

# GOOD OLD BOAT™

*The sailing magazine for the rest of us!*

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# GOOD OLD BOAT™

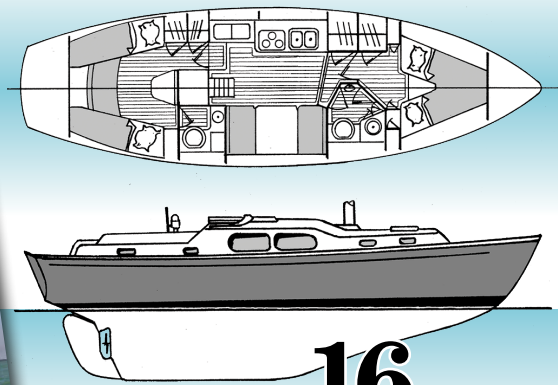
JULY/AUGUST 2015

## CONTENTS

ISSUE 103



10



16



58

### For the love of sailboats

#### Feature boat

#### 10 *Yellowbird*, a Chris-Craft Sail Yacht 35

A pedigreed early center-cockpit design  
BY BILL JACOBS

#### Boat comparison

#### 14 The Chris-Craft 35 ...

... and center-cockpit contemporaries  
BY ROB MAZZA

#### Design considerations

#### 16 Something gained, something lost

Two Chris-Craft 35s illustrate the designer's dilemma  
BY ROB MAZZA

#### Refit boat

#### 20 Saved from extinction

A Pacific 30 — possibly the last one — sails again  
BY PETER THELIN

#### Review boat

#### 58 Cape Dory Typhoon

An ever-popular daysailer approaches 50  
BY WAYNE CANNING

### Speaking seriously

#### Sailboats 101

#### 18 The Gunter Rig 101

A handy sailing rig for dinghies and small trailerables  
BY DON LAUNER

#### Sail loft

#### 24 Why sails fail

Nature and lack of nurture take their toll  
BY LESLIE LINKILA AND PHILIP DINUOVO

#### Cruising designs

#### 27 Keel evolution, part 2

Separation achieved  
BY ROB MAZZA

#### Making your own

#### 30 *Nurdle's* new centerboard

A foil made with fiberglass, foam, and ingenuity  
BY JOHN CHURCHILL

#### Interior improvements

#### 48 Head makeover

Imagination, a little paint, and a few pennies go a long way  
BY CLIFF MOORE

### Spotlight on ...

#### Electronic wizardry

#### 34 Electrical connections

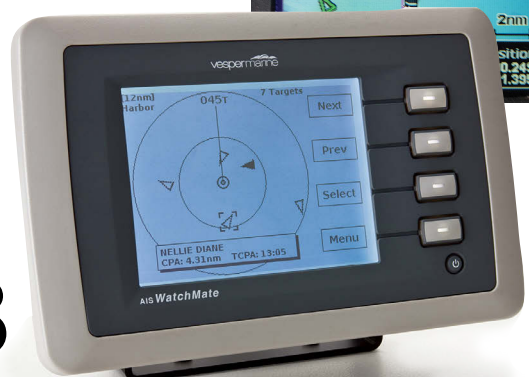
Proven procedures keep the juice flowing  
BY DAVID LYNN

#### 38 AIS for the rest of us

See, be seen, and talk about it  
BY ED ZACKO

#### 44 Inverter essentials

Silent power for home comforts afloat  
BY WAYNE CANNING



38

# GOOD OLD BOAT

CONTENTS

ISSUE 103

JULY/AUGUST 2015



51



5

## Just for fun

### Learning experience

#### 51 That sinking feeling

A first cruise that might have been the last  
BY SUSAN PETERSON GATELEY

### Sailing life

#### 56 There's no hiding added weight ...

... but extra pounds bring peace of mind  
BY CLIFF MOORE



### On the cover ...

*Wanderlust*, Joe Duehmig's 1978 Ericson Cruising 36, looked good enough to fellow sailor Roy Schneider for him to pull out his camera as she sailed north out of Milwaukee Bay, Wisconsin. We're very pleased he did. She looks good to us too.

## What's more

#### 5 Web sightings

Words for writers; know a boat by its stripes; know a boat by its sails; download reviews

#### The view from here

#### 7 Slippery slope

The ever-narrowing gap twist cup and lip  
BY KAREN LARSON

#### Mail buoy

#### 8 Truck painters, door openings, and small world

#### 68 Product launchings

Charts for iOS, lantern and device charger, Li-ion jump-starter

#### Simple solutions

#### 63 Battery Catch 22

Chargers that work only with a charge  
BY JIM HEUMANN

#### Quick and easy

#### 64 Continuous rope loop

A non-splicer has it all sewn up  
BY FERMAN WARDELL

#### 65 Night light

An inexpensive LED shows the way  
BY ALLEN PENTICOFF

#### 70 Good old classifieds

#### Reflections

#### 77 Meeting *Pendragon's* liveaboards

Former owners reach out across the years  
BY LEONARD SKINNER



64

# Saved from extinction

A Pacific 30 — possibly the last one — sails again

BY PETER THELIN



Every marina has a few neglected boats. Their owners, enthusiastic at first but now distracted by daily life, have left these forgotten or ignored once-proud vessels to rot.

A few years back, I watched as this decaying process happened to a Pacific 30 in our marina. Dust turned to dirt and mildew transformed into lichen. Bird droppings and broken mussel shells teemed with insect life. Sailcovers, sails, and running rigging degraded in the sun and eventually vanished completely. White plastic fenders yellowed, deflated, and disappeared as their lines rotted. One spring, I noticed a sapling growing on the boat. A few days later, I spotted a neighbor watering the little tree. She smiled and said at least the boat was finally getting some attention.

building, and maintaining — for more than 25 years and tend to spot project boats. These have run the range from a Columbia 45, a Bolger Storm Petrel, a Catfisher 28, a Seafarer 24, and a San Francisco Super Pelican, to a Bluenose 23, and a couple of hovercraft. I like challenges.

The Pacific 30 was one of those challenges. I first noticed the striking red low and narrow hull when we moved to the marina. It was docked less than 100 yards from our new floating home. The boat was in awful shape, but I was drawn to her classic lines: the spoon bow, counter stern transom, and long low cockpit. I'd sold my last boat, a Bluenose 23, to afford the floating home, but I was feeling the itch again. I asked our harbormaster about the red boat. She said it had been years since

My wife, Sue, and I live on a floating home north of San Francisco. I've been involved with sailboats — sailing, living aboard,

his last visit, but the owner still paid the slip fees and wasn't interested in selling.

I turned my attention to a down-on-its-luck Seafarer 24, but now and then I'd ask about the Pacific 30. After a year of tinkering, I sold the Seafarer to a group of young sailors from Berkeley and swore to Sue that I was done with rescuing boats.

That oath lasted a year. On craigslist, I stumbled on the "largest SF Pelican ever made," a 20-foot Super Pelican located in Oregon. Sue and I towed *Dowser* back from Eugene and I spent the next summer rebuilding her before growing disenchanted with her ability to point (sorry proud Pelican owners). I swore once again I was through with boats . . . this time forever!

But I continued cruising the classifieds. I seriously considered an overpriced Ericson Scorpion made from the same mold as the Columbia Sabre and even took a 12-foot Livingston for a test ride when, out of

**Seeing *Ramona* today, at top, who would think she was the same boat as the sad, moldering (but still elegant) hulk, inset, Peter found in his home marina?**

the blue, our harbormaster told me the Pacific 30 owner had decided it was time to let her go. I called him immediately, generously offering to take over slip payments. He thought every boat was worth something, so we agreed on \$500 and the Pacific 30 was mine.

### Grunge, grime, and guano

To start with, the owner hadn't sailed, cleaned, or hauled the boat in more than 10 years. It may have been longer; the quantity of guano, mildew, and lichen was substantial. The sad sapling had been joined by other small plants that I chose not to water. Secondly, the Pacific 30 had sunk — more than once — following a couple of wet winters when the scuppers and cockpit drains were plugged. The interior had filled with a combination of water, oil, and battery acid that created a terrarium atmosphere that cultivated a lush forest of brown and black mold.

Blistered wiring, bloated batteries, rusted mechanicals, and peeling paint filled every nook and cranny. Corroded soda cans and tins of tuna combined to create an interesting aroma. Needless to say, I wouldn't let Sue look inside until the cabin had been completely cleaned, sanded, and repainted. It was the least I could do since I was "done with rescuing boats forever!" You're

probably wondering about the previous owner's choice of red portlights. I had meant to replace them, but even Sue agreed that they actually grow on you. Not unlike lichen.

After pumping out the bilge and removing bags and bags of trash from the cabin, I donned a Tyvek bunny suit, gloves, ear protection, and respirator and took an orbital sander with 40-grit sandpaper to the interior. The old, mildewed paint hung in sticky sheets and the softened epoxy paint loaded up disc after disc; sometimes it was better to use a scraper. It took a couple of intensive weeks to get down to the bare fiberglass. After that, removing the

“Corroded soda cans and tins of tuna combined to create an interesting aroma.”

peeling decorative laminates, sanding and varnishing the woodwork, changing out the wiring and lighting, and cleaning the upholstery made a big difference. Finally, Rust-Oleum Topside white brightened up the interior significantly.

On deck, I took a stack of scouring pads, Formula 409, and Clorox to uncover the gelcoat. Next, I sanded the woodwork and applied Sikkens Cetol. Epoxy and C-clamps bonded the split handrails back together. Then I replaced the faded running rigging, rotted spreaders, and threadbare

mainsail cover and Sue made the beautiful tiller cover. I scored a deal on a used stainless-steel hatch from Blue Pelican in Alameda to get some air and daylight down below.

### Engine conundrum

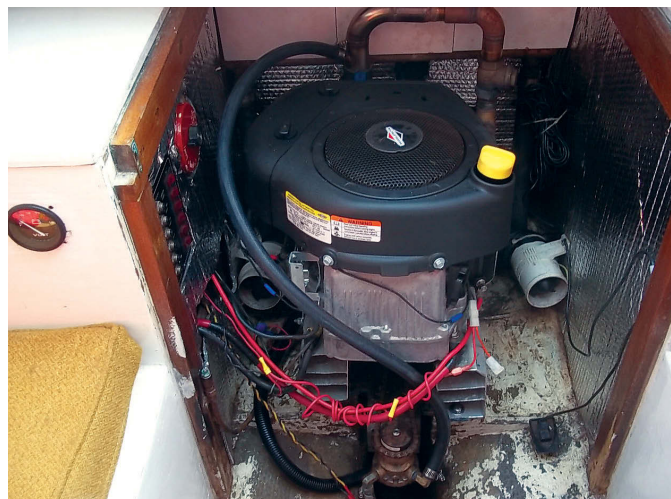
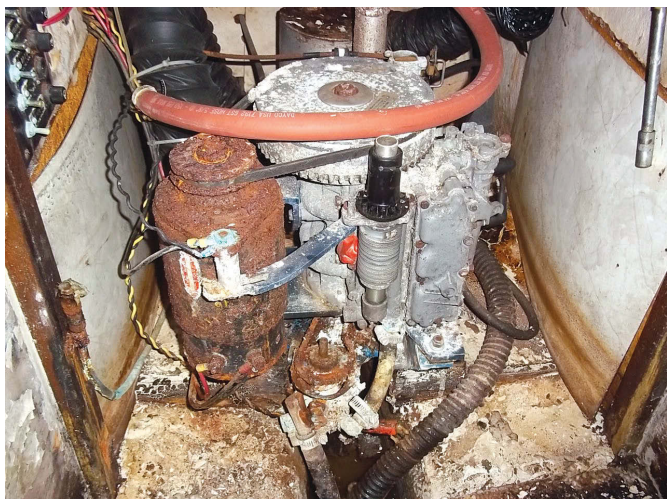
The engine proved to be a major challenge. The previous owner told me the boat was equipped with a saildrive unit that had rusted solid long ago. On inspection, however, I found it was actually something I hadn't encountered before; a Baldwin 9.5. This was an Evinrude 9.5 outboard modified to be mounted inboard with a proper prop shaft coupled to the lower unit.

The Baldwin uses a remote water pump for cooling and a separate exhaust system. It's a nifty idea, with none of the

corrosion issues of a saildrive.

The engine gurus at the Outboard Motor Shop in Oakland knew all about Baldwins and advised me to replace it, rather than rebuild. When I chose to ignore their advice, they sold me a couple of old Evinrude 9.5 powerheads to replace the corroded one. I also bought a new Jabsco water pump and had Metal Magic in Oakland fabricate a new stainless-steel exhaust system.

The day after Thanksgiving, I motorsailed through heavy fog to the Berkeley Marine Center for a haulout



The motor in the Pacific 30, at left, turned out to be a Baldwin — an Evinrude outboard modified to drive a conventional prop shaft. Peter had it working with a new (old) powerhead but eventually replaced it with a Briggs & Stratton air-cooled lawn mower engine, at right.



**A great variety of wildlife, from fungus to plants and from insects to birds, had colonized the boat as it sat untended, at left. Undaunted, Peter, with his vast experience restoring boats of all sorts, set to with cleaners, sandpaper, and paint. The result, at right, is spectacular.**

and spent the next few weeks sanding off all the old paint, filling little blisters, and shimming the rudder post to eliminate a rattle. I also replaced the through-hull fittings and running lights and reglassed the rudder. I painted the bottom and had the yard spray the hull a luscious deep red. The Pacific 30 was becoming the center of attention.

As the guys at the Outboard Motor Shop predicted, the Baldwin drive proved to be a constant headache. I couldn't keep the engine from hydro-locking. The problem was that the unit — originally designed to hang above the water off the back of a boat — was now below the waterline. Water always manages to find its level, which coincided with the cylinders.

Despite my trying various resilient gaskets (the best turned out to be a 1/8-inch sheet of lead) and filling problematic cooling passages with

epoxy, the motor always eventually hydro-locked. I was set on yanking the Baldwin out and mounting an outboard, but the Pacific 30's long counter stern made that location extremely awkward. I considered cutting a big motor-well hole in the lazarette behind the cockpit (ouch!) and debated the efficacy of a side-mount bracket (but the motor would be under water when heeled).

I liked the idea of using the lower unit of the Evinrude to drive the boat, but how to power it? An expensive diesel? An electric motor? Then it occurred to me that an air-cooled lawn mower engine — about the same size, weight, and power as the Evinrude — could work. Was there precedent? I found many online discussions on the subject, most extremely negative . . . except for one fellow who had tried it and said it worked like a charm. He sent pictures of his installation.

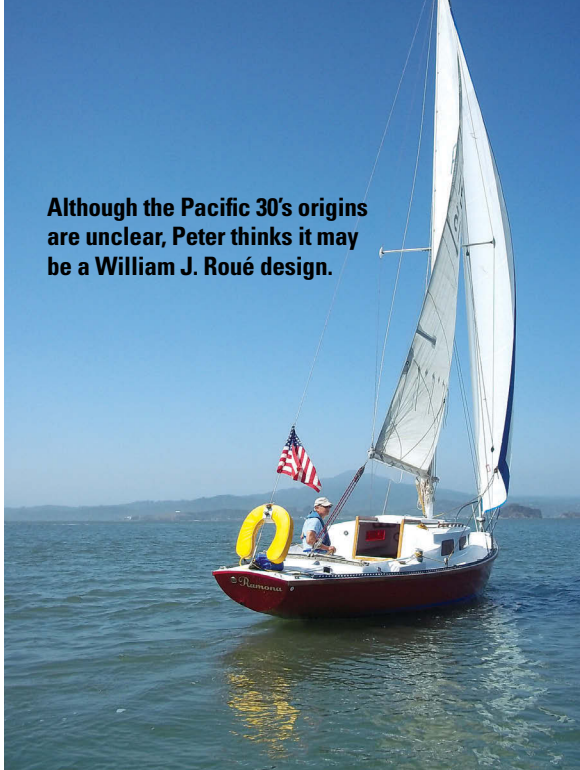
Most responses in online discussions were along the lines of "I'd rather drill a hole in my head than listen to a lawn mower engine in my boat," as one sailor wrote. But the 10-horsepower unit (thanks to BrandNewEngines.com) is actually quieter than the old Evinrude due to the inboard boat exhaust system. I kept the Jabsco water pump — chain-driven off the driveshaft — to cool the exhaust and installed some ceramic tiles above and behind the exhaust to handle the heat. I also incorporated a bronze check valve to keep the cooling water from backing into the engine through the exhaust, though in practice that hasn't been a problem.

The engine sits atop two sections from a Lexus 300 rear aluminum bumper — sans vinyl — and uses a Lovejoy shaft coupler to connect the engine crankshaft to the Evinrude drive-shaft. Venting is a concern, so I made



**Belowdecks it was the same story, at left. The unusual tinge is from the red-glazed deadlights in the cabin sides. They had been due for replacement, but by the time the cabin was refitted and refurbished, at right, Peter and Sue had become accustomed to the glow.**

Although the Pacific 30's origins are unclear, Peter thinks it may be a William J. Roué design.



large louvered holes around the compartment and installed a pair of bilge blowers to vent out the rear deck. The Briggs feels more powerful than the Evinrude.

### Updates inside and out

New cushions from Foam Creations of Albany, California, perk up the interior and I found a table at the Berkeley Yacht Club Marine Flea Market that was the perfect size.

To make singlehanding easier, I bought a Hood 800SL roller furler on eBay and even managed to install it without completely removing the headstay — not a task for the faint of heart! This requires accurate headstay measurements, disconnecting the headstay from the stemhead, shoving the extrusions and roller assembly up the headstay with one hand while holding the cable taut with the other and, finally, reattaching the whole thing to the stemhead without everything sliding back off into the water.

Pineapple Sails of Alameda made a 100 percent jib for the new furler. Maybe next year I'll spring for a new mainsail too.

I think lifelines provide a false sense of security on small boats so *Ramona* has none. Instead, everyone wears a life jacket/harness and uses a tether when going forward. I also kludged together a retrieval system for the horseshoe buoy.

I decided to rename the Pacific 30 after my late mother, *Ramona*. Since Sue does boat lettering — her company is AlphaboatGraphics — she supplied the lettering to go on the stern.

### Provenance unproven

The name “Pacific 30” was originally stenciled on each side of the hull. There is a

P30 insignia on the mainsail and the title states that the boat is a Pacific 30. Yet despite extensive research, my boat is the only example I've been able to find. There's a “15” on the mainsail indicating, one would guess, that there should be 14 more Pacific 30s in existence, but I've yet to see one. The title lists the builder as SPCN, which is a DMV term for “homebuilt”, but who was the designer?

A friend pointed out that *Ramona* bears a strong resemblance to an earlier boat of mine, a Bluenose 23, whose designer, William J. Roué, did design a 30-footer called the Roué 20 because it was his 20th design. The Roué 20 is very similar and has all the same specs. The only differences are that the Pacific 30 is a masthead-rigged boat and the Roué 20 is fractionally



***Ramona* has the appearance of a boat from an era when grace and good manners under sail trumped creature comforts for the crew.**


rigged. In addition, the rudder on the Roué 20 is attached to the keel. Nor does the Roué have an inboard; it uses a motor well in the transom lazarette.

I spoke to David Sadler of Halifax, the builder of all of the fiberglass Roué 20s. He had never heard of the Pacific 30 but agreed that the resemblance is striking. He also said he had considered using a balanced rudder on his

boats. Maybe my boat is a variation in which the inclusion of the inboard engine necessitated the repositioning of the rudder.

### A refit with dividends

*Ramona* is a dream to sail: very responsive and tacks on a dime. She sails easily with just fingertips on the tiller and with a little traveler adjustment she'll mostly sail herself. She does well in light air, is reliable in stays, and can easily bury the rails when the wind picks up, yet she feels reassuringly stiff in a blow. There's a little flutter from the tiller that leads me to think I need to shave the edges of the rudder.

For just \$500 for the boat, another couple thousand for engines, sails, furler, plumbing, metalwork, electrics, sandpaper, paint, eBay sailcovers, a lot of marine flea market stuff, plus the boatyard fees, and a lot of elbow grease, I've got a very sweet sailboat. Sue and I look forward to many more happy voyages around San Francisco Bay. 

*Peter Thelin was raised in the Northeast before moving to San Francisco to work for the federal government. A master optician, he runs the Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory Optical Shop. He has owned, restored, and lived on a number of boats before settling into a floating home.*