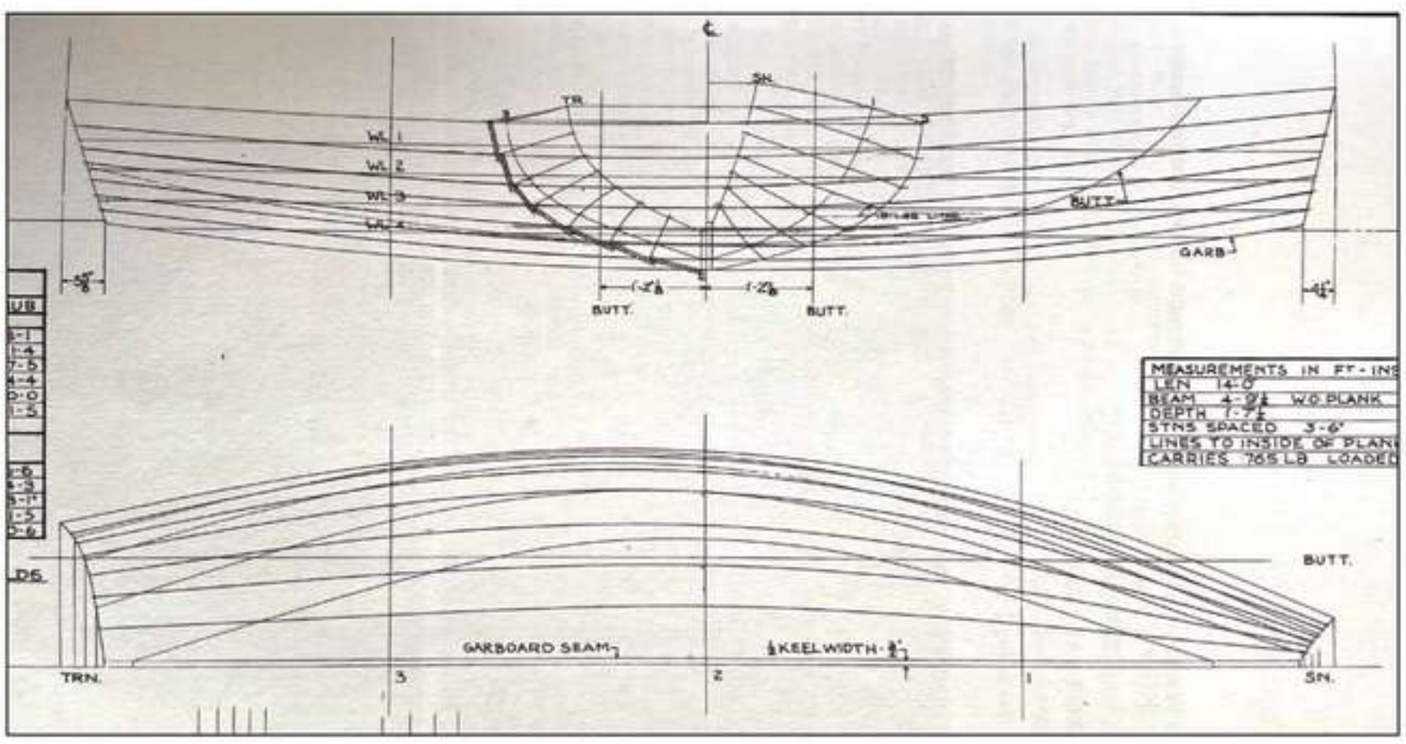




The pine with which the type is associated is Huon pine, a species much-celebrated by woodworkers of any kind, but boatbuilders in particular, for its rot-resistance and blemish-free lengths unimaginable today. Loggers used bluff-bowed punts to navigate rivers in western Tasmania to search out and harvest Huon pine. Perfect for planking, it was prized by shipyards and boatbuilders and still is, when it can be recycled from building beams or reservoir-recovered logs. Much-overharvested in earlier times and targeted for conservation as early as the 1860s, the species is now heavily protected.

The early days of the logging industry in Tasmania are eerily reminiscent of my own native Pacific Northwest, where celebrated and revered species such as Douglas-fir, western red cedar, Alaska yellow cedar, and Sitka spruce reach towering heights. The story of early loggers' hard labor in cutting trees was only heroic in its day; in hindsight, it is both heroic and tragic. Forests established for thousands of years were all but gone after only about a century.

In Tasmania, as in the Pacific Northwest, it is the early days of resource hunting—the pioneer period—that retains its allure. Whalers, fur trappers, loggers, gold-rush miners, and a host of others worked largely before machinery took over. The sheer scale of their tasks and the amount of work and hardship involved in scraping a living out of wild and remote lands are compelling stories. In Tasmania, the piners—some of them convict laborers—used punts as everyday workboats that only later were elevated to a revered status. Small, stout boats were necessary to work the upper reaches of rivers, often among rapids. The book does an excellent job of tracing what is known about the boats and their development and their numerous possible European antecedents. It doesn't skimp on photographic evidence: a couple of



Piners' punts are small, able boats that worked the upper reaches of rivers to move prized Tasmanian timber to sawmills.

early pictures from western Tasmania in the 1880s are published across two facing pages, with punts flagged in a way that puts them in context beautifully.

The book is in two parts, the first being devoted to everything that is known about these workboats, which were generally 14′ to 18′ long, planked lapstrake fashion but sometimes batten-seam. Extensive lists of builders, transcripts of oral histories, and references particular to this section give a reader ample avenues for further exploration. The second part is about the 21st-century context for the type, including individual accounts of 46 boats known to exist; the WBGT continues to search for others in barns and backways. A more diverse collection would be difficult to imagine: some are fully documented (in photos, photogrammetry, reconstructed lines, and detail drawings), others are not much more than derelicts, still others have been restored, and yet more are modern reconstructions in either traditional construction or even stitch-and-glue. A number of these boats are faithful replicas that have been built by the guild's members.

An important inspiration for the renewed interest in the type was Adrian Dean, who in the 1960s was a teacher at School of Mines in Queensland and took an interest in the type; later, in the 1990s as a teacher at The Wooden Boat Centre in Franklin, Tasmania, he started building reconstructions. His fingerprints are on many of the boats in this collection, as are the guild's.

Legacy in Wood: The Wahl Family Boat Builders is written as a labor of a different kind of love: family. The author, Ryan Whal, is a great-grandson of Øystein Whal, who emigrated from Norway in 1915 first to the United States and then, in 1920, newly married to a Canadian-Norwegian, to Canada. He started building boats for his own use during winters and fishing the Skeena River during summers. Eventually, he chose boatbuilding and settled near Prince Rupert, British Columbia, ultimately at nearby Dodge Cove. The boatyard he founded built somewhere between 1,000 and 1,300 boats between 1928 and 1990, across three generations. All but a few were fish boats, most of them salmon trollers and gillnetters.

Whal started the research for his book by asking his grandfather questions and recording his memories. This book, however, is much more than a straightforward family reminiscence. The West Coast of North America has always been closely associated with salmon fisheries and with the timber that came from the temperate coastal rain forests—especially Douglas-fir, western red cedar, Alaska yellow cedar, Port Orford cedar, and Sitka spruce. Øystein Whal was not alone in seeing opportunity there and in choosing to

***Left*—The Wahl family built fishing vessels, including TRADE WIND, near Prince Rupert, British Columbia, beginning in 1920. *Above*—They built their last wooden boat, LEGACY, in 1990.**

put his formidable energy into supplying boats for the region's fishermen. The result was an intertwining of experience and expertise that was closely aligned with the meteoric rise and extended diminishment of the salmon fishery. As a 17-year-old, the author worked on LEGACY, launched in 1990 as the last wooden-hulled fish boat that his family's yard built.

The Wahl yard was not alone in experimenting with fiberglass boatbuilding but ultimately rejecting it; however, the post–World War II widespread emergence of aluminum and steel for commercial boat construction spelled the end of the era of the handsome wooden boats—especially trollers—that were the Wahl yard's specialty. The yard's building techniques remained

old-school, with construction molds developed from half-models and a lot of the work done by eye. (One former employee describes them thus: "They were good, but they were backwoods boat builders.") Writing for a general readership, the author doesn't delve too deeply into the specifics of their techniques.

"For most of the last century, fishing was the backbone of the local and provincial economy," Wahl writes. "Now all the coastal fishing communities have either died out or undergone major transformation to stay alive, forced to remodel their waterfronts for tourism.... Gone are the packs of commercial fishboats so tightly docked together that you could walk from one to the other to get to the next pier. Today it's the sport fishermen's boats that occupy those spaces, which isn't surprising since the tourism and sport fishing industries are so tightly integrated." His family was equally tightly integrated with that history and legacy, and he is to be commended for getting the story down in print.

Another way of getting a story in print and in circulation is on exhibit in the third book in my found set, *Tugboat SAND MAN*. This tugboat has been a much-loved fixture of the waterfront at Olympia, Washington, for decades and a sometime participant in the Port Townsend Wooden Boat Festival and the tugboat races at Olympia Harbor Days. Unfortunately, just after this volume was published, the foundation created as a caretaker for the boat was disbanded. The boat, seized for unpaid moorage, had no bidders at auction in late July 2025 and is now in limbo on land in the hands of the Port of Olympia, possibly for some sort of land-based historical display. She has been out of the water for about three years and is unlikely ever to be relaunched.

The book, therefore, demonstrates an important aspect of this type of publication: getting history down in print. The original goal was to call attention to the boat for continued preservation. Now, it may serve as a resource for some unknown savior. At a minimum, it documents the life of a boat.

The author, Lisa Nickel, who credits a mentor, Chuck Fowler, who guided her into the project, as coauthor, grew up in a tugboat family on Puget Sound. She, in fact, appears in the foreground of a 1979 SAND MAN photograph as a young girl on the foredeck of her father's tugboat. She worked with the Arcadia Publishing Company, which has an extensive series called "Images of America," using historic black-and-white photographs chosen by local writers who write the introduction, chapter lead-ins, and captions.

The photographs, as you would expect, carry the day. The one-page chapter introductions give context for an aspect or era of the boat's history. It could certainly be

The tugboat SAND MAN has been a fixture on the Olympia, Washington, waterfront for decades.

argued that the approach is a formulaic one, but it's a formula that seems to work, given the thousands of local history books in Arcadia's uniform 6½″ × 9¼″ paperback format. The series gives a very real opportunity to highlight specific historical subjects, many of which would never otherwise have been the subject of books. Nickel spoke highly of how the publication came together.

Historical photos work because they extend ample opportunities for browsing and, as with the piner's punt photos, for grasping the historical context of a boat and her times. SAND MAN's name came from one of her primary tasks of hauling sand and gravel from quarries in southern Puget Sound, including a large operation in Steilacoom, south of Tacoma—now an enormous linear park with views of the sound and the Olympic Mountains to the northwest. Hours can pass in simply picking details from the photos.

Not all boats can be saved. I can think of numerous fish boats in Puget Sound that are now gone. The Tasmania punts often were alongside much larger, and very elegant, boats, now all gone. Wahl wrote about the end of an era in British Columbia. But some are saved. A wheel or wheelhouse may end up in a museum. Whether they survive or not, getting their stories into a form that can be passed to the future is an act of devotion. If a boat survives, it survives because it was notable enough, or loved enough, that somebody cared about it, and often cared a great deal. The memory of a boat survives for the exact same reason.

Tom Jackson is WoodenBoat*'s senior editor.*

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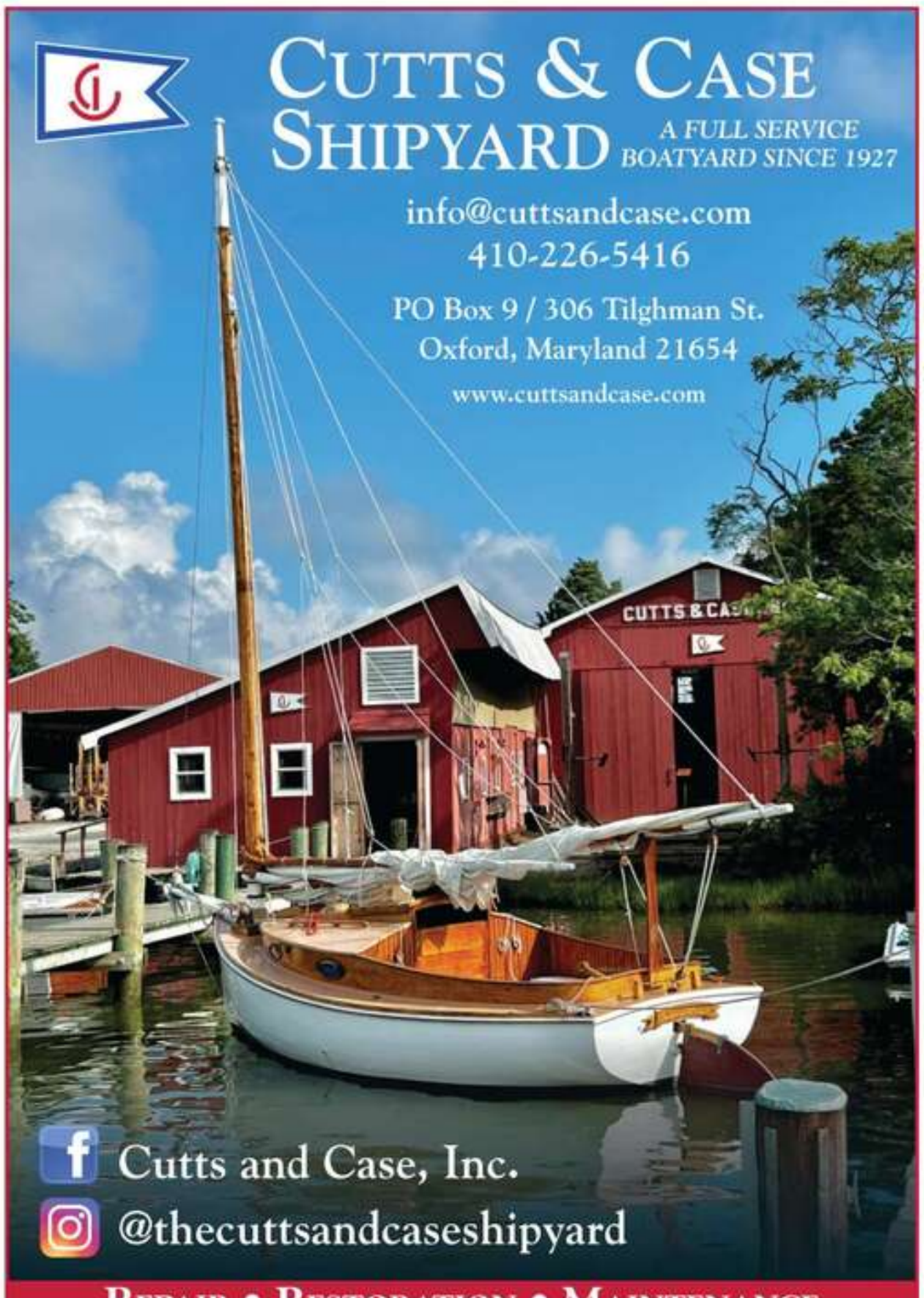

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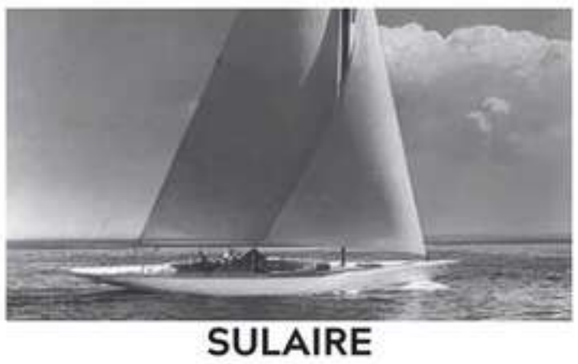

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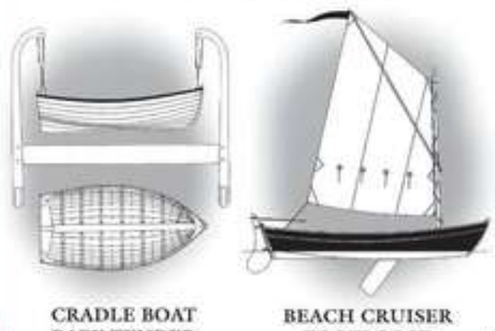

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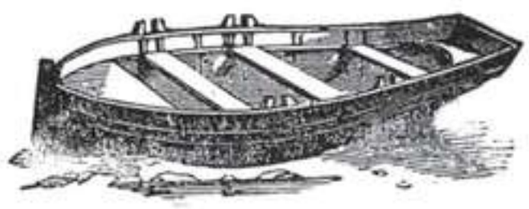

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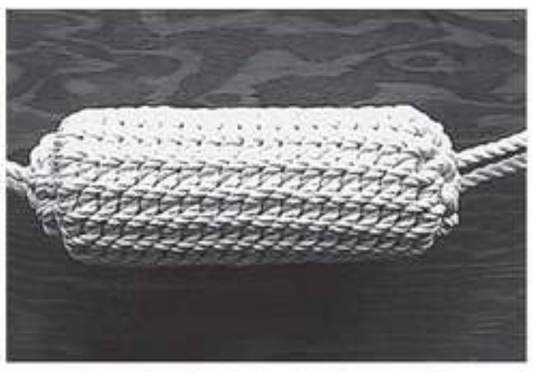

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YEAR: 2007. MFG: SCHLEIFF BOATWORKS. Model: Rescue Minor. Hull material: Wood. Engine Drive: Inboard. Engine: YM 3YM20. Length: 19′ 8″. Venture Trailer. Contact Johnna, jknapp@weamco.com. View more photos online: www.woodenboat.com/boats-for-sale/rescue-minor-2007.

"SPARKS" – A MODERN TAKE on a vintage lauch. 30′ electric/solar/diesel fantail launch with a low maintenance wood composite hull. Built by Ted Moores for his personal use to peacefully cruise inland waterways with dogs and grandchildren. A rare opportunity to own a significant vessel built by a professional builder whose life's work has influenced small boat building for decades. Featured in *WoodenBoat* No. 219. For detailed information: www.bearmountainboats.com/pages/sparks. Contact 705–740–0470 Joan Barrett. Asking $125,000 USD.

BUZZARDS BAY 14′ built in 2008 at Washington County Vocational School in Maine. Located on Cape Cod. New Triad trailer. Asking $12,000. Email ennk@comcast.net. 508–314–6063.

NEWELL DINGHY, built Seaview, England, circa 1970, finest materials, craftmanship, 8′, sail or row, $6,000, Mathews, VA, more details US 804–384–1822.

Boats For Sale
continued

1951 KETTENBURG K-38 Hull #7 (Length: 38′, Beam 8′, Draft: 5′2″) with sails (main and rolling jib), mast, boom and Perkins 103-10 diesel engine. Has been gutted for easy access to be able to fix some of the broken frames. www.mykettenburg.com.

39′ SLOOP CURRENTLY undergoing full cosmetic refit at Cutts and Case in Oxford, MD. Spirit was built by Harold Follett and his son then finished by Cutts and Case and launched in 1979. She is in excellent condition and is currently awaitng her new owner. Asking $95,000, more information and images www.thecuttsandcaseshipyard.com. meghan@cuttsandcase.com.

JOEL WHITE CATSPAW DINGHY. LOA 12′8″, beam 4′6″, draft 6″. Build completed in 2019. Atlantic white cedar on white-oak frames. Mahogany accents. Sitka-spruce spars. Shaw & Tenney oars. Harding tanbark colored sail. Topsides sprayed with Awlgrip. Has had very little use and always stored indoors. Trailer not included. Massachusetts. Contact Victor, victor@luzoauto.com, 508–740–3584. $7,900.

ROB ROY 57′ YAWL 1956. Designed by Arthur C. Robb and built by Herbert Wood yard in England. Long history of cruising and racing in New England, the Caribbean, and Europe. Now in West Mediterranea. New main mast, new engine, recent sails. Hull fully revised in 2025. Raced Les Voiles de Saint Tropez in 2023, 2024, 2025. Length 57′, beam 12/9′, draft 6/10′, 20 tons. Engine 65-hp (2022) Mahogany over rock elm and monel frames. Asking price 195,000 €. Mail to capelley@orange.fr for details or Call +33621350779.

1935 22 SQUARE METER SLOOP. Designed by Knud Reimers and built by Motala in Stockholm. 36′ overall, 6′ beam, 4.5′ draft. Honduras mahogany hull. New mainsail, Torqeedo electric motor. Located in Ithaca, NY. More info at www.acbs.org/the-emperors-boat/. David, 607–262–0443, dematth@gmail.com.

33′ ENGLISH STYLE GAFF CUTTER. Peter Buxton completely restored 1927 cutter. Longleaf yellow pine on black-locust frames. Has not been in water since restoration: boat is like new. All new systems, new low hours engine, 6′10″ plus headroom below, self-draining cockpit. New bowsprit length so rig (running and standing) needs to be set up and adjusted. Interior very large with black-locust brightwork. 45′ LOA, 33′ LOD, 11′6″ beam, 4′9″ draft. 68-hp Perkins diesel low hours. Spacious accommodation for up to 7. Please see Off Center Harbor ad: www.offcenterharbor.com/dream-boat-harbor-good-boats-for-sale/34-buxton-restored-gaffer-cutter-1927-2017-katarina/ or *WoodenBoat* Boats for Sale Online ad: www.woodenboat.com/boats-for-sale/33-english-style-gaff-cutter. She is basically brand new and a new work of art. Stored inside in Sedgwick, Maine. Asking $65,000 or best offer. Contact Bruce Elfstrom, bruceelfstrom@gmail.com. 860–977–0334.

1929 HERRESHOFF FISHERS ISLAND 31. Beautifully preserved by Ballentine's Boat Shop focusing on integrity of its heritage. In museum condition, original teak deck, sails in excellent condition. Great cruiser with many amenities. Active and successful racing. $90,000. Located Pocasset, Mass. bruce.bradley@live.com. 313–910–9226.

"HERE AND NOW", Designed and built by Gannon and Benjamin (G&B) in 2006. 38′ wooden boat, pristine condition. Classic construction with high-quality material (angelique, purpleheart, white oak, wana, cedar, mahagony), carvel planked. Draft 6′, beam 10.4′. Bronze fastened. Anchor windlass. Wooden spars, custom made. Galley aft, Origo stove, heating system, hot/cold water and shower, vacuum head. Plenty storage space. 3-cylinder Yanmar diesel (6 kn.), Furuno radar, GPS Raymarine, bronze winches, Muir anchor windlass, sails in perfect condition. Dinghy. Recent survey (2025) available. Stationed on Martha's Vineyard, at G&B. Serious inquiries at Gannon and Benjamin, Martha's Vineyard, or spoenla@aol.com or 011 49 175 7272499.

"TUULI" IS FOR SALE. Iain Oughtred designed 19′2″ Ness Yawl. Construction started at WoodenBoat School in 2010 and finished at home by current owner. First in the water 2011. Continuing improvements and fully equipped, including Torqeedo electric motor, Meranti hull, Douglas fir main mast, remaining spars and oars are spruce. All epoxy sealed. Excellent condition–$12,000. Located on Cape Cod. waltkangas@gmail.com for more information.

TRAILERABLE FAMILY CRUISER. Trailerable cutter-rigged gaff sloop. Awarded "Best Owner Restored Sailboat" — Mystic WoodenBoat Show 2024. Asking $22,000 for boat, motor, trailer, dinghy and 2026 mooring reservation. Text 603–501–9719.

"ELEANOR" IS FOR SALE. Howard Hughes' personal yacht. 71′, built to Trumpy's exacting standards in 1939. Full professional restoration underway including new frames, stem, transom, bottom and topside planking, caprail and roof. Factory rebuilt pair of Cummins diesels await installation. Cummins model #6 BTA 330-hp. A unique opportunity to own this important piece of American marine history awaits. Finish to your own specifications. Contact Steven, skingurbanna@gmail.com, 757–387–9066. Reedville, VA. See more photos online: www.woodenboat.com/boats-for-sale/howard-hughes-personal-yacht-71-built-trumpys-exacting-standards-1939.

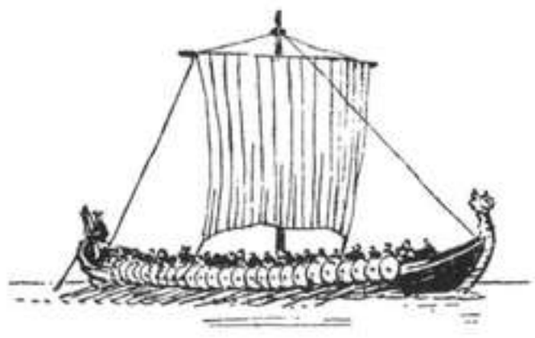
YANKEE ONE DESIGN SLOOP Sailboat 30′. Award winning, designed by William Starling Burgess/Stone built. "Flame" totally restored in 2015. Complete survey in 2023. "A Sailor's Sailboat." Richmond, CA. All new stainless rigging. Stainless outboard bracket. 2 spinnakers. More photos available. $39,900 or best offer. www.woodenboat.com/boats-for-sale/yankee-one-classic-wooden-racing-sloop-sailboat-30. Contact Bob, stefroche916@gmail.com.

Boats For Free

"SHADOWFOX"–1965 31′ Ocean Crossing Cruiser. Well-maintained. 20-hp Universal diesel. New mainsail. Roller-furling jib and spinnakers. $25,000. kwasiemoto@cox.net.

1962 TED HOOD LITTLE HARBOR 40. Centerboard yawl, double-planked, bronze-fastened, indoor winter storage, maintained by wooden boat professional. 40-hp Yanmar engine 1990 hours; autopilot, refrigeration, Raymarine electronics. Sails in good condition including spinnaker and mizzen staysail. Summers Rockland, ME. Asking $49,500. More information, photos and contact at www.grayandgrayyachts.com.

CANDLEFISH 13, Sam Devlin design. Meranti marine mahogany used throughout. Twenty horsepower Tohatsu four stroke, manual start, with less than 15 hours. Includes trailer, oars, anchor, and gas can. Ash outwale and seats. $6,500. dhmslm@gmail.com, Sturgeon Bay, WI.



BUILT 1951, OVERALL LENGTH 32′, length on deck 30′, beam 11′, draft 3′ centerboard up, 7′6″ down. Hull: Cape Cod Catboat with trunk cabin (design #870). Cedar planks on oak frames. Lead ballast. Bronze fastenings and bolts, also galvanized bolts. Rudder oak with bottom pintle on keel. Engine: Gray Marine mod. 4112 4 cyl. 31-hp. Spars: built-up rectangular spruce. Stainless-steel shrouds. Sails, mast, rudder, other parts in storage. Fair condition, needs work. Must be taken off premises. Not for parts. Located in Lincolnville, Maine. Contact Mark, 207–522–0944. To see photos, view the listing on *WoodenBoat*'s Boats for Sale Online, www.woodenboat.com/boats-for-sale/john-alden-designed-catboat.

VILLAGE COMMUNITY BOATHOUSE of New York City is looking to donate traditional wooden Whitehall gigs built in our shop to deserving rowing programs. Contact info@vcb.nyc.

VINTAGE SNIPE RACING BOAT 15′ 7″ with rigging and sail. Hull is marine plywood and needs some attention. Deck needs replacement for sure. Mast in good shape, boom is newly made of Sitka spruce. Centerboard is new as well, as is rudder (made from Bruynzeel plywood) and tiller. Sail is tired but I suppose it could be used. cmooreny@earthlink.net, 917–734–3659.

THE WOODEN BALLAST KEEL SLOOP "RASCAL" was donated to us in 2021. The donor purchased it in California, where it had been stored covered and dry for 30 years. LOA 22′ 6″, LWL 17′ 5″, beam 6′ 11″, draft 3′ 11″. Western red cedar planks on steam-bent oak frames with no rot. Designer and builder are unknown, and the boat has no markings or numbers. Possibly built in the late '40s, she was actively raced in San Francisco Bay. Other maritime museums point out similarities to a "BJK" design and suggest origins in Seattle or Southern California. Video and more photos, a list of what has been done, and a restoration to-do list are available. In short: replace 2-3 planks; bung, caulk, fair, and paint hull and transom; make fiberglass patch near the keel; make a tiller; reinforce rudder; recaulk deck; mast repairs; build boom; reinforce the sails; plan and make running and standing rigging. Galvanized screws were used in a previous owner's misguided refastening. Volunteers here have nearly finished refastening with copper rivets. The beautiful project is too much for our limited staff. Contact dnelson@hrmm.org. Photos online: www.woodenboat.com/boats-for-sale/wooden-ballast-keel-sloop-rascal.

40′ CUSTOM CAROLINA BUDDY HARRIS sportfisherman project boat. Started customization but life got in the way. Steering system, engine controls, some wiring and other components. 8-71 twin turbo Detroit available. Contact Gary, jazzlvr@msn.com or 302–462–5150.

FREE 1960 42′ STEVENS. Needs a new good home! It's a great opportunity for the right person. Currently dry docked in a DIY yard ready to be restored. Interior is in beautiful original condition. Most planking and framing appear to be in okay condition. Cockpit deck needs to be rebuilt. Status of Crusader gas engines is unkown. Exterior needs work, all hardware is intact. Located at Sunset Aquatic Shipyard in Huntington Beach, CA. 562–592–2841. ron@sunsetaquatic.com.

WOODEN BOAT DONATION. 14′ Marblehead skiff for rowing and sailing. John Gardner design: complete plans for this lapstrake boat and sail rigging included. Building initiated in 1982 at Mystic Seaport. Construction completed in 2019. Gambell & Hunter mainsail and jib. Covered and stored on trailer (included). Ideal project for educational shop and/or as a template for a new start. Photos upon request. Call Peter Hobart, 301–712–6851, Essex, Maryland.

FREE TO THE RIGHT HOME. 18′ Runabout. Built in 1960. Plywood runabout over sawn frames with 88-hp Evinrude engine on a two-axle trailer of the same vintage. Trailer has had some restoration. Boat length 18′, beam 7′5″. Boat has been stored inside but will need some work to return to the water. Pictures or inquiries: Dennis Cronin, 804-350-2866, cronindj2@gmail.com.

WoodenBoat Classified Order Form

Please circle the issue(s) in which you wish this ad to appear. Example Mar/Apr is one issue.

NOTE: Ads received after the deadline may be placed in the following issue

Issue Date —	Mar/Apr	May/June	July/Aug	Sept/Oct	Nov/Dec	Jan/Feb
Deadline —	Jan 12, '26	Mar 11, '26	May 11, '26	Jul 15, '26	Sept 16, '26	Nov 5, '26

- ♦ Boats advertised for sale must have wooden hulls.
- ♦ One boat per ad. Limit: One photo per ad.
- ♦ "BOATS FOR FREE" ads are FREE!
- ♦ All classified ads are prepaid.
- ♦ Counted as one word = phone and fax number, email or web address. All else: a word is a word. WoodenBoat does not use abbreviations such as OBO, FWC, etc. Please spell out.
- ♦ Please print clearly—WoodenBoat is not responsible for errors due to illegible copy.

TEXT: (20 word minimum or $55.00) Suggested Category _____

1 _____	2 _____	3 _____	4 _____
5 _____	6 _____	7 _____	8 _____
9 _____	10 _____	11 _____	12 _____
13 _____	14 _____	15 _____	16 _____
17 _____	18 _____	19 _____	20 _____
21 _____	22 _____	23 _____	24 _____
25 _____	26 _____	27 _____	28 _____
29 _____	30 _____	31 _____	32 _____
33 _____	34 _____	35 _____	36 _____
37 _____	38 _____	39 _____	40 _____
41 _____	42 _____	.... Attach sheet for additional words	

WORD COUNT _____ × $2.75 = $_____ + Photo ($75) = $_____ = $_____ **TOTAL**

(20 words minimum = $55.00 /issue) *(Payment must be in U.S. funds drawn on a U.S. bank).*

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Telephone _____ Email _____

PAYMENT METHOD

☐ Check ☐ Money Order ☐ **MC / VISA / AMEX / DISCOVER #** _____ Exp. Date_____

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RATES EXPIRE DECEMBER 31, 2026 classified@woodenboat.com ♦ Tel: 207–359–7713

INDEX TO ADVERTISERS

by Maynard Bray and Abby Kidder

ROSEWAY

A National Historic Landmark schooner

COURTESY OF WORLD OCEAN SCHOOL

The 112′ LOD schooner ROSEWAY of 1925 will be broken up in 2026 if World Ocean School cannot find a new owner.

Particulars

LOA	137′
LOD	112′
LWL	89′
Beam	25′
Draft	13′
Sail area	5,600 sq ft
Power	400-hp turbocharged Caterpillar diesel
Official No.	225756
Designed by	John James
Built by	J.F. James Shipyard Essex, Massachusetts, 1925

When ROSEWAY slid down the ways in Essex, Massachusetts, on November 21, 1925, she was a yacht built for swordfishing. In 1941, she went to work for the Boston Pilots Association and served them well for more than 30 years, which included wartime duty as CGR 812 patrolling the coast for German submarines. In 1972, when the Boston Pilots retired her, she underwent a swift but only partial conversion under new ownership on her way to becoming a passenger-carrying schooner. Those owners never made a go of it, but by 1976 subsequent owners Jim Sharp and Orville Young had completed the job and put her in the cruising trade as a windjammer sailing out of Camden, Maine.

In that role, she came to be noted for her red sails, sweet sheerline, and handsome hull shape. She was also one of the few of her type with auxiliary power.

But her 25-year stint carrying passengers ended when U.S. Coast Guard inspectors withdrew her certificate of inspection after having determined that her wooden hull had deteriorated to the point where it required extensive rebuilding—a project her then-owner considered too vast to undertake. With no business and no means to make the upgrades, she was repossessed by the bank that held her mortgage. While attempts were made to sell her at auction in 2003, there were no bids that the bank considered viable, so she sat idle.

Then, along came the directors of a new nonprofit called World Ocean School. They needed a boat, and ROSEWAY was the right fit. They convinced the bank to donate her to them. After towing the schooner to Sample's Shipyard in Boothbay Harbor, Maine, they set out to raise $1.5 million for the rebuild. After 18 months of some very fine workmanship and fundraising to match, ROSEWAY was relaunched as the primary classroom for World Ocean School, a role she fulfilled year-round over the next couple of decades. Sailing from her home port of Boston, she went as far west as Duluth, Minnesota, east to Bermuda, south to the Virgin Islands, and north to Nova Scotia.

She worked hard and served thousands of students until 2022, but the years took a toll. A U.S. Coast Guard inspection made it clear that another rebuild was needed; this time, the estimated cost had risen to somewhere between $3 million and $4 million. While the school sought to raise funds, ROSEWAY was laid up at Mystic Seaport Museum in Connecticut. To keep operating its programs, World Ocean School purchased the three-masted Great Lakes schooner DENIS SULLIVAN. Sadly, the ROSEWAY campaign failed to raise the necessary funds and the organization decided it was time to find her a new home.

ROSEWAY is still an exceptionally handsome schooner, and a World Ocean School shipkeeper continues to care for her—but not for much longer. If a new owner and a new life don't materialize by this spring, she will be decommissioned and demolished—a sad ending for this beautiful and rugged sailing schooner with such a remarkable history!

There's hope that she could return to the windjammer trade, or else become a new school ship, a museum ship, a private yacht, or even a dockside attraction. Who knows what the future might hold for this century-old vessel. Let's hope her next 100 years won't find her buried at the bottom of the sea.

ROSEWAY now lies at Schooner Wharf near downtown Mystic. For more information, see www.worldoceanschool.org/tall-ship-roseway. For purchasing information, reach out to World Ocean School at info@worldoceanschool.com or 617–816–9247.

Maynard Bray is WoodenBoat*'s technical editor. Abby Kidder is a past president of World Ocean School, and was one of its founders.*

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