

In the Galley Issue 

| Tanker Collision pg30

| Great Lakes Shuffle pg15

# GOOD OLD BOAT

*Inspiring hands-on sailors*

Issue 153: November/December 2023

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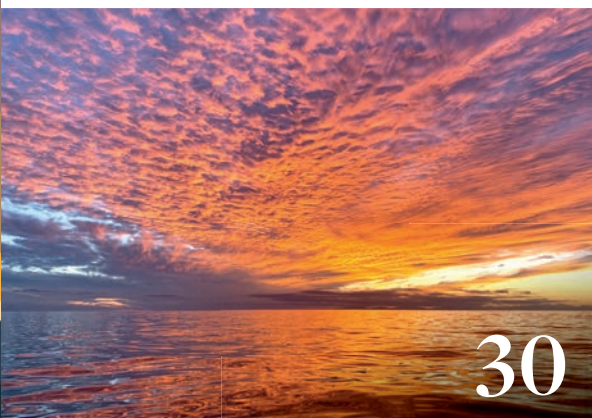
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# GOOD OLD BOAT

Issue 153: November/December 2023

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Sarah and Charlie Danu love visiting farmers markets while cruising, and filling their Formosa 41, *Blossom*, with friends to enjoy the local bounty for dinner. The couple rebuilt the boat's galley, which includes marble and black walnut countertops, custom copper sinks, and white oak and mahogany drawers. At the time of publication, they had put the boat up for sale and were planning to rebuild the galley on their next boat in the same way.



CEO / CFO / PUBLISHER  
**Karla Sandness**

EDITOR  
**Andy Cross**  
andy@goodoldboat.com

SENIOR EDITOR  
**Deborah Bach**

BOAT REVIEW EDITOR  
**Dan Spurr**

TECHNICAL EDITORS  
**Drew Frye | Rob Mazza**

ELECTRONICS EDITOR  
**David Lynn**

COPY EDITOR  
**Marcia Landskroener**

CREATIVE DIRECTOR  
**Scott Racette**

ILLUSTRATORS  
**Tom Payne | Fritz Seegers**

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS  
**Cliff Moore | Fiona McGlynn | Ed Zacko**  
**Bert Vermeer | Allen Penticoff**

ADVERTISING SALES  
**Behan Gifford**  
advertising@goodoldboat.com

DIRECTOR OF CIRCULATION & BOAT CLASSIFIEDS  
**Brenda Ellingsen**  
brenda@goodoldboat.com | 701-840-6137

FOUNDERS  
**Karen Larson and Jerry Powlas**

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# Contributing Boats

## *A few boats behind the stories in this issue.*

### *Sundown*, 1976 Ericson 39B

“The Ericson 39B was the cruising version of the flush deck Ericson 39, which was designed as an IOR racing boat. *Sundown* is fun to sail, super stable, and still fast enough to overtake many of the newer boats we see on the Chesapeake Bay.”

Designer: Bruce King

Owners: Marc Carraway and Lisa Mistretta

Home Port: Urbanna, Virginia

**Fun Fact:** *Sundown* was originally owned by singer/songwriter Gordon Lightfoot. The story has gotten around our marina, and even around the internet. As a result, we often meet transient sailors and boaters new to our marina who come over to ask us about her history, which has led to the beginning of several beautiful friendships.

*A Queen in a Sailor's Dream on page 41.*



ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRITZ SEEGBERS

### *Avocet*, 1979 Cheoy Lee 41

“*Avocet* is everything we need her to be and more. She inspires us to chase the horizon and continue the legacy the previous owner started. We have truly touched every inch of the boat through projects, renovations, and general maintenance, and have grown to love her more and more as the years go on. At the time of writing this, we are entering our fifth year of ownership and have never felt more at home as we do aboard *Avocet*.”

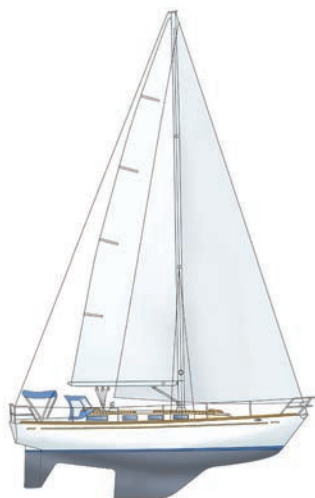
Designer: Cheoy Lee/Ray Richards

Owners: Chris and Marissa Neely

Home Port: Ventura, California

**Fun Fact:** People recognize that *Avocet* is a Cheoy Lee, but often fail to identify her model. On the outside, she looks strikingly similar to the Offshore 41 and even the Pedrick 41 designs, but has key differences that set her apart from both. So why the confusion? Well, Cheoy Lee commissioned naval architect Raymond Richards to design the Offshore 41, then reportedly “borrowed” the design and changed it ever so slightly to avoid paying royalties, calling it a Cheoy Lee 41.

*Cool Change on page 20.*



### *SeaLah*, 1987 Mirage 29

“For almost seven years, *SeaLah* has given me and my family many great memories on Lake Ontario, the 1,000 Islands, the St. Lawrence River, Lake Erie, Lake St. Clair, Lake Huron, and Georgian Bay. Our ‘trailer on the water’ continues to provide moments of rest and relaxation, as well as the occasional rude awakening in thunderstorms.”

Designer: Mirage Yachts Ltd.

Owners: Lee Brubacher

Home Port: Victoria Harbour, Ontario

**Fun Fact:** Before I changed her name, *SeaLah* used to be named *Acquittal*.

Perhaps this *Mirage* was purchased by either a happy lawyer or a happy client!

*The Great Lakes Shuffle on page 15.*





# View from Here

BY ANDY CROSS

Sailing close-hauled off the rugged coast of Washington in our 1984 Grand Soleil 39, *Yahtzee*, I was hungry and could tell others in the cockpit were too. We'd started the Pacific NW Offshore race hours earlier at the Columbia River bar, and with fickle winds and strong currents, it had been a challenging morning so far. The sky was a steely Pacific Northwest gray and our foul weather gear was working hard to keep us comfortable. Collectively, we needed a bright spot.

Then, without a word, my wife, Jill, handed warm breakfast burritos up the companionway followed by a round of hot coffee. Perfection.

Our stalwart crew of seven included two friends, Cliff and Mark; my dad, Russ; Jill and me, and our sons, Porter and Magnus, then aged 3 and 1. Breakfast was a big boost for crew morale, and our sights were set on the finish in Victoria, British Columbia, which would eventually come after a two-night adventure on the Pacific Ocean and in the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

While taking the first bites of his burrito, Mark joked, "You read our minds, Jill! Thank you!" Laughter ensued, and we all threw out names for what her onboard restaurant should be called. The one that stuck was appropriate for the moment and person: "Jilly Beans Cafe." We ended up sailing to a strong finish, but the collective memories from the race are what endured. And many years and miles later, we still affectionately refer to *Yahtzee's* galley as Jilly Beans Cafe.

That is one of the things I love about a functional boat galley — the endless memories that are made there. From feeding our boys their first hearty morsels of solid food on the countertop as babies, to now, teaching them how to safely light the stove and make pancakes, help chop vegetables for a stir fry, or even make a simple peanut butter and jelly sandwich, those are the family moments that shine brightest.

Along with our culinary journeys together, we've also entertained a

steady stream of friends in marinas, out for evening sails, or in any number of picturesque anchorages. Non-boaters are always curious and surprised about how we can store everything we need in such a small space, and about the meals that can be created there. And we enjoy the camaraderie of having fellow sailors over for potlucks and telling sea stories late into the evening, and then visiting their boats for a meal the next time around.

In many of these moments, the galley seems to spill out into the salon and up the companionway into the cockpit. The grill hanging on *Yahtzee's* stern gets pressed into service quite often, especially in hot weather, and the cockpit table is used as added counter space for making a salad or laying out appetizers for happy hour.

Indeed, galleys are more than just confined places where food is stored and prepared. They're about the good times

that flow outward from them, no matter the size of the boat or how many crew you need to feed.

Like many parts of our sailboats, though, galleys are spaces aboard that can be, and sometimes need to be, upkept and upgraded to be made more efficient, functional, or comfortable. In this "In the Galley" issue, we're excited to highlight several projects that can accomplish just that, or might inspire your own improvements or modernizations. Maybe it's time for a new sink to help with doing dishes, a new countertop to provide a fresh look and feel, or finally tackling that insulation around the refrigerator box that has been there for decades.

However your galley is organized or equipped, remember, it's one of those special places on your sailboat where some of the fondest memories are made — and that is priceless. 🌊





# Tape Tips, False Alarms, and Ruminations on Recent Issues

## Good Old Renewal

The July/August 25th anniversary issue of *Good Old Boat* made me decide to renew my subscription. We originally subscribed because our friend and neighbor Rob Mazza contributed to the magazine, but he hasn't been in it as much lately. Like many retirees, I was going through the list of things I can do without so my wife and I do not have to live in complete destitution. Unfortunately, *Good Old Boat's* renewal notice arrived at the same time as my parsimonious phase, and I felt I might get along without it. But the 25th edition was the "aha!" moment when I reconsidered. Thanks for your magazine.

—Bob Levo  
Hamilton, Ontario

## Tape Tips

My best tip that I want people to know: If you're painting outside in the sun, the masking tape to use is 3M Scotch Weather Resistant Masking Tape 225 silver tape. It lasts for weeks in the hot Florida sun and still pulls up cleanly. The problem is that it costs between \$75 and more than \$100 for a 1-inch-wide roll and is hard to find. It is well worth the cost, though, as a big job can take all day to tape off and then three or four days to paint, if you're lucky and have good weather. Buyer beware — test it to see that it doesn't break off too easily. If it does, the tape is beyond its shelf life and will be difficult to remove because it will constantly break. Storing it in a hot environment shortens its life span, but if

kept at room temperature, it will last for years.

Another tape tip: To remove, pull the tape back on itself and only very slightly away from the paint, taking your time. Remove soon after the last coat has been applied.

—Susan Clair  
St. Petersburg, Florida

## False Alarms

Last year I bought the same personal locator beacon (PLB) that Hal Wells writes about in his article "False Alarm" from the July/August issue of *Good Old Boat* and had a false alarm the first day I took it down to my Grampian 26. The belt I was wearing was too wide for the



Tonight I remembered to take my camera sailing so I could capture our most famous buoy. Everybody on Grand Traverse Bay knows "Red 8," the southernmost buoy on the west arm of the bay, which marks a sudden shoal just off the marinas. Tonight the wind was up a bit as I was trying to snap the photo. The yacht club racers were not using the buoy as a mark for tonight's race, so I was worried that maybe it had been set closer to the shoal this spring. I sailed just past, came about quickly, and snapped the photo as I sailed away (left).

And as I rowed away from my mooring after the evening's sail, I was smiling (as always) at the wonderful little Cal 20 that is in my care. The evening light was perfect for the 1967-era olive green sheer and boot top stripes. The boat's lovely sheer (thank you, Bill Lapworth) pleases the eye. But wait, there's a camera in the knapsack! So I turned the dinghy around and rowed back to take a picture of the boat. OK, I do this every year, but tonight the light was just right. So you'll see a photo of *Martha C*, Cal 20 Hull #1220 (at right).

—Chris Campbell  
Traverse City, Michigan



belt clip, so I had the PLB in my pocket. A couple of weeks later, I had another false alarm; this time it was inside my inflatable PFD. These false alarms are caused by the protective tab that covers the button on the PLB being pushed slightly to the left. To fix the problem, I glued an O-ring around the button. There is no record kept by the Coast Guard of the number of false alarms, so ACR, which makes personal locator beacons, likely has no idea how bad the problem is.

—Stan McCall  
Hamilton, Ontario

### September/October Observations

What an issue *Good Old Boat's* September/October one was! I especially enjoyed the following articles: the Vancouver 27 boat review, “All Wrapped Up,” “Bronze Beauties,” “Y-Valve Win,” and “The Red Queen Problem.”

Here are a couple comments on the various stories. In the boat review, ballast weights disagree significantly between the chart/drawing page and the text on the following page. I was trying to compare it to my Alberg's ballast (4,000) and related ratio numbers, since the 29.25-foot LOA was basically what my propane locker and helm seat required. I have a modified keel and attached rudder. The boat is optimized for seaworthiness, but is not a cutter.

**A strategic O-ring minimizes false alarms from the Personal Locator Beacon.**

Similar to the story “All Wrapped Up,” a C&C 30 forestay/furler episode occurred in my home marina. In Nigel Calder's *Boatowner's Mechanical and Electrical Manual*, third edition, he describes the solutions, including establishing a 10-degree forestay/foil attachment approach angle difference for the halyard. Even better, install a mast-mounted keeper sheave or halyard restrainer fitting so that the halyard cannot touch the headstay wire. Bill Abbott of Abbott Boats in Sarnia, Ontario, installed one on my boat and I have never had trouble for nearly two decades.

My 1985 Alberg 29 is Sail #157. Previous owners had sailed the boat down to the Caribbean, so saltwater drip holes like the photos in “Bronze Beauties” were present. The chainplates have been professionally repaired now, but I think the bronze replacement project looks



superior structurally and aesthetically, and is easier to inspect and repair. The author's skills and knowledge far exceed mine.

Much like the author's method in “Y-Valve Win,” I do something similar when winterizing my freshwater cooling circuit. I disconnect the intake hose at the filter exit well above the water line and clamp a standard ribbed plastic coupler fitting to join a couple of yards of extra hose into the cockpit. It's a five-minute job. After funnel-priming the hose, the end goes into the antifreeze bucket. I then start the motor and watch the jug empty.

— Dave Toogood  
Erieau, Ontario

### Solar Sailer

Thank you for the memories stirred by the July/August 2023 editorial by Andy Cross. Back in 1998, I found a copy of the magazine in my P.O. Box that I was renting for my Silver Waters Sailing venture (day charters and lessons using a 1968 Chris-Craft Cherokee sloop).



*continued on page 56*



# Com-Pac Sun Cat

*A pert little catboat for daysailing and napping*

BY DAN SPURR

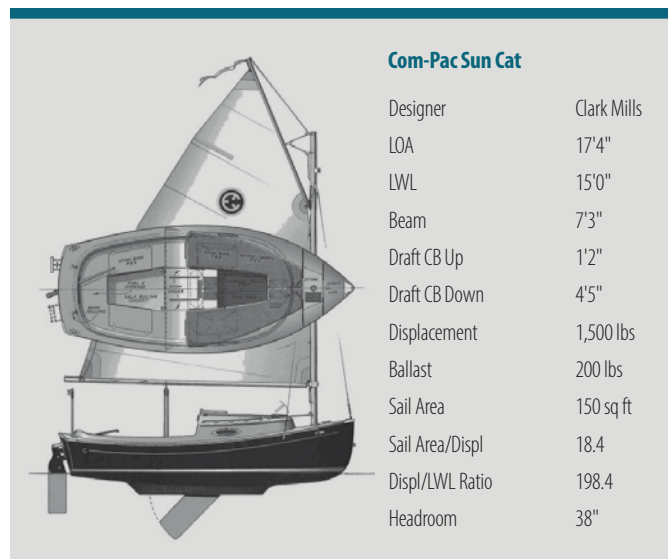
Bob Ryan, 75, handed me his business card at Dock on the Bay Marina on Longboat Key, Florida. Below his name was his occupation — Retired. We were standing next to his recently purchased 2002 17-foot Com-Pac Sun Cat. After owning a Bristol 24 Corsair, Morgan Out Island 28, and a Catalina 30 over his sailing years, the snowbird from Chicago wanted a simple-to-sail, easy-to-maintain boat for daysailing on Sarasota Bay. He found it in the locally built *Christine II* on a trailer at the Sarasota Sailing Squadron, Sarasota's community sailing center on neighboring Lido Key.

The Sun Cat satisfied most, but not all, of his requirements. It has a small cabin for naps, a head, and quality construction.

What it didn't have, and what he didn't fully appreciate until buying the boat, were lifelines. As a senior, when balance becomes an issue, one looks for security on deck. Fortunately, Bob hasn't fallen overboard. Also fortunately, there isn't much reason to leave the cockpit unless anchoring.

## Design and History

Clark Mills designed the Sun Cat; he is best known for designing the 7-foot 8-inch Optimist "Opti" dinghy, perhaps the most ubiquitous sail-trainer in the country. He also built boats at Mills Boat Works, a shop he opened in Clearwater, Florida. Other Mills designs include the Windmill and several Com-Pac boats — the 16, 23, Sun Cat, and a variation called the Sunday Cat. Mills passed away in 2001



at age 86 and was inducted into the National Sailing Hall of Fame in 2017.

The Sun Cat design is a development of an earlier Mills design, the Dilks Sun

Cat, for boatbuilder Dilks & Co. More than 500 Sun Cats have been built since the boat was introduced in 2000. The Sunday Cat, with a smaller cabin in exchange for a larger cockpit, followed in 2008.

The concept behind all catboats is severalfold: a shallow hull for shallow waters, hence the likelihood of a centerboard and so-called barn door rudder to provide sufficient surface area in contact with the water without drawing much more than the hull itself; a single large sail for



At left, the Sun Cat has shrouds port and starboard, which are integral to the Mastendr rig-raising-and-lowering system. As a cat rig, there is no backstay.

Next page, the Sun Cat does not have a large sail area, which means it needs a little breeze to get going, but also does not need to be reefed too early. Photo: Charles Yeager







**The cockpit comfortably seats three to four.**

self-tacking and decent speed; and a generous beam for stability, as ballast is minimal, if present at all. The Sun Cat has 200 pounds in the stub keel, which also houses the centerboard in the up position.

Com-Pac boats are built by the Hutchins Company, founded in 1957 by Les Hutchins, a tool and die maker. Its 12 models, which range from 14 to 35 feet, are all sailboats except for one power launch for leisurely harbor cruising. Of the 11 sailboats, six are cat-rigged and the rest are sloops. Besides Clark Mills, Bob Johnson (founder and past owner of Island Packet Yachts), and Charlie Morgan also contributed their design talents. The 20-foot Horizon Cat was designed by Halsey Herreshoff and was a development of the Herreshoff America trailerable sailboat, for



which Com-Pac later acquired the tooling. Today, the business is operated by Les Hutchins' sons, Gerry and Richard Hutchins.

### Construction

The hull is single-skin fiberglass (no core), as is the deck. It has a stub keel with stainless steel centerboard, operated by a line and cam cleat on the cockpit floor. The early boats had a stainless steel box to house the board, but corrosion issues led to changing the structure to molded fiberglass.

The conventional metal rudder is hinged to kick up if and when it hits bottom — in Florida, one can skip the “if.” There is an anchor locker at the bow. Ballast of 200-plus pounds is concrete in the stub keel.

Gerry Hutchins describes how the hull and deck are joined: “The hull/deck joint is unusual for us. It is a system that Clark Mills designed into the boat. The hull has an inward flange, and the deck is flat so it rests on the inward flange. Screws are installed

every 6 inches to hold the hull and deck together; and then the rub rail is installed with another set of screws that go between the original screws. Of course, there is liberal use of a marine adhesive sealant between the hull flange and the deck.”

### Rig

The Sun Cat has a single sail of 150 square feet with a relatively short mast of roughly 16 feet, and a 9-foot 1-inch gaff that is raised with a separate halyard; both

halyards are led aft to the coach roof. No winch assist is needed, though one owner said there seemed to be excessive friction raising his sail.

When the sail is furled, the long, 13-foot 7-inch boom rests in the gallows at the aft end of the cockpit. There are several positions, allowing you to move the boom off to one



**Owners say the berths are comfortable, if a bit narrow.**





side so you can stand on the centerline.

Com-Pac's Mastendr quick-rig sailing system makes raising and lowering the mast quick and effortless. The mast is light enough that once it is fixed to the tabernacle, you can walk/lift it upright. With shrouds attached, it is stable laterally. Fastening the forestay to the stem fitting with the self-locking lever secures the mast.

Gerry feels that the Mastendr is a great marketing feature, "People really appreciate the quickness and ease of that system," he says. "It's a hinge within the aluminum extrusion — the boom, sail, and gaff all push down below the hinge and rest on the boom gallows, then, with the forestay released, the spar is able to hinge back and rest on the boom gallows as well." For trailering or dropping the rig to get under a low fixed bridge, this seems to be the ideal setup. Indeed, some owners say ease of raising and lowering the mast was a major reason for their purchase.

### Accommodations

The interior is essentially a V-berth, or two settees with considerable foot

space between. Under the companionway is a storage box that doubles as a step, and a portable toilet tucked under the cockpit that must be pulled out for use. A single battery is located in the forepeak, and on the main bulkhead is a small electrical distribution panel for cabin lights, nav lights, anchor light, and masthead light.

Teak strips along the hull sides add a touch of warmth to the fiberglass pan. It's very clean and simple. Sleeping aboard for a night or several is entirely possible. The settee berths measure 6 feet 5 inches.

There is sitting headroom of 38 inches — enough unless you are leaning against the hull, as the sidedecks are low. Slouching solves the problem.

### On Deck

The cockpit is wide and comfortable. Sitting aft, you can reach the outboard throttle and tiller and centerboard and sheet. There is no jib to worry about, so the only reason to go forward is to anchor. The sidedecks are narrow. Moving forward to anchor is a short distance; hang onto a shroud for your "one hand for the boat." The boat will heel a bit but will not easily capsize.

### Underway

We motored out of the marina at 3 to 4 knots, headed up and raised the mainsail with both gaff and sail halyards. Bob brought the peak of the gaff near to vertical. Falling off, we sailed downwind smoothly and swiftly, then reached back and forth across Cranes Bayou. When it was time to return to the marina, we headed up, but as expected, could not point very high. With no compass to gauge the tacking angle, we guessed it was probably 110 degrees, give or take. Speed was 4 to 5 knots.

The boat stalled if pressed too hard, and we had to fall off to gain speed before trying again. Don't sheet the sail as tightly as you would a Marconi rig. When in the groove, however, she went upwind nicely and we made progress. To get the boat to point as high as possible, Rich Hutchins recommends bearing off a bit to gain hull speed and then bringing it up higher into the wind — without pinching. The boat's light displacement meant she slowed quickly when depowered. To summarize comments from owners: The boat is slow and doesn't point as high as a sloop, but they

Looking aft, there is space for a portable toilet between the berths/settees and under the bridge deck. The hatches and opening portlights provide adequate ventilation.

don't care. It's a catboat and performs as intended.

### Conclusion

The Sun Cat is still in production, with a base sailaway price of \$27,500. An online search showed used models built before 2008 ranging from around \$8,000 to \$16,750. We found a 2021 model for \$29,500.

This boat is beautiful, simple, and fun. Don't go too far downwind from your return destination. Reach back and forth, and enjoy lunch. The Sun Cat adequately meets its mission of easy daysailing and overnighting in very shoal waters. 🌊

*Dan Spurr is a Good Old Boat contributing editor and editor-at-large with Professional Boatbuilder. He is the author of seven books on boats and sailing including Heart of Glass, about the fiberglass boatbuilding industry, and was formerly senior editor at Cruising World and the editor of Practical Sailor.*

# Owners' Comments

**I**t took a bit of getting used to the gaff rig, but it wasn't difficult. Fun, in fact. Of course, no catboat goes to weather like a sloop, but with her gaff peaked up hard, she did better than I had anticipated. Three issues: 1) The centerboard has a unique support mechanism (plus the whole trunk in early boats, like the one I had) that is made of stainless steel, caulked, and bolted into the hull. If the boat has been kept in salt water rather than trailer-sailed, oxygen deprivation and corrosion take their toll (I rebuilt the whole thing, repassivated it, and remounted it). 2) The cabin had great berths but not enough sitting headroom for me. 3) The cockpit drains took on water when there were two in the cockpit. But

the Mastendr rig was by far the best and easiest rig I've ever used in over 50 years of trailer-sailing. If you accept the fact that it is a slightly under-canvassed catboat, I think you will enjoy acquiring the slightly different skills needed to sail a one-rag gaffer.

—Ferd Johns,  
Oak Harbor, Washington

I owned one for several years. It was well made and was comfortable to camp out on. Mine had a stainless cap on the inside of the boat that partially housed the centerboard. I had to seal it at the joint on top because it leaked. If one plans to trailer-sail, it should not be a problem. She did not point as high as my Montgomery 15.

—Bert Felton,  
Alameda, California

I have owned and sailed a 2005 Com-Pac Sun Cat. Honestly, I don't have too much negative to say about this design. There are no creature comforts in the small cabin. The bunks are not wide. But the Sun Cat wasn't intended to be a cruiser; it's a great daysailer with sufficient room to store small gear out of the weather, and maybe even take a nap! No disappointments in performance. I've sailed for 50 years. The Sun Cat is a simple design, easily sailed by this old man. No going forward to mess with a jib.

—Neil Van Blaricom,  
Sequim, Washington

Tends to round up during gusts if full sail is up; can cause heavy weather helm

in winds 15 mph plus. The cockpit is comfortable. The Mastendr system to raise the mast is an art of engineering. One of the reasons that I bought this boat was that I could launch and rig it myself. It did not come with a quick reefing system, so I am still learning how to reef the sail. When motoring or often when running, water comes up into the cockpit through the cockpit drains. It will run out and not build too much. Plan on getting a 25-inch shaft motor. I have a 4-stroke Mercury 1-cylinder that pushes the boat to hull speed.

—Leonard Heinrich,  
Tuftonboro, New Hampshire

I own a 2010 Sun Cat and sail her locally on Lake Lanier. She is an excellent beach

hopper and weekender. I know the V-berth is for two, but I find it really suited for one plus a few days' gear and food. It's absolutely a breeze to singlehand. It won't be too much trouble if the wind kicks up unexpectedly before you can reef. It's easy to balance

The spars on Leonard Heinrich's *Chris Kat 2* are protected in plastic for trailering. The end of the boom is secured aft in the gallows and forward in the tabernacle. Shrouds are already attached. To raise, simply pull on the headstay and secure.

Photo: Leonard Heinrich





**Tim Smith likes to beach camp with his Sun Cat; drawing just 14 inches with board up, she can be brought in very close to shore.** Photo: Tim Smith

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the tiller with centerboard trim, even in a stiff breeze. It can fit under moderately low bridges by letting the gaff drop parallel. It's easily driven to hull speed with a small outboard. She's slow. The factory rudder is quite inefficient. Factory rudder hold-down/lift is easy to bend or damage. That is easily remedied with an aftermarket rudder (I recommend Rudder Craft). Climbing the stern ladder from the water is quite challenging; the boom gallows are in the way and not strong enough to be a handle. Reaching over the stern to outboard controls is difficult.

—Tim Smith,  
Gainesville, Georgia

You can go from ramp to in water/ready to sail in about 15 minutes. I can't say enough good things about all the thought that went into making this happen, from the tabernacle mast/Mastendr design to the simple gaff rig. It's lightweight, so it can be pulled by a normal vehicle rather than a large diesel truck. If you are looking for a small, easy-to-handle boat that requires a minimum of fuss for daysails, weekender camping-style trips, and the ability to travel great distances on the road, without spending a small fortune, you have found your boat.

—Tom Anthony,  
Muskegon, Michigan

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**Tom Anthony's *Desi Lou* has just a little teak trim to give her a classy look without much maintenance.** Photo: Tom Anthony





# Multifaceted Marvel

*A DIY cutting board that works in the marina, underway, or at anchor*

BY CHRISTOPHER BIRCH

I love it when a piece of boat gear has multiple uses. One favorite example is an angled cutting board I spotted in the galley of a wooden sailboat named *Viking O*. It approximated the boat's angle of heel for improved functionality under sail and doubled as a dish drying rack when positioned to drain over the galley sink edge. Lastly, it sat flat atop the sink, providing additional counter space when the sink was not needed. More than just a cutting board, it's a versatile galley multitool.

The dimensions of the sink and adjacent countertops are different aboard our 36-foot Morris Justine, *Sundance*, but the design of the cutting board was easy to modify. So I set out to build one for myself.

The teak rails bolted across the bottom of the board are where the magic happens. One rail is 1.5 inches wide. The other rail is 3 inches wide. This difference in width provides the helpful angle for dish draining at anchor and vegetable cutting under sail. There is no way to calculate the ideal angle because boats are

always tipping this way and that (even at anchor, far too often!), so I winged it and just chose an angle that felt right.

Set athwartships on a countertop, the board provides an excellent work surface in the heeling galley, thanks to its standing angle. When the boat is brought around to the other tack, the cook simply rotates the

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Bottom left, the rough-cut setup of teak and maple boards is ready to be clamped and glued.

Below, the bottom of the cutting board has through-bolted rails and rubber feet.





board 180 degrees to approximate the new angle of heel.

Our board has been in use for a few months and spends the majority of its time atop the sink, where my wife and I appreciate the additional counter space it provides. The bottom rails are sized to fit into the sink like a snug plug, keeping the board securely in place.

I started construction by ripping teak and maple boards down to 1-inch by 1-inch square baluster planks. I needed eight of each to match the 16-inch width of the galley sink apron, but I cut a few extras to have spares on hand. Next, I cut all the planks to match the length of the sink apron, 18.5 inches. I finished construction without needing the spares, but I quickly used them all in other projects. This dimension of hardwood has proven to be exceptionally handy stock to have lying in wait.

If this cutting board has any chance of staying flat, it needs to start out its life flat. The clamps I used to hold the planks together during glue-up also had a tendency to induce a curl in the board. To prevent that, I clamped the board flat to the bench. Scraps of shrink-wrap plastic on both the clamping bench and clamp pads ensured that the board didn't end up glued to the bench or clamps. A trial run with the clamps to work out an effective plan for the workbench before adding glue was helpful. After an overnight clamp, I removed the excess glue on my new creation using a palm sander fit with 80-grit paper.

Store-bought cutting boards tend to warp and split with the passage of time, and I was determined to prevent both issues on my galley multitool. The angle rails that I bolted to the bottom of the board worked like frames and helped prevent both problems. For additional reinforcement, I added end-grain splines. I used a table saw to cut a dado in the ends of the board to accommodate the splines. (A dado blade on a router table could have also cut this slot just as nicely.) I glued battens of teak in place, cut to match the width of the slot, and then sanded flush. I used West System 105 Epoxy Resin for glue on both the planks and the splines.

A favorite coffee cup helped me define the radius for the corners. I traced the curve of the lip of the inverted cup onto the corners with a pencil on both the top and bottom of the board. Switching to a



belt sander, I then carefully rounded down the square corners of the board to the pencil line.

Back at the sink in the galley, a pair of pesky faucets sat on the sink apron where I envisioned my board would sometimes

Top, working as a dish rack of sorts, the board has a slight angle to drain into the sink.

Above, the cutting board works well when *Sundance* is sailing on a starboard or port tack.



rest. Either the faucets had to go, or I needed to create cutouts for them in my board. I opted for the cutouts. A hole saw in a drill did this job easily. The cuts went through the teak end-grain splines, exposing the construction detail in an interesting way.

Aligning the board with the sink apron was tricky. The rails are shorter than the width of the board and disappear into the sink to allow the board to lie flat. Once down in the now dark hole, those rails have a new job: They must hug the walls of the sink snugly to keep the board from sliding around. But the fit can't be too snug or the board will be difficult to remove from the sink. The rails also do the important cosmetic work of centering the board on the sink apron.

Confidence in my measurements and my bolting plan was low and I didn't want to drill holes in the wrong place on the new cutting board, so I made a simple plywood mock-up of the top and used it to test fit. Once I had the rails mounted where they needed to be on the plywood, I transferred the hole pattern to the cutting board.

**The finished board has a snug fit in the sink, which makes for extra countertop space.**

I bolted the rails in place with 10 x 24 316 stainless bolts in every other plank. I countersunk the bolt heads into the top working surface of the board and covered them with matching bungs. I considered using teak bungs in the maple planks for a contrasting look, but after

## More than just a cutting board, it's a versatile galley multitool.

some impromptu focus group polling, I decided that was too busy and ended up sticking to my original plan of using like materials. The nuts and washers on the other end of the bolts were countersunk into the rails, with no metal protruding from the bottom edge. Since the holes on the bottom of the rails are out of sight, I refrained from adding bungs to cover the nuts. I also thought it would be helpful for these holes to be allowed to breathe and drain should the top bungs ever develop a leak.

The last step was to add feet to the bottom of the rails for a secure countertop

grip. I wanted non-marking pads with great nonskid properties, built with nothing that would rust. I ordered several samples for inspection and testing. To avoid rust, the embedded metal washer in the rubber foot had to be not just stainless, but good quality stainless. Despite the manufacturer's claims, I didn't trust the quality of the stainless until I could see it with my own eyes.

I set up a test station where I rinsed the different candidates with salt water several times a day over two weeks. My dish of wet rubber feet proved to be something of a countertop curiosity during this time — some would even say an eyesore — but I'm glad I did the testing because several candidates failed badly. In the

end, I used four clear rubber feet with high-quality embedded stainless washers made by Hilitchi and purchased from Amazon. Each is screwed to the bottom of the rails with a 1-inch #10 stainless steel screw. We carry two sets of spare rubber feet aboard.

I opted to round the top edge of the board with a router bit for a pleasing finish that matches the other cabinetry in the galley. Minor hand sanding on the bottom edge of the board produced a more subtle radius for a cleaner fit to the sink apron. I left all surfaces unfinished and plan to give the board a good sanding for cleanup from time to time.

My contraption is large and can get in the way at times in our small galley. Fortunately, it tucks away nicely under the stove when we don't need it. In practice, though, we rarely put it there and instead just move it around the galley and keep it in use. When we sail offshore with potential storm conditions, we stow the board in its safe spot under the stove to make sure it can't fly around the cabin.

Speaking of sailing, I've found one more unexpected function for my galley multitool: It's a heeling gauge. When the vegetables start rolling off the high edge of the board, it's time to put in a reef. 🌊

*Christopher Birch is the founder of Birch Marine Inc. in Boston. He and his wife are now cruising full time aboard their 36-foot Morris Justine, Sundance. Follow their voyage at [www.EagleSevenSailing.com](http://www.EagleSevenSailing.com)*





# The Great Lakes Shuffle

*Grimsby to Georgian Bay, and why you should never bring bananas on board*

BY LEE BRUBACHER

In the cold days of January 2023, my wife and I made the move from Hamilton to Barrie, Ontario. There was a dilemma, though. Moving our belongings over land was one thing, but what about our sailboat?

Ten years prior, I had jumped into the deep end of sailing with both feet. We kept our Mirage 29, *SeaLah*, at Fifty Point Marina near Grimsby, Ontario, on the southwestern shore of Lake Ontario. Now it was time to move the boat and I was faced with three choices: Have *SeaLah* trucked to our new home port, put the mast down and transit the

Trent-Severn Waterway, or choose the outside passage through the Welland Canal, Lake Erie, Detroit River, Lake St. Clair, St. Clair River, Lake Huron, and into Georgian Bay. For an avid adventurer and sailor, there was only one option — we were doing the “Great Lakes Shuffle.”

On Sunday, May 14 — Mother’s Day — we arrived at Fifty Point Marina to onboard two crew, Ron Ouwehand and Peter Layard, and shove off for the voyage west. We exited Fifty Point channel and waved goodbye to my wife, who would pick me up at the journey’s end.

We got off to an inauspicious start. There was no wind, which meant a nearly four-hour motor to Port Weller and the Lake Ontario entrance to the Welland Canal. Since it was May, there were lots of pesky but harmless midges. The weather was cool but beautiful, and supper beckoned. When the barbeque failed to light, Peter took the grill apart and found a spider’s nest blocking the propane flow at the entrance to the burner tube. At the same time, we discovered that the Raymarine speedometer wasn’t showing a reading. I found the paddle-wheel and rewired it.

What could possibly happen next? Yet another disaster reared its ugly head as we motored. My iPad, with Navionics loaded and maps downloaded, did not track our movement through the water. After an hour of frustrating research, I realized my iPad was not equipped with native GPS. You’ve got to be kidding me! Three challenges at the outset of our voyage.

Then for dessert, I pulled out some bananas, to which

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The author is all smiles as *SeaLah* roars down Lake Erie in a frosty northeast wind.



Ron asked incredulously, "You brought bananas? Never eat bananas on a boat!" I had no idea there was a maritime superstition about this potassium-laden fruit. I scoffed at Ron's fear and we all ate a banana.

### Farewell, Lake Ontario

We arrived at the Welland Canal and tied off at the Seaway Welland wharf to wait for our transit the next morning. Thankfully, my wife was still in Hamilton that night and came back with a second iPad, which, it turned out, also did not have GPS. So at 9:30 p.m., we drove to Walmart and bought a Samsung tablet with GPS. I was elated to see that after Navionics was installed, this new tablet showed our

position and heading on the map.

The next morning, we cleared the decks of bug guts and bird poop and entered Lock 1 at 9 a.m. We went through solo and had a fairly uneventful 8.5-hour transit. A crew of three is needed traveling upbound because of the work required fending off the rough cement walls. A lot of water boils in from below, tossing pleasure craft about like toy boats. Two long lines were lowered from the top of each lock, allowing us to guide our bow and stern. I brought along a 2 x 8 board that we tied outside the fenders. The plank took significant abuse caused by scraping up the lock walls, thereby helping to protect the fenders and *SeaLah's* hull. Peter said goodbye once we reached

Port Colborne, which is the entrance to Lake Erie — our second Great Lake of the voyage. As dusk descended, Ron and I watched the film *Master and Commander*, a must-see for sailors. How very fitting to watch this masterful tale while listening to the creaking of my own boat.

### The Lake Erie Hop

After a bout of crazy, unfavorable southwest wind in the 20- to 25-knot range, we awoke in the darkness on May 17 and left the dock just before 4 a.m. It can be challenging to exit an unknown port in the dark, even with Navionics, and we were unsure why the Port Colborne pier lighthouses showed green right returning, opposite colors to normal. Must be something to do

with the Welland Canal, we thought. It was cold and the wind was from the north at a steady 20 knots, gusting to 25 with waves at 3 to 6 feet. We set the autopilot on a west-southwest heading for Long Point and motored at an easy 2,400 rpm, with full jib and no main, averaging 6.5 knots of speed and topping out at 9.1 knots.

But then, wham! For the second time since installing a Raymarine wheel pilot six years earlier, the belt broke. In a big flourish of waves and swell, the autopilot lost its heading and could not keep the boat straight. We tried again a couple of times, to no avail, and resorted to hand steering. Ron wryly commented on my "banana belt" and I wondered if



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layers. It was a quick hop with 10 knots behind and it was time for a crew change. Peter met us, allowing Ron to return home for work, and we shoved off for the two-hour motorsail west to Colchester, Ontario. Colchester is a small community on Little Point, where the marina is staffed by teenagers, rules are suggestions, and red tape is nowhere to be found. Lovely.

### Channel Surfing

Before leaving, I thought about the banana superstition again as I repaired the autopilot, hoping it would work for the remainder of our journey. We entered the Detroit River at 10 a.m. and traversed the Amherstburg Channel, where the river current varied between 1 and 2 knots against us. Our speed over ground depended on whether we sailed the mid-channel or along one of the shores. Choosing to primarily hug the Canadian side, we passed Boblo Island and Ballards Reef, then snaked in behind Turkey Island. We saw dozens of swans, but no turkeys. From there we followed the long, skinny channel to the east of Fighting Island and in the distance saw the massive twin towers of the future Gordie

Howe International Bridge, which will have the longest main span of any cable-stayed bridge in North America at almost 3,000 feet.

Soon after, we passed the Ambassador Bridge and Belle Isle and approached Lake St. Clair. Peter and I were engrossed in good conversation in the cockpit when I glanced behind and saw a full-sized freighter bearing down on us. We veered to port in a hurry. Another lesson learned: Never lollygag in a shipping channel.

Once on Lake St. Clair, we had a beautiful sail on a reach with just the jib in 14 knots of wind, making 5 knots of boat speed. We anchored in a man-made gunkhole in Huron Point, Michigan, by the Lake St. Clair Metropark Marina. That's when another banana problem befell the good ship *SeaLah*. My newly installed, brand new LED anchor light failed to work. It tripped the

there might be something to the banana superstition. I immediately purchased two new replacement belts from a marine store and arranged for delivery through Peter, who would soon rejoin us. After a 15-hour sail, we motored into Port Stanley at 7 p.m. to find a quaint town on the west shoulder of Long Point.

We left early the following day, catching the first exit bridge possible out of Kettle Creek. We had an easy motorsail 8 miles offshore with an easterly wind of 10 knots, being careful not to get fouled in several strings of commercial fishing nets with flags indicating buoys connected to leaders going deep under the surface. It was another long day of sailing and we had just enough light to get

into Scudder Marina on the northern shore of Pelee Island.

From Pelee Island we headed for Leamington, with sunny and warm weather that finally allowed us to shed

Above left, the tallest of the Welland Canal locks, lock 4, opens directly into lock 5.

Below, approaching the future site of the Gordie Howe International Bridge, linking Windsor, Ontario, and Detroit, Michigan. This massive bridge will boast the longest single span in a suspension bridge in North America.



breaker — evidence of a short somewhere. Grrr!

We had no luck fixing the anchor light, as it seemed the wires were pinched at the base of the mast. Since all the connections were buried within the tabernacle, I would need to loosen the rigging and have the mast lifted to fix the problem. Banana bummer.

I pulled the anchor up at 8 the next morning and we meandered out of the channel, through Lake St. Clair to its middle channel past Harsens and Walpole islands and then entered the St. Clair River proper. We arrived at Sarnia's Bridgeview Marina at 5:30 p.m. and met an old friend who drove us to refill the propane tank, do my laundry, and get fries at the pier under the Blue Water Bridge. It was an iconic location with great food.

### Onward to Lake Huron

On May 22, Peter was called home and could not continue the journey, so he left for the train and I was off by 8 a.m. singlehanded. As I reached my third and final Great Lake, Huron, I carefully passed several commercial fishing

### A panoramic view of *SeaLah* anchored in Black Creek Point, Michigan.

nets and entered the lake's wide open southern basin. The conditions were exceptionally calm and my Yanmar faithfully purred along all day, pushing *SeaLah* at around 5.7 knots. The sky was foggy, and for much of the afternoon I could see no shoreline whatsoever. As I approached Goderich — the town where I was born — the skies finally cleared and I saw the unmistakable teal color of the Goderich Salt Mine buildings. Located 1,800 feet under Lake Huron, the mine is the largest underground salt mine in the world.

I found a slip at Maitland Valley Marina just after 6 p.m. and since it was still early, I unstrapped the kayak and paddled up the Maitland River and under an old railway bridge. The fish were impressive — from millions of minnows to fish 3.5 feet long!

Worry woke me at 4 a.m., as I wondered where I should go and how far I should travel that day. A favorable southwesterly breeze was in the forecast, but



the following day was expected to bring atrocious northeast winds. Wanting to use the wind I had, I slipped the dock lines at 5:30 a.m. and enjoyed another cold morning watching the sun rise.

While I sailed north, the day warmed and I spent a good hour in the sun scrubbing the deck. In the afternoon, with still no wind to speak of, thick fog rolled in from the north-west. I could only see 50 yards in front of the bow and had to keep a sharp lookout. After another 15-hour day, I pulled into Stokes Bay and tied up to a decrepit government wharf.

It was strong and, I hoped, sufficient for the big blow to come.

The weather forecast did not disappoint. At around 5 a.m., the northeasterly front hit with winds up to 30 knots and lasted for several hours. I went

outside in the predawn light and added more dock lines for security. I had never used seven lines to secure my boat before, and *SeaLah* was getting splashed by waves hitting the other side of the pier 20 feet away. The rest of the day remained windy and bitter, but beautifully sunny.

### The Homestretch

At this point I was only two days away from my final destination. A 10-knot northeasterly wind pushed me out of Stokes Bay, past Lyal Island to port and Mad Reef to starboard. To keep myself closer to shore, I carefully threaded my way inside Greenough Bank. It was eerie to see the bottom detail only 20 feet down as if it were 5 feet. I was not used to this kind of clear water in Hamilton.

In midmorning I turned off the motor, put up all the canvas I had, and sailed along at 6 glorious knots. It was calm, controlled, and smooth. Eventually, the wind direction forced me too far offshore and I put the sails away and turned on the motor. At noon I rounded "the horn," Cape Hurd, and entered Cape Hurd Channel. While the northwest shore of the Bruce Peninsula was largely devoid of anything man-made, the north shore was loosely dotted with



The crew left Port Stanley early on a foggy morning. Photo by Sandra Elfman.

Next page, **motor-sailing with the jib above Tobermory, heading toward the Wingfield Basin.**





mansions on the water, with views to die for.

I skirted clockwise around Flowerpot Island and saw its stately stone monuments resembling flowerpots, then motored in calm seas to the tip of the peninsula. On the way, two things struck me: First, the channel here is over 550 feet deep! This is by far the deepest water *SeaLah* has sailed in. Second, beyond the harbor village of Tobermory, the entire northern peninsula shore is rugged, natural landscape devoid of human interference, and is stunningly beautiful.

I pulled into the Wingfield Basin on Cabot Head. This small lake is completely surrounded by land and is recommended by boaters as a great hurricane hole. Although this oversized pond could easily accommodate 20 boats on the hook, I was the sole boater. While the sun was up, I kayaked the circumference and got out to walk marvelous trails to the Cabot Head Lighthouse.

After nearly two weeks traversing through Lake Ontario, the Welland Canal, Lake Erie, the Detroit River, Lake St. Clair, the St. Clair River, Lake Huron, and Georgian Bay, it was my last day on the water. I retrieved my Rocna from 10 feet of crystal clear, azure water and exited the basin. It was a cool, bright,

calm morning and I watched a stunning sunrise over Georgian Bay as I began a straight shot of 56 miles on one heading. I was more than glad for Navionics on this trip. Georgian Bay is littered with islands and I could not imagine finding my way solely with paper charts.

I experienced one final, aggravating mishap. As I approached my destination, a passing boat put up a big wake that made *SeaLah* roll. This motion caused my loose companionway doors to fall into the cabin, badly gouging the cabin sole. Was it another banana bungle that confirmed the old superstition? Nah. Bananas or not, things always break when you're sailing, but that won't keep me shackled to the dock. If you are blessed to live near the Great Lakes, endless cruising grounds await. Go and explore. 🍌

*Lee Brubacher and his wife, Cheryl, sail their Mirage 29, SeaLah, out of Queen's Cove Marina in Victoria Harbour at the southern end of Georgian Bay. When not on the water, Lee can be found on stage as the pastor of worship and creative arts at Emmanuel Church in Barrie, Ontario.*

**Motor-sailing with the jib above Tobermory, heading toward the Wingfield Basin.**



# Cool Change

*A lack of insulation leads to a fridge overhaul and new stylish countertops.*

BY MARISSA NEELY

When my husband, Chris, and I were first looking at boats in 2018, we were young college students in search of a future home afloat. Chris grew up on the San Francisco Bay sailing aboard his family's Mason 43, laying the foundation for his love of sailing. We went into the boat-buying market armed with knowledge and did our best to remain realistic with our budget, wants, and needs. Never did we think we would ever end up with a boat like our 1979 Cheoy Lee 41, *Avocet*.

The first time we stepped aboard *Avocet*, it was not love at first sight. Although her size and teak interior brought a sense of familiarity, I couldn't immediately overlook her unique design that was different from anything I had ever seen. Chris, a master of seeing the bigger picture, urged me to try and "imagine" with him. After spending an hour going through all of *Avocet's* nooks and crannies, I finally began to see her potential, but what really sealed the deal for me was her galley.



The galley is to port and set at midship, with spacious countertops and the biggest fridge we have ever seen on a 41-foot sailboat. After signing the papers and moving aboard, we made use of that galley every day, cooking all our meals on board and enjoying the massive amount of space and

storage. Despite our admiration for our sweet galley, it had its downfalls and was in dire need of an update that eventually led to our full galley remodel.

This project, like many do, started with one goal in mind but quickly grew into multiple ones. Our fridge insulation, or lack thereof, was causing our compressor to run constantly, which was extremely inefficient and put an unnecessary strain on our recently upgraded lithium batteries. When we ripped the stained, once-white Formica off and cracked open the lid to reveal what was in the "walls," we laughed at the discovery. We found extremely wet insulation that didn't surround the entire fridge, but rather, started at the top, shrunk toward the bottom, and was nowhere to be seen on the back or front walls of the fridge. At most, we saw 3 inches of insulation, but in most areas it was only about an inch.



Above, Chris sands the insulation to be a uniform surface.

At left, chipping out the old insulation and countertop was time-consuming but satisfying.





With the fridge cavity gutted, it was a large and empty shell full of opportunities. After researching our options, we decided to insulate the space using four layers of 1-inch, 4 x 8-inch sheets, which can be purchased from nearly any hardware store — unless you reside in California like we do. The insulation is not

available in the state, so we had to take a quick road trip to our neighbor state of Nevada to stock up on “boatlegged” products.

In the original plans, Chris was going to build the fridge on top of the fiberglass reinforced plastic (FRP) liner that was in the old fridge layout. The fridge had a

flat floor, and recreating that seemed to be the path of least resistance. However, after seeing how much space was wasted in the original footprint, we decided to cut the entire liner out and start from scratch. After removing the panels, we discovered that the two main galley bulkheads weren’t actually tabbed to the hull on the inside of the fridge well. After some serious time with a grinder, Chris was able to tab two layers of 1708 biaxial fiberglass connecting the bulkheads to the hull, reinforcing the structural integrity and giving us peace of mind.

With a blank canvas and the curvature of the hull exposed, the space lost from the liner was reclaimed and we were able to put a full 4 inches of foam against the hull and still have more room inside than before. After reading a plethora of marine fridge-building articles, we decided it would be best to get our fridge walls, floor, and ceiling to an insulation rating of at least R20, since anything lower loses a significant amount of energy. To achieve our desired rating, we used 1-inch thick insulation panels with an R5 rating and



Above, **Chris** happily takes the old Formica countertops off the boat.

At left, **Avocet's** boat cat, **Cleo**, inspects the couple's handiwork.



Positioning the Foamular XPS insulation in the bottom of the fridge compartment.

played around with different configurations and layers inside the fridge cavity, ultimately deciding on 3 inches of insulation on all walls, with 8 inches between the floor and engine compartment. With this design, we gained a cool “secret” hiding place under the floor of the fridge, concealed by a teak grate, under which is a well that can hold up to 30 beer (or soda) cans perfectly!

After the dry fit, we sealed the insulation layers together with expanding foam, thickened epoxy, and Sikaflex-291 LOT, morphing the once singular panels into proper pieces of our refrigeration puzzle and crossing a major part of the project off our list. The next step was to cover the delicate foam with something durable, easy to clean, and waterproof that we would see when opening the fridge. Between Chris, his brother, Jon, and me, many ideas were thrown around about what material to use.

After much debate, we finally settled on using a FRP board attached with thickening

epoxy rather than fiberglassing, because it was more cost-effective as well as time-efficient. Fully glassing in the fridge would have taken approximately 2 gallons of resin, a good amount of cloth, and around a gallon of paint, plus many hours of sanding and fairing between dry times. The FRP board was \$60 for two 4 x 8-foot sheets and only required half a gallon of resin — and the best part about this decision was no sanding required!

With the FRP board in place, Chris mixed some more thickened epoxy with a white pigment and ran the fillets on all the hard corners of the fridge where the edges of the board came together. Two weeks of work later, *Avocet* finally had a very watertight and airtight fridge, and it

scratchproof, heat resistant, good for baking, and not too heavy. After searching high and low for the perfect fit, we met with a local shop that shared with us their incredible inventory and were excited to work with us and our odd-shaped templates. After hours of perusing the options, we decided on quartz because it met our criteria, with the exception that it was heat tolerant, not heat proof. Other boat owners might be concerned about weight, but since our galley is mostly centerline, it wasn't that big of a deal, especially since it leveled out the boat's previous slight list to starboard. Altogether, the countertops weighed around 120 pounds.



The finished front-loading fridge with a grate over the beer well.





Left, the finished freezer is ready for food.

Below, Avocet's finished galley turned out great, and is a big project checked off the list.

While the fridge is a front (or side) access, our freezer is accessed from the top. Instead of replacing it with quartz like the rest of the countertops, we created a new lid out of butcher block that was much lighter and added a beautiful contrast, complementing the other wood and pops of white in Avocet's interior. With the fridge and freezer interior ready to be filled, Chris repurposed the old shelves to account for the new design, then added a divider between the fridge and freezer, making sure it can be removed for cleaning and for access to the cold plate when it needs to be replaced.

Our Sea Frost cold plate was installed by the previous owner, and although the unit is not new, it has a lot of life left and was made by a company that still is in business and can offer support and spare parts

cycles and our use of the doors, making us more efficient in our everyday use.

With the fridge primed and cold, we went on a proper shopping trip, filling the space to the brim with fresh produce,

frozen goods, and other items for a family excursion to Santa Cruz Island to celebrate a job well done. We had enough food to keep our extended family of eight fed for a month, and even after our return from the island, the remaining produce stayed fresh for an

additional three weeks, proving that we had solved a major issue aboard, and ensuring we would not go hungry if food was stored correctly.

As we continue to whittle down our project list and reflect on how far we have come, this remains one of our favorite projects. It made life aboard more comfortable and has inspired us to carry on and escape the breakwater, sailing into the sunset with the promise of ice-cold drinks wherever the anchor drops next. 🌊

*Marissa and her husband, Chris, have lived aboard their 1979 Cheoy Lee 41, Avocet, since 2018, preparing to sail the world. They recently cast off their docklines and have been cruising the Pacific coast since 2022. You can follow their adventures on [www.svavocet.com](http://www.svavocet.com) and on their YouTube channel, Sailing Avocet.*

## We had solved a major issue aboard.

if needed. When the fridge was finished, I did the honors of turning it on for the first time in weeks, putting our work to the test. The new ½-inch rubber seals and new bronze latch and hinges on the fridge door



# Bubbled Bliss

*A DIY soda machine satisfies a couple's bubbly water obsession.*

BY MARTY MCOMBER

We had just pulled into Ketchikan, Alaska, and we were desperate people.

It wasn't the days on end of rainy weather during the weeks-long passage from Seattle, nor the isolation of traveling a remote coastline where cell phone signals were rare and mountains rising straight from the sea all but snuffed out any VHF broadcast. We weren't desperately low on fresh veggies, despite the scarcity of provisioning options along the famous Inside Passage — although that was a bit closer to the mark.

No, it was that several days past, anchored alone in a breathtaking inlet on our Passport 40, *Rounder*, the last of the carbon dioxide bubbles had wheezed out of our soda machine. Our sparkling water supply had fallen flat. Somehow, we had survived those harrowing miles on plain drinking water. But as soon as we were settled into our slip at Ketchikan, Deborah was off on a 4.5-mile round trip hike to the one store in town that carried a replacement canister for our soda machine.

OK, maybe we are a little obsessed with sparkling water.

In our defense, when you spend a long time aboard any vessel, the little things that make it feel homey take on an even more important role. Whether it's making a good cup of coffee, warming

a chilly bunk, enjoying freshly baked chocolate chip cookies, or sipping a favorite whiskey, creature comforts elevate the entire experience of being afloat.

We happen to enjoy all of the things on the list above. But our obsession with having adequate supplies of bubbly water on the boat goes back many years. And based on our latest summer cruise, we believe we have found our long-term solution.

I can't remember exactly when we started bringing bubbly water on board with us — it must have been more than a decade ago — but I can remember how. It started off with buying 2-liter bottles of bubbled water. Then we discovered the joys of lightly flavored bubbly water in cans, and that soon replaced the plastic bottles, since they stowed better and tasted delicious.

Not only was sparkling water

great at keeping us hydrated through the day, but we also soon discovered that it makes a perfect mixer for our favorite rum: no additional sweetener required, just a squeeze of fresh lime and we were all set. That led us to mixing it with rosé wine for a light-alcohol alternative when we wanted to sip a drink at sunset without feeling it the next morning.

The downside to all of this goodness was the ongoing hassle and expense of bringing cases and cases of water down to the boat and finding places

to stow it all. Worse still was all the waste we needed to deal with from the quickly emptied bottles or cans. For these reasons, I was motivated to find a better solution for our bubbly water needs while planning our Alaska cruise in 2018.

We are fortunate to have very large water tanks aboard *Rounder*, and with a whole-house filter installed in our plumbing system, our water stores also taste great. The solution seemed simple — just purchase a SodaStream home

**The ultimate sparkling water solution involved using an adapter to connect a 5-pound CO<sub>2</sub> tank and a Drinkmate soda maker that bubbles just about any kind of beverage.**







Top to bottom, the 5-pound, food-grade CO<sub>2</sub> tanks hold a great deal more gas than the standard size soda maker bottle. It is cost-effective, too.

This simple adapter, available on Amazon, allows you to easily connect your soda maker to a larger bottle of CO<sub>2</sub>.

The first larger-capacity soda setup included a pressure regulator, a quick-connect ball valve, and a special bottle cap to carbonate the water, all available on Amazon.



soda machine. So we did. Gone was the endless buying and schlepping cases of water to the boat, the countless empty cans filling our recycling bin. Problem solved, right?

But then, as noted above, we discovered the downside to a soda maker. You need to carry a stash of those small, expensive CO<sub>2</sub> bottles or you run the risk of running out. On our return from Alaska that summer, I started doing more research on how we might be able to build a better, more reliable system. That led to our next iteration.

If you brew your own beer, this won't come as a surprise, but it turns out that it is pretty easy to purchase

5- or even 10-pound tanks of food-grade CO<sub>2</sub>. I then just needed to buy a few additional pieces — a pressure regulator to connect to the tank and appropriate tubing with a ball lock assembly at one end to connect to a carbonation cap that fits on any standard 1- or 2-liter plastic bottle from the grocery store. I bought the equipment on Amazon for about \$70 and the tank from our local gas and welding supplier. Voila! We could now carbonate our water without using a SodaStream and its necessary CO<sub>2</sub> canisters. When the new, larger tank ran out — which took many, many months — we could swap it for a new one at any gas or welding store.

This worked well for us for several years, including getting us safely through our next remote and long cruise around Vancouver Island last summer. But the new carbonation rig had one major drawback: It was a lot harder to actually bubble the water. Unlike the quick and easy way modern soda makers work, my DIY setup required vigorously shaking the bottle for about 30 seconds to make sure the water was fully carbonated. And it worked much better if the water in the bottle was very cold before adding the carbonation.

I know, I know, cry me a river of sparkling water. I could have been happy with what we had and left it at that.

But last winter, I came across Drinkmate — a SodaStream competitor with a twist. Rather than only bubbling water, it could carbonate just about any liquid, thanks to the way its special cap allows excess carbonation to be bled off slowly so the liquid doesn't overflow the bottle. I tried out a unit at home and discovered that we could now make just about

any concoction we wanted. We added fresh fruit juices to water for flavor. We could make our own hard (or soft) seltzer. We could turn plain rosé wine into bubbly wine. We could recarbonate flat beer from that growler we didn't drink right away. From watermelon bubbly water to fizzy iced tea, the possibilities were endless.

It was fast and easy to create these delicious new beverages, and I wanted to start using the device on the boat. But that would mean going back to those annoyingly small bottles of CO<sub>2</sub>, right? Happily, no. It turns out that you can find third-party adaptors with a hose that lets you use a larger CO<sub>2</sub> tank with any of the major home soda machines, including Drinkmate. I purchased one on Amazon for about \$45.

The new setup worked perfectly for us on our five-week cruise this past summer. In our galley, we have a deep locker next to our sink that was the perfect place to mount the 5-pound CO<sub>2</sub> bottle, with room to store the soda maker with the adapter attached next to it. It's now a breeze to bubble away to our hearts' content — to the tune of 5 or 6 liters of water a day.

It may have taken some starts and stops to get to this level of convenience, but as I sipped on my cup of cold, sparkling water in the cockpit on a 90-degree day last July, I couldn't have been any happier.

And isn't that what boating is all about? 🍷

*Marty McOmber has been sailing and refitting his 1984 Passport 40, Rouser, in the Pacific Northwest since 2012. He and his wife, Deborah Bach, have lived aboard during summers and cruised from the south end of Puget Sound to the waters of Southeast Alaska, with plans for destinations farther afield in years to come.*





# Trailer *Traveller*

*An engine failure prompts an unexpected road journey through three states.*

BY DAVID BOND

I was pushing up the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW) approaching mile 403 when the engine quit. Again.

I was trying to get my new-to-me old boat home to Maine but had been plagued by engine problems. This was my second year owning *Traveller*. I had quit my overseas teaching job with an open-ended sabbatical in mind. Now it was my second summer with the boat, and I had spent my cruising savings on engine repairs. I never expected to haul *Traveller* overland, but plans change. As it turns out, deciding to put the boat on a trailer was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

## A Pressing Deadline

That Perkins 4-107 had been a source of aggravation and a slow drain on my bank account before it eventually let out a massive puff of black smoke and stopped *Traveller's* northward push. Don't get me wrong — Georgetown is a pleasant waterfront town along South Carolina's stretch of the ICW, but *Traveller* was still a long way from its home port.

But now, there was a much-needed new job waiting in Frankfurt, Germany, and a scheduled flight to get there. With a deadline looming, the pressing question became, What to do with the boat? It was much too expensive to just leave the boat in South Carolina.

I drove to the local McDonald's, ordered a big coffee, plugged in my laptop, and began researching boatyards. Several coffee refills later, I weighed my options. I could leave the boat in my South Carolina mud berth — the marina's cheaper, back row of floats that went aground at low tide — at a high monthly cost (plus pay a yearly



Billy Ray works on the straps holding *Traveller* to the trailer.



At right, wrapped with a web of lines, the mast is carried beneath and to the side of the boat.

Below, Billy Ray's rig offered a comfortable ride from South Carolina to Virginia.

property tax!), or have it hauled overland about 400 miles to a cheaper, long-term storage yard I'd found on the Virginia shore of the Chesapeake Bay.

### Dollars Make Sense

*Traveller* is a 36-foot Cheoy Lee Luders offshore sloop, and the cost difference to store it was easy to calculate. The new Virginia boatyard would be about half the cost of the South Carolina marina. OK, that made sense. But would the trucking costs cancel out any storage savings?

I continued searching online, and after two dead ends, I contacted a boat transport clearinghouse. They sent my inquiry to a boat-hauling company based in North Carolina, which promptly emailed me a quote and asked me to call them. I Skyped and gave them my boat details.

The hauling rate would be \$2,990, which included blocking *Traveller* on the trailer, transit insurance, and all the required permits. This rate worked out to a little over \$7 per mile. Travelift fees for getting the boat on and off the trailer were my responsibility.

I calculated that the \$2,990 for the hauling, plus one year of cheaper storage in the new boatyard, would equal another year in South Carolina. But additional years in Virginia would add up to a significant saving in storage costs. The cost of hauling the boat 1,000 miles to Maine was out of the question, but more importantly, it wasn't part of the adventure. I figured I would continue my trek northward at some point in the near future.

I emailed the hauling company back: "Send the truck!"

The next day, the company emailed me a contract. They required a \$2,000 wire-transferred deposit before sending the truck. I agreed to their terms, signed their electronic contract, and transferred the deposit through a local bank. The company promptly set a pickup date for the following Monday.

I asked them for suggestions for getting the boat ready. "Plan ahead, secure or remove anything loose on the boat, and have all the boat paperwork in order,"



was the reply. "That's the key to a smooth transport."

On Monday morning, a massive white cab appeared through the trees. The 18-wheeler hissed to a stop in the gravel parking lot; I walked over and introduced myself to the driver.

Billy Ray was a burly man in short pants and heavy shoes. He slid down from the high cab, brushed himself off and announced in a southern drawl, "I'm hungry! Where's a good place to eat around here?" I suggested an all-you-can-eat buffet down the road. He unhitched the trailer. The tide had just turned, and haulout wasn't for a few hours.

"C'mon, let's go!" he said, so we climbed into the cool AC of the truck and headed to the diner.

### Loading Time

When the tide was high, the yard crew hauled the boat, but they wanted *Traveller* off the Travelift as soon as possible. While

one yard crew attacked the gnarly bottom with a pressure washer and a shovel, the Travelift driver looped a sling under the mast spreaders. Another crew member and I disconnected the shrouds and stays. The mast was lowered onto sawhorses and I turned my attention to arranging the blocking on the trailer.

Billy Ray had brought a pile of wooden blocks, and with a cold drink in hand, he pointed along the backbone of the trailer. "We'll need a couple here, and here, and here."

I stacked the blocks where he'd pointed, then looked up and saw *Traveller* suspended in midair and heading my way. The crew lowered the boat onto the trailer and we set to work adjusting and padding the hydraulic arms. Next, we hefted steel crossbeams across the trailer to support the mast.

Back at the sawhorses, Billy Ray scrutinized the lashings on the stays and shrouds. "Need lots of ropes there, boy.

It's like a hurricane out there on that interstate — 60-mile-per-hour winds. We don't want nothin' shaking loose."

It took six of us to carry the trussed-up mast to the trailer. With the mast secured, Billy Ray leaned a ladder against the hull, inspected the cleared deck, and once again set me to work. I unshackled the anchors and chain and stowed them securely below. Next, I unscrewed the stainless cowls, stowed them, and sealed any missing deck plates with duct tape. I stowed all coiled lines in the lazarettes and secured the lids with small padlocks so they wouldn't blow open at highway speeds.

The Windex Wind Direction Indicator was a fragile piece to stow. Eventually I settled on a heavy cardboard box, lined it with T-shirts, and stored the box in a locking cabinet.

It was surprising just how many small blocks and bits of line secured the stanchions and lifelines, but they were all removed, labeled, and boxed. I removed the few electronics onboard, rolled them up in towels, and carefully stowed them in deep drawers down below. The sails were already unhanked and bagged, so I wedged them into the V-berth up forward. I disassembled the dodger and bimini frames and stored them on the settee, along with their canvas. An empty

bunk was a good place for the rolled-up, deflated inflatable dinghy.

I turned my attention to the cabin. I'd purchased four large plastic bins from a local DIY store; they were strong and cheap and perfect for packing loose items. I quickly filled them, snapped on their covers, shoved them forward onto

## "It's like a hurricane out there on that interstate."

the V-berth, and wedged them in with the sail bags.

I drained the freshwater tank, then dogged down the hatches and opening portholes and double-checked them. Seacocks were closed. The steering wheel was lashed amidships. The boom and spinnaker pole were lashed to cushions on the cabin sole.

Billy Ray eased down the companionway steps and moved fastidiously through the cabin. He pushed things, prodded others, and rattled all the drawers. When nothing moved, he pronounced us roadworthy.

### Land Cruising

It must have been 103 degrees when we finally left the boatyard. There were smiles and waves from a line of friends and crew. Then, within 15 minutes, Billy Ray had gotten us stuck in a sprawling, live oak tree along a quiet, shady lane.

He jerked the big rig forward and back, struggling to get out from under a low-hanging branch, but *Traveller's* stainless steel pulpit had snagged it good. I sweated up to the foredeck and tried to push the branch away.

Billy Ray leaned out of the cab and yelled, "Let's go! Don't you worry, she'll break off."

I wasn't sure if he meant the branch or the pulpit. The boat lurched, there was a loud

snap, and we were free. Thankfully, it was the branch that had snapped, and with a puff of black smoke and some grinding of gears, we headed north with me riding shotgun, or rather, navigator.

*Traveller* has a beam of just over 10 feet, exceeding the maximum normal trailer width of 8.5 feet. This meant that the trailer required wide load permits, which put us into a specific hauling category. We were required to stop at sunset and not resume our journey until sunrise. We had to park in designated wide load areas. The boat is a little leggy, too, with a draft of just over 5 feet, so we had to be

aware of the height clearance of every overpass on every road, in every town, through every state we crossed. Luckily, the specifications were all listed in books.

Billy Ray had an assortment of almanacs for sunrise and sunset, and guidebooks listing the overpass heights for every highway in every



**All oversized loads are required to stop at sunset at designated parking areas.**



Similar to a boat's cockpit, this 18-wheeler had radios, GPS, a bunk, and a small fridge.

state. As navigator, my job was to get acquainted with the most important one: the *United States Truckers Regulations on Oversize Load & Pilot Car Directory*. Similar to our pilot books or cruising guides, this essential handbook is updated annually and provides detailed information and regulations related to transporting oversized loads. It includes bridge clearance and parking information, permit requirements, and any other restrictions.

I looked up the references for each of the three states we traversed. As the sun set (and I checked the exact time in the almanac), Billy Ray pulled the rig into a designated wide load parking lot next to a brightly lit Hardee's restaurant.

The evening air was hot and oppressive. I would sleep in a saloon bunk on *Traveller*, but it was stuffy in the cabin. I wanted to hook up the little air conditioner that I usually wedged in the companionway hatch.

Not a problem. Billy Ray opened a panel on the side of the truck and unrolled a long extension cord. He plugged the other end into his onboard generator — another land cruising accessory.

### A Successful Arrival

We arrived at the Virginia boatyard the next day, and the yard's Travelift hoisted *Traveller* off the trailer and onto new blocking and jack stands. The new crew was amiable and helpful.

It was time for Billy Ray to head back to North Carolina, but first I took us out for lunch. And what do you eat when you're on the Chesapeake? Crab cakes, of course.

There was a firm handshake and a farewell wave. The big rig rumbled off down another interstate highway as I walked back to *Traveller*. Everything looked fine and nothing was broken. Even the Windex arrived unscathed. Road hauling with Billy Ray was money well spent.

So now we were a few hundred miles further up the ICW. Only a thousand more to get back to Maine. The boat needs to be repowered, and I've got my eye on a nice little Beta diesel. It's



available with the same motor mount footprint as the Perkins and might be a relatively easy swap. On the other hand, I might remove the engine entirely, and put an outboard on the dinghy and use it as a pushboat like the traditional, oyster-harvesting skipjacks out on the Bay.

But that might just be the Chesapeake influencing me. 🍷

*David Bond is a writer and artist from Maine. He currently teaches English in Germany while Traveller rests ashore in the Chesapeake. They will continue their adventures together soon. Before wading into teaching, David operated a sailboat chartering business in Kennebunkport, Maine. His book, Adventures in the Charter Trade, is about those crazy times and is available on Amazon.com.*

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# Night of the Falcon

## *Hitting a Tanker in the Dark*

BY MAURISA DESCHEEMAER

Sailing through the night is a phenomenal experience. I have had some of my best and worst moments in the inky black of night — ghosting, coasting, flying, and hanging on for dear life through the ocean. The more miles we put under

our keel beneath starry skies, the more diligent we are to reevaluate our sail plan and tidy the topsides well before sunset to prepare for the darkest hours of night. Still, as with so many parts of sailing day or night, no amount of preparation or experience can

eliminate surprises out on the ocean.

Recently, while sailing south by southwest for multiple days out of the Sea of Cortez and down the mainland coast of Mexico on our Alajuela 48 ketch, *Whirlwind*, we heard a surprising and

new-to-us radio transmission on Channel 16.

The wind was steady, our sails full, and the swell generally behind us with the anchorage we were headed for hours ahead. As we neared the coastline of a locally famous cape, Cabo Corrientes,



Previous page, a beautiful sunset over the Pacific Ocean while prepping for night sailing.

At right, *Whirlwind* running under a reefed main into the night.

marine traffic in the area went from complete silence to bustling. There were large commercial vessels, smaller pleasure crafts, and local open-boat fishing vessels (pangas) setting and checking their long lines. All of this traffic, coupled with confused seas stretching from the notorious cape, means this stretch of water requires vigilance day and night.

Before dark we turned our radar on, put a reef in the mainsail, and tidied the decks. I tucked the kids in and my husband, Mike, took the first watch. I had been off watch for a mere half hour when he woke me up to say he needed me. "Maurisa, on deck. Things are happening out here and I need you to get up."

In the 12 years we have been sailing together, he has never — not once — woken me up for anything. He has tacked, jibed, reefed, raised, and lowered sails without asking for assistance. So why now? What was happening?, I wondered, with a curious knot beginning to twist in my stomach. Waking up, I listened for clues about what was going on. All was quiet but the sweet sound of water rushing by the hull. I scooted out of bed while feeling the motion of our boat; we seemed to be sailing along just fine.

Then the radio crackled a bit and an older male voice came through loud and clear, "I just hit a tanker."

The voice was calm as can be.

What? Did I hear that right? My thoughts raced and I hastened dressing. I called up toward the open hatch aft of the cockpit, "Mike, did he just say they hit a tanker?"

"That's what I heard. It is the second time. There is a lot of traffic out here and I need you to monitor the radio, the AIS, and the radar. I will sail the boat and watch for boats."

I rubbed my eyes, and planted myself into the navigation station. I looked down at the small notepad in which we typically record the date and time, our latitude and longitude, and course and speed during multiday passages. I recorded all the current information just before a new radio transmission came through from the vessel in distress. I flipped the page

and quickly recorded their latitude and longitude, with the name *Falcon* below it. Then I searched and marked this location on Navionics. I saw we were about 12 miles north and heading in their direction.

Looking at our AIS, I also saw the tanker that was heading north. I recorded all the information on the screen. Mike got a visual on the tanker when it appeared on the horizon, and could identify by its running lights that we were on a safe course to pass port to port with a good amount of distance between us. He attempted to make radio contact with the tanker in two different ways: He hailed the vessel on the VHF radio and made a DSC (Digital Selective Call). No answer.

There was another boat communicating with *Falcon* named *Mandolyn*, which was also sailing southbound on the coast and moving in *Falcon's* direction. I found *Mandolyn* on our AIS and saw

they were closer to shore, a bit farther north, and moving more slowly than we were. I realized we were the vessel closest to *Falcon*, and the man came on the radio again with an updated location and few details. He was drifting and had his spreader lights on. He stated calmly, and I promptly transcribed, "The bow is smashed and the boat is not taking on any water yet."

The "yet" was particularly troubling. I hailed him on the radio and made brief contact, letting him know that we were also aware of his location. I relayed ours and told him we were coming toward him. I communicated with *Mandolyn* as well and confirmed that we were both making our way toward *Falcon*. I quickly realized I needed to ask *Falcon* for some more details, but neither we nor the other vessel, with whom we remained in contact, were able to reach *Falcon*. At this point, the wind was starting to die,





*Whirlwind's* track down the Pacific Coast of Mexico. *Falcon's* position is marked with the red circle after Maurisa plotted the boat's latitude and longitude.

to make out *Falcon's* lights to determine which way they were facing. Its running lights were dim, low, and rhythmically obscured by their dinghy and other items on deck.

We slowly circled the boat three times, rocking broadly from side to side as we turned through every angle with the swell. We were communicating with *Falcon* on the handheld VHF radio the entire time, letting them know what we saw. Because their bow was smashed, they were staying in the cockpit. We saw that one anchor was dangling off the port bow, along with part of the bow pulpit and rail system. The drum on the roller furler didn't look right, and the forestay had a deep sag to it. More of their rail system was hanging low off the starboard bow. Although we could not make them out exactly, we could see dark gashes in the

so we pulled down our sails, turned on the motor, and made haste in *Falcon's* direction.

For the next two hours, the man on *Falcon* came on the radio, calmly stating his slightly changing latitude and longitude, but never again responded to direct communication. Mike and I discussed how best to handle this impending encounter. There were so many unknowns. We did not know how many people were on board, if anyone was injured, or if there was anything or anybody in the water nearby. I compiled a short list of questions on our notepad so that if we made contact again, I would try to get more information.

Just after midnight, we caught sight of *Falcon's* spreader lights in the distance. I hailed the man again, and when I made contact, I cut to

the chase: Number of people aboard? Two, named Dave and Patti. Injuries? None. Lines/debris in the water? Not sure. Requests? Come across *Falcon's* bow and tell him what we see.

In the pitch black of night, I got out our cordless Makita flashlight to help us see the bow. We approached cautiously, running with the 5- to 6-foot swell. It was difficult



Repairs begin on *Falcon's* damaged bow while on a stern anchor.





Dave and fiberglass workers set out to repair *Falcon's* bow.

would need to set a stern anchor, and we were confident that the space and protection in the bay would accommodate that. The third boat planned to follow us for a bit and if all appeared well, would continue on to its original destination farther down the coast.

For the next four-plus hours, *Falcon* stayed quite close to us as we motored. Once we came around Punta Perula, we saw that there were an exceptional number of boats — over 20 — in the anchorage; there are usually far fewer. At 6 a.m.,

we were inside the protection of the anchorage and able to set our hooks well away from the field of other boats. When the sun rose, it was time to meet the crew of *Falcon* and reflect on the previous night's events. 🌊

*Maurisa Descheemaeker lives and sails with her husband and two kids aboard an Alajuela 48 ketch, Whirlwind. Their firstborn was but a peanut when sailing became a family adventure. Boat by boat, they have put many miles under a handful of keels throughout the Salish Sea, down the Pacific Coast, and south to warmer latitudes.*

fiberglass bow on the port and starboard. “Smooshed” was the word we settled on to describe the nose of their bow.

So what now?

*Falcon* had been heading to a port about 50 miles to the southeast. Our planned destination was about 30 miles southeast. The other boat trailing behind was new to the area and heading about 40 miles southeast. But the nearest port with a haulout and rigger was about 70 miles north-northwest and into the swell. We strongly discouraged *Falcon* from pointing their bow into the swell. It seemed a miracle that their boat was dry down below, and we thought moving with the swell would be the best way to possibly keep

it dry. We asked if they would like to follow us into the closer harbor we were heading for.

We let Dave know that we had spent a fair amount of time — over a year in total — on this short stretch of coast over the past few years. We knew the bay well, and knew some local pangueros (fiberglass open-boat men) in the small town who would likely be able to assist them with enough of a repair to get *Falcon* north to a proper haulout facility. We offered to pilot them at whatever speed they were comfortable with.

Together, we decided that we would motor between 4 and 5 knots in the direction of Punta Perula and anchor at the head of Bahia Chamela. *Falcon*

### The Takeaway—MD

The couple aboard the Cal 2-46, *Falcon*, was Dave and Patti — 78 and 84 years old, respectively. Patti was on watch when the collision happened and shared her experience openly and honestly. While she had gotten some instruction on using the AIS, she was still confused and did not really understand how to operate it properly. She thought the tanker's lights were extremely dim, and in the darkness, she had a difficult time figuring out which way it was moving. Patti said she attempted to change course but was unable to. They had been sailing on a run, by the lee, and she could not adjust the course enough without having to jibe.

Dave and Patti were very fortunate to have made it through the incident with just a damaged boat. The lessons from this unfortunate yet avoidable event are evident. As mariners, we need to know that our navigation lights are operational

and placed for prime visibility. When on watch, crewmembers should know how to read navigational lights of other vessels to determine the direction they are moving in and if they are on a collision course.

Along with knowing how to read and interpret navigation lights, all on-watch crew who take the helm should know how to read and use navigation and communications equipment, including AIS, chartplotter, VHF, and radar. And if you're ever in doubt while on watch, it is critical — no matter the hour or rank — to bring crew on deck for assistance with maneuvers, sail changes, to help identify nearby vessels, or even to answer questions about a piece of equipment.

Ultimately, whether you sail on an inland lake or on the ocean, knowing your boat, your gear, your crew, and your own personal limitations is of utmost importance to staying safe.

# A Feast Afloat

*Memories of food and boats swirl together, powerfully evoking time and place.*

BY CRAIG MOODIE

Eating while afloat ranks among my greatest pleasures, with the old saw about salt air quickening the appetite proving true in my experience. Many memories involving food and boats make me lick my old seadog's chops to this day, and here are six eats I remember with relish. *Warning to gourmets: This is boat — not haute — cuisine.*

Aboard our family's 35-foot Ohlson yawl, *Carousel*, my mother was Saint George to the alcohol stove's dragon. She fought valiant battles to light it, at times igniting billows of blue flame while shrieking and cursing at it like the true salt she was. When she subdued it, she produced a range of chow from spaghetti to stew, but no dish was more memorable than her signature ham steak flambé — the flambé being only occasional and accidental. I can still smell the aroma, and smoke, rising from the cast-iron skillet, the ham laden with pineapple rings and doused with brown sugar and rum, sizzling and spitting above the rippling

blue fangs of the flames, the stove always lying in wait for a chance to sputter or spew.

Of my two older sisters, Leslie and Alison, Alison fell for the sailing life, and she perfected a trademark lunch while underway on her and her husband, Tom's, 30-foot Hunter. It may not have involved epic battles with fire-breathing appliances, but it was legendary in its own right. The mystery of how Swanson's canned chicken heaped on white bread could satisfy us so much remains unsolved to this day. I suspect such humble fare became a wonder of flavor and sustenance only because we devoured it in the cockpit of a sloop cruising from the back creeks to the open waters of the Chesapeake Bay. Maybe the preservatives helped too.

I lived aboard *Carousel* for a week while I was in college — not to sail her, but to work on her. The boat never left her slip in Stamford, Connecticut, and I never left either, at least not physically,

except to lie sweating in my berth at night imagining myself sailing up Long Island Sound to brave Plum Gut, a bottleneck of water between Plum Island and Orient Point that becomes a bona fide maelstrom at certain tides, and sailing into the widening waters beyond to other thrilling places. I sustained myself on time-honored college boy rations

of beef stew spooned out of the can at room temperature, which was plenty steamy since it was mid-July.

Peanut butter sandwiches seemed to blend one into the other until one sultry evening, when I stood in the companionway watching cloud-to-cloud lightning flicker and dance closer overhead. I'd just troweled chunky peanut butter onto one slice of bread when a simultaneous lightning strike and artillery blast of thunder near the boat made me jump so much that the open-faced sandwich cartwheeled out of my hand to the deck — face down. That much peanut butter was far too precious to waste; I needed fuel to continue sanding the decks on my hands and knees, readying them for coats of Tip Top Teak Deck Brightener. Mostly I was thankful that my dinner hadn't become peanut butter sandwich flambé.

On our maiden voyage aboard our 12-foot catboat, *Finn*, in 2006, my wife packed a lunch including a bag of Goldfish (the ultimate seafood) to accompany our bottle of champagne. I realized that the goldfish featured on the bag was named Finn, which made the salty morsels even more delectable — and the Veuve Clicquot did its part too. No matter that we lost the breeze halfway into Buzzards Bay, a notoriously fickle body of water between Cape Cod and mainland Massachusetts, and had to paddle back to the mooring before a thunderstorm swept down on us; Goldfish of the Finn variety remain our go-to crunchies.

You might think working as a deckhand aboard a lobster boat more than 40 years ago would have afforded me many chances to partake of the coveted crustacean. Not so aboard the *Gertrude H.*, Harry Hunt's Virginia-built wood workboat. Harry was renowned for pioneering the offshore lobster fishery in the canyons of the continental shelf. In the short time I worked on



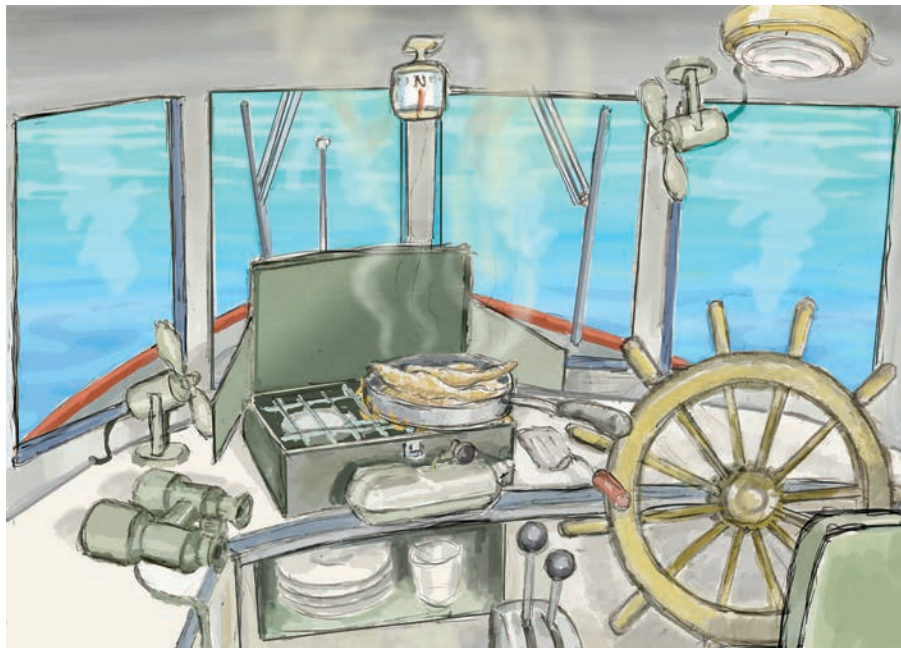
ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRITZ SEEGERS



the boat, the lobsters went to the market, not into the pot for the crew — except on one occasion.

Harry, two other crewmen — one of them my longtime shipmate Chris — and I were stacking gear in Harry's trap yard at his home in Orleans, doing the drudgery of the dreaded shorework. All morning, we hefted waterlogged wooden traps off the truck to stack them for the winter. Finally, a lunch break arrived, and so did Harry's wife, Gertrude, sailing out of the house bearing a platter of sandwiches with slag heaps of fresh steamed lobster barely contained between slices of whole wheat bread — an impromptu all-you-can-eat outdoor lobsterfest.

Commercial fishing whet the appetite — no sleep and dead hauls will do that to



fish, he fired up the Coleman stove in the pilothouse, sliced a knob of butter into the skillet, let it brown, and set the fish to sautéing. The fish was so fresh it flaked apart in the pan, and so light and white it evaporated in a sweet, tender cloud in your mouth. And thus the cold cuts and processed cheese that sustained us for so long fell from grace, if only temporarily. Never before or since have I eaten such a simple, yet toothsome, dish.

Goodness. I've written myself up an appetite. Excuse me while I hunt down a snack. Peanut butter sandwich flambé, anyone? 🍷

*Craig Moodie lives with his wife, Ellen, in Massachusetts. His work includes A Sailor's Valentine and Other Stories and, under the name John Macfarlane, the middle-grade novel Stormstruck!, a Kirkus Best Book.*

a stomach — but the demands of the work left little time to satisfy it. I was the mate aboard a 35-foot wood Maine-built boat, where most meals consisted of slabs of cold cuts and American cheese on bulky rolls, gobbled between drifts while we jigged for codfish or trolled for striped bass in the rips of Nantucket Shoals. One day, we hit on a school of scrod. Some of the fish were so small they resembled pan-sized trout more than codfish, especially with their glistening gold and green jewel-like markings.

Once the day was done and we ran inshore to anchor for the night on the Fishing Rip, Rick said, "Let's treat ourselves." After I cleaned two 10-inch

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# Get Pumped

*Installing a foot pump in the galley is a great way to save water.*

BY DINI MARTINEZ

On many sailboats, the biggest use of fresh water is for washing dishes, which was the case on our 1993 Moody 44, *Da Capo*. The previous owner had downsized the water tanks, and while that might have worked great for a retired couple, it was difficult for our family of five if we didn't have easy access to water or if it hadn't rained for a while. Given our positive experience with a galley saltwater pump on a previous boat, it was a quick decision to install one on *Da Capo* as well. We just had to figure out the best way to do it.

The type of foot pump that elegantly hides in a cabinet and only has a foot pedal sticking out was not an option for us because we

needed the limited space available under the sink for storing our pots and pans. However, the bilge right behind the galley sink is relatively deep and was mostly empty. A round type of foot pump would fit perfectly there.

In order to have only the round foot pedal poking out of the floorboard, we needed to cut a hole the size of its diameter. Following the rule of "measure twice, cut once," I measured at least three times before drilling a circle into the floorboard with a circular saw drill bit. The diameter would allow anyone standing behind the galley sinks to comfortably pump water with their right foot, while the body of the pump would be neatly hidden under the floorboard.

The next step was to install a Y-fitting on an existing through-hull. The 12 through-hulls on *Da Capo* are already too many for my liking, so finding a way to branch off an existing one was a must. The closest underwater

opening to our galley sink is the starboard aft toilet water intake. While that might not sound ideal, the toilet valve assures that this is a one-way route — any toilet content cannot flow back the other way. With the seacock closed, I installed a Y-fitting, which allowed me to lead a short hose to the next bilge compartment, where I planned to install the saltwater pump.

Given that feet would be pressing on the pump at least three times a day, we needed a solid support for it. An inset in the bilge compartment for a potential second floorboard provided a convenient ledge for a piece of plywood. Simply placing the plywood on top of the ledge would have been the easiest solution, but that

wouldn't leave enough space for the body of the pump to fit under the floorboard.

To create maximum stability, I affixed my plywood piece with two F-clamps exactly where I wanted it to sit. Then I drilled six  $\frac{3}{32}$  holes through the ledge and the plywood piece. Before going any further, I took the rest of the afternoon to cover the plywood with two layers of epoxy. I had learned from another installation that plywood on boats — and particularly in galleys where moisture is inevitable — never lasts long. The epoxy should keep any water from getting into the plywood and make it last much longer.

The next morning, I installed the epoxied plywood with screws and washers on



Left, a Y-fitting was run off the water intake.



Right, the author bolts in the epoxied plywood support.



Below left, Dini draws a shape where the pump will be installed onto the plywood support below.

At right, the finished project shows the pump on the floorboard and the extra tap for salt water in the forward corner of the galley sink.

top and bottom. To give the board even more stability, I wedged a couple of support pieces of wood between the bottom of the bilge and the plywood support, so any pressure from the top would encounter resistance from the bottom.

I put the floorboard in place and traced the circle of the drilled hole onto the plywood support below. This was where the pump would sit. Then I took the floorboard off and fit the pump into place with one of my smallest drill bits, a screwdriver, and four small screws.

From there, I connected the hose that I had added to the Y-fitting to the water intake. A second hose leads from the pump, through the bilge, to the back of the aforementioned storage cabinet up to the tap that

was conveniently part of the galley sink setup. Following best practice, every hose connection received a double hose clamp, each facing in a different direction. I made sure they were tight, but not so tight they would cut through the hose.

All that was left to do was set the floorboard back into place and test out the pump.

Everything worked perfectly, despite the kids' initial excited temptation to treat the pump as their new trampoline.

As with most boat projects, planning was key — thinking every step through before even moving a finger, having all tools and implements ready and hoses measured out, and thinking twice so as to only have to drill once. Over

and over again, I have found that putting in the extra effort during the visualization and preparation stages of any project saves so much time and energy down the track.

Our successful galley saltwater pump installation inspired us to add a foot pump for fresh water as well, and not just to save water. When our freshwater pump suddenly stopped working after a daylong passage,

right before dinner, we realized how much we depend on a functioning electric system to access our fresh water, which is required to turn many of our dried food items into edible delicacies. If our batteries failed, we'd need to be quite creative to get water out of our tanks. That issue could easily be avoided with a manual pump, which also helps save water and electricity.

For now, finding space for another foot pump is the only thing holding us back. But we will also find a solution for that. 🌱

*Dini Martinez has lived on boats on and off for most of her life, including work on superyachts, three years with a baby and a toddler around the Mediterranean, and years of coastal cruising around her homeland's Down Under. Since 2021 she has been sailing the Caribbean with her family on a Moody 44, running yoga and tantra retreats. You can find out more about her on Instagram @Dini\_Martinez and at DiniMartinez.com.*



# Counter Revival

*Giving an old galley a fresh face*

BY TERRY J. KOTAS

“We’ll just have to try and squeeze it in,” I said pleadingly, trying to convince my wife to pack one more thing into our already overpacked car.

Exasperated, Heidi, who also happened to be in charge of packing the car for our drive south from Washington to Mexico, said, “It won’t be a squeeze. It will need to ride on top of everything that’s already in the back of the car — including the cat.”

The subject of our discussion was a 3-foot x 4-foot piece of Formica laminate that could not be found in our area of Baja, Mexico, but was needed for an upcoming project. It would have to ride inside our small SUV to protect it from 2,000 miles of road travel.

“She’ll have fun. It will give her a new hidey-hole for the long trip,” I suggested, trying to lighten the mood.

In reality, Rosie the cat didn’t have fun. The sliding piece of cardboard-encased Formica bonked her sleeping body more than once on the weeklong road trip, eliciting nasty looks from both my wife and the cat.

Over the last couple of years, I have watched, or rather heard, the slow debonding of the galley countertop in our 1980 Fantasia 35, *Cetus*. It started as a small 6-inch diameter spot that had a rather hollow sound when a dropped spoon or knife would hit the area. And with 95-degree summers in the Sea of Cortez, coupled with high humidity, the old laminate was begging to be replaced.

Sure enough, when we arrived back to *Cetus*, we found that more than half of the old countertop had come loose and decided it was time to replace it. First, we pulled the old caulking and trim pieces from the edges of the counter, then removed the sink and plumbing. (Note to self: Water pressure should be turned off



at this point. Lesson learned — again.). With the double sink out of the way, the largest section of old laminate came up in one piece, with just the slightest bit of persuasion.

Once the plywood was exposed, it was easy to see where water had intruded under the lip of the sink and eventually, under the laminate. That had likely sped up the debonding. Armed with a ream of sandpaper, I figured a good sanding was all that would be necessary to prepare the surface for a strong bond for the new contact cement. Not so fast! The years-old cement was extremely hard and rough, and my 80-grit sandpaper was no match for it. After just a few minutes of hand sanding, it was clear I would need to try something different, something more aggressive.

Thinking back to the recent reconstruction of *Cetus*' cabin sole (“Saving a Sole,” *Good Old Boat* May/June 2022), I knew the mahogany plywood would be many layers thick. Using a sharp chisel, I peeled off the top layer of wood, revealing a surface that would need little more than a light sanding and thorough cleaning.

Meanwhile, Heidi laid out the new Formica and used the old piece as the perfect pattern. Not having to create a new pattern from scratch was a real time-saver. After carefully tracing the lines onto the new Formica with a black Sharpie, Heidi applied blue 1-inch painter's tape, centering it on the cut line. The dark mark was clearly visible through the blue tape, which reduced chipping while the cut was being made. She had tried cutting the laminate with several different devices we





Previous page, *Cetus'* old countertop was slowly delaminating and needed to be replaced.

At left, when the sink was removed, it was clear that water had intruded under the flange.

Below, the top layer of the mahogany plywood needed to be chiseled off to get a good working surface.



adjustments by using 100-grit sandpaper along the edges. The closer the fit, the better the caulking would hide any overcuts or chips. Even with all the fine adjustments, we still had to pop a corner in. That would be our starting place.

Spreading the contact cement on the exposed wood and the back of the Formica was the next step — though due to the vapors, we don't remember much about that

had available, including a laminate scribe and laminate shears. But in the end, simple tin snips turned out to be the easiest, most effective, and least damaging way to cut the material.

This is where a new challenge reared its ugly head. There are large 2-inch rails attached on two sides of the counter; a bulkhead and cabinet complete the rough rectangle. Apparently, the boat builders in Taiwan used some serious glue, possibly of alien manufacture, to attach the rails. There was just no delicate way to remove them, so the new laminate pieces would have to fit in place right the first time, on all four sides. There was literally no room for adjustment.

After cutting the laminate, we dry-fitted the piece about two dozen times. We avoided making large

part of the process. After the fumes had dissipated and we could go back inside the galley, we were faced with the toughest part of the whole project.

Contact cement is unforgiving, and if the two pieces aren't positioned just right the first time, there's no second chance. The bond is instantaneous and inseparable. Interestingly, nothing will stick to just one side of the dried glue, so we used a combination of newspaper and wooden dowels to suspend the Formica over the potential catastrophe. We placed the dowels on the countertop about 6 inches apart, then put newspaper on top as double protection from accidental touching.

Starting at the corner, we moved the paper and the first dowel away and slowly lowered the piece down. The

initial placement looked perfect, and as we removed the remaining dowels and let the Formica fall into place, we breathed a huge sigh of relief. With the largest piece of laminate glued down, we turned our attention to the two other pieces needing to be installed. They were small and easy to work with, but best of all, the sink would cover all of those seams. As we laid each piece down, I rolled the freshly glued Formica relentlessly with a 3-inch rubber roller until my arms ceased to work, and the bond was ensured.

As usual, replacing the sink was harder than removing it. It started out easy enough, as the screw holes for holding the sink in place had been transferred from the pattern and were already marked on the new laminate. Silicone was previously used to seal the sink but had apparently failed to keep water from intruding, which caused the debonding. We both agreed that using silicone again could create an ugly mess.



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Setting the double sink properly in its cutout would require twisting, turning, and then lowering it down in just the right sequence. We could picture the cleanup that would ensue if we accidentally spread silicone everywhere in the process. Instead, we opted to use butyl tape, placing it under the lip of the sink to keep water from migrating underneath and causing a future project.

Before the project was complete, we had a 4-inch stretch of countertop that needed to be caulked. Heidi and I are no strangers to caulking or its associated mess, but when I pulled out the tube of silicone, a look of dread crossed her face. Over the last 30 years on *Cetus*, each of us has caulked with about equal luck on different projects, and neither of us is a fan of silicone caulk. We use it sparingly, but I made the decision to give it a try. I confidently grabbed the caulking gun and began to lay the bead of white silicone. Before I had gone a foot, I realized I was in trouble, and by 2 feet, my wife was

pleading with me to stop. The bead had become a surging, stop-and-go mess.

Working together, we sacrificed a roll of paper towels to clean up the white goo. On take number two, we switched to a small syringe for the application. It was Heidi's turn to apply the silicone, and she displayed a steady hand laying down a nice, even bead. Then she sprayed the caulk with soapy water and wiped the excess with her finger, leaving a very clean line. With a look of triumph, she set the syringe down — only to discover a nice white silicone smear up her arm.

"That's it! I swear I will not be a part of any more silicone nonsense on this boat!" she said, cleaning off her arm and looking for more goo. It was a week before I pointed out the small white blotch that was still on her elbow.

Having lived aboard *Cetus* for nearly 30 years, there have been plenty of DIY projects, both big and small. Although not a huge visual change, the new countertop definitely brightens up the galley area.

And best of all, when I drop a utensil on the counter, the nice, solid kerplunk is music to my ears. 🍴

*Terry Kotas and his wife, Heidi, began sailing in 1978. After building their first boat from a bare hull, the family set sail for the South Pacific. They are currently enjoying the Sea of Cortez aboard Cetus with their cat, Rosie, while planning their next adventure. Terry has written three humorous sailing adventure novels, and the latest, Adventures Off the Beaten Path, is now available at all major booksellers.*

Clockwise from top left, spreading contact cement is not one of the author's favorite jobs.

Tin snips proved to be the easiest tool to cut the new laminate.

The pesky silicone was applied with a syringe for better control.

A simple fix and a fresh new look for *Cetus'* galley.





# A Queen in a Sailor's Dream

*The late Gordon Lightfoot's '70s-era Ericson gets a proper rig and hull refit.*

BY MARC CARRAWAY

**T**he calls, emails, and texts started coming in to my wife, Lisa, and me on the evening of May 1. “I was so sorry to hear,” “I hope you’re OK,” and, “It must be sad for you.”

It was as though we had lost a family member. But the messages were condolences for someone who, although we had known about him for many years, we had only met once for about 20 minutes. The great Canadian singer-songwriter Gordon Lightfoot, known for *If You Could Read My Mind*, *The*

*Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, *Carefree Highway*, and his biggest hit, *Sundown*, had passed away at the age of 84. Lightfoot was also the original owner of our 1976 Ericson 39B, *Sundown*, and was an early influence on my own musical career, hence the condolences on his passing.

*Sundown* came into our lives in the aftermath of Hurricane Isabel in 2003. We had hurried down to our marina on the Potomac River to check on our Bristol 28, which survived the storm unscathed, unlike

many boats around her. We ran into Simon, then the owner of *Sundown*, and over dinner, he let us know that he was planning to sell the boat. We weren’t looking for another boat at the time, but we decided then and there that *Sundown* would be our retirement boat — so we bought her 20 years before we planned to retire.

A couple of years after buying *Sundown*, my band partner John and his wife, Marty, took Lisa and me to see Gordon Lightfoot in concert

at Wolf Trap in Northern Virginia. Our wives used a picture of the boat to talk our way backstage after the show, and Lightfoot came out of the dressing room area saying, “I want to see the people with the boat!” We talked about music and sailing, and about changes to *Sundown* since he had owned her. A longtime sailor and racing enthusiast on the Great Lakes, Lightfoot described how he’d had a custom wooden sloop built in Ontario and so had eventually sold *Sundown*. He was energetic and engaging, even after a several-hour show, and we thoroughly enjoyed the encounter.

We had been able to afford the boat because she had a host of issues that needed attention. Over the next several years, we repowered her with a factory-rebuilt Perkins 4-108, cleaned up wiring and plumbing issues, and rebuilt the mast step and steering assembly, all while sailing her extensively up and down the Chesapeake Bay. What we were *not* able to do in that time, however, was give any serious attention to the aesthetic issues — in particular, her fading, crazing hull paint and peeling graphics, which had been designed by



*Sundown* sails hard over in 2012, showing the original boot stripe graphic.



Lightfoot. That would have to wait until retirement.

The other big issue we faced was the fact that Lightfoot had the 57-foot mast filled with urethane foam to deaden the sound of slapping halyards (see more of the story on that at [www.lightfoot.ca/goldgoos.htm](http://www.lightfoot.ca/goldgoos.htm)).

This made it impossible to rewire the mast and had trapped moisture inside the stick. We had monitored some corrosion spots for years, but the mast needed a full inspection, rewiring, and

repainting of the original white with red stripe design. When I eventually retired this past year, I made plans to haul the boat and pull the mast over the winter, and got started on a project that threatened to overwhelm me at times.

The mast was the first thing on my agenda when

the boat was hauled out in November 2022. We laid her up on sawhorses and I started to chip away at the foam inside with a hand scraper on an extended paint pole. The foam was friable and relatively easy to break up in the center, but the edges had melted and

the corrosion was clustered. I managed to get an inspection camera down the mast and saw that other than a couple of pinhole spots, there was no additional visible corrosion inside. The exterior corrosion was more from paint bubbles than structural issues. To my

**The author (with guitar) and bandmates perform on the dock in front of *Sundown* before the restoration.**

## Lightfoot came out saying, “I want to see the people with the boat!”

hardened into a sharp-edged wall against the aluminum interior of the mast. I was able to break this up a bit at a time, but caught a lot of long, ragged splinters — even through work gloves — in the process.

Eventually, I was able to fully clear the top 10 feet of the mast, which was where

great relief, the mast was still solid.

The next steps for reaming out the mast got more difficult, as the angle of the scraping tool made it impossible to get all of the foam as I went farther. I tried a couple of other tools but was having little luck progressing beyond

the initial 10 feet. At that point, our marina owner offered the use of an industrial plumbing snake. With 100

feet of snake and a variety of cutting heads, I was able to work through more of the foam, getting around 20 feet in from each end, but the snake would twist and bog down at that point. My goal of working all the way through

the mast was beginning to look like mission impossible.

After considering various options, I decided to continue digging through the mast using PVC pipe. I joined 60 feet of 1 1/2-inch PVC pipe and cut a slant on one end as a digging tool. With the help of my sailing friend Mark, I was





eventually able to punch all the way through around the end of January. I ran fish tape down the newly excavated tunnel so we could pull new VHF cable and wiring through the length of the mast, and we celebrated the first success of the winter's work with a well-deserved beer.

We next taped, sanded, primed, and rolled and tipped the mast with Pettit urethane paint. Keeping the original red stripe on the white mast presented some serious taping challenges, but after three coats of each color, I was happy to see a gleaming red and white mast emerge. I also painted the spreaders and ran the new wiring for the VHF, anchor light, steaming light, and deck lights.

In addition to repainting, the rig on *Sundown* was also way overdue for replacement. Our rigger, Keith, who had installed our roller furler a few years earlier, got the new rig to me and I installed it, set the spreaders, put on new spreader boots, and prepared everything for stepping. The mast was ready to go.

In February, I began to turn my attention to the tired hull. The first step was to remove the old scraped and cracked paint and prep for new painting. I held my breath as I put the random orbital sander to the hull for the first time, and was rewarded with

the emergence of a smooth, clean undercoat, one square inch at a time. I spent the next two weeks sanding for hours upon hours, again with help from Mark, who eventually burned his own sander out on the task. The undercoat was in much better shape than I had anticipated, and its many dings and scratches disappeared as we sanded. Only a couple of gouges had reached the gelcoat. After those were faired, the hull was clean and ready for painting by the end of March.

Before the hull could be painted, however, I needed to repaint the trademark Ericson gunwale stripe. Taping was critical in all of the painting steps, and each session meant at least an hour of taping around the hull before painting. I used the same red Pettit urethane for the stripe that I had used for the mast to ensure a good match of color and appearance. After three coats on the gunwale stripe, I was ready to begin taping for the hull paint.

I had envisioned a roll-and-tip paint for the hull, with Pettit urethane or Awlgrip on my list of possible options. But Jimmy at the boatyard recommended Alexseal for hand painting. With the proper additives and careful prep, the paint goes on with a 4-inch foam roller and then spreads out without tipping.

Friends expressed concern that it would take forever to paint a 39-foot boat with a 4-inch roller, but once the taping was complete, I could get around the entire hull, without rushing, in about 45 minutes. I had multiple weather delays, primarily from excessively windy spring days and lots of pollen in the air, but we eventually hit a run of days that were still, dry, and warm enough to paint.

The Alexseal was very easy to work with, as long as we followed the mixing instructions. Jimmy suggested a minimum of three coats of primer before applying the final hull paint. My goal for the first two coats of primer was to be able to apply the second coat within three hours so I wouldn't need to sand

between coats, but the wind and weather kicked up again. The primer was easy to sand, however, and I was able to get the boat hand sanded and wiped within about 40 minutes.

Once the primer had fully cured, which took about two days in the mid-70s with low humidity, I was ready to start on the hull paint. Just as with the primer, two coats could be applied in a three-hour window without the need for sanding. I got the first two coats on in a day and gave them a couple of days to cure

Top left, *Sundown's* hull before the restoration had lots of wear and tear.

Above, removing the old paint and graphics was a long, slow process.

At right, the mast and boom showed signs of corrosion on the outside, leading to fears of internal corrosion as well.







before sanding and applying the third coat. A couple of days later, I sanded and taped again, then applied the final two coats in an afternoon. After the last coat, I stepped back and realized that I had met my goal of bringing this tired old boat back to life ... so far.

Another major issue in restoring the boat was remaining true to the original graphics designed by Lightfoot, which featured the boat name cut out of the red boot stripe. We ran into some problems because of the way the boot stripe curved

under the stern. Few of the local graphics companies felt comfortable trying to replicate that curve and the cutout letters, and those that did quoted me prices that were way out of my budget. After a lot of thought, I decided to paint the boot stripe myself and have solid lettering placed in a gap that I would leave amidships.

Painting the boot stripe was in many ways the most intense part of the painting effort. My taping had to be perfect, as did the spacing I would leave for the lettering

that would be applied by Kilmarnock Lettering Company. One challenge was that the boot stripe flared from 5 ½ inches for most of the hull length to 11 inches wide where it curved under the stern. I had to guesstimate where and how much that flare expanded as the stripe progressed toward the stern and tape accordingly. I started on the port side, and as you can imagine, the process began with a lot of trial and error.

When I was satisfied with the outline of the stripe, I then had to measure every

inch from where the stripe began to flare to where it reached the middle under the stern — and then recreate the starboard stripe to meet those measurements. I also had to get the distance and the slant of the gap where the side lettering would go exactly right. By this time, I had the finished lettering in hand on transfer sheets and could use them to help guide taping for the gaps. The process of taping, measuring, retaping, eyeballing, and retaping yet again took an entire day.

The next day, I held my breath and began to paint the boot stripe with the same Pettit two-part urethane used on the mast and the gunwale stripe. I planned to do two coats and retape in between, but the stripe looked so good when I pulled the tape off after the first coat that I decided to stop there. A few days later, Roxy from Kilmarnock Lettering applied the side lettering and the boat name on the stern. After surveying her work, I breathed a sigh



Top left, **taping was one of the most time-consuming tasks of the entire project.**

Above, **Roxy applies the name in the gap left on the boot stripe.**

At left, **with the painting and graphics complete, Sundown is ready to go back into the water.**



of relief. While not an exact restoration of the original graphics package, the new stripe and lettering held true to the overall look of its design. *Sundown* was good to go.

Or so I thought. When I asked the yard about stepping the mast, I was told that their usual crane operator, who had pulled the mast in November, was not available because the crane was down for repair. Many phone calls to local companies did not produce any affordable results, and it looked like *Sundown* would be mastless and stuck on the hard for the foreseeable future.

Fortunately, a marina friend who had pulled the mast of his Bavaria the previous year steered me to the local crane operator he had used. I was a little leery, as this was only a 50-foot crane and I had a 57-foot mast, but after discussing the logistics for attaching the crane just above the midpoint of the mast, I decided to give it a shot. I shouldn't have been concerned. The operator manipulated the controls of that crane like Chopin played a piano, and other than having to clean up a pile of urethane fragments that spilled out of the mast through the cabin top and onto the step, things went more smoothly than I could have hoped for.

Once the mast was up and the boat back in the slip, Keith came back to tune the rig. He completed that quickly, then it was time to run up the new genoa that Evolution Sails had made over the winter. It fit perfectly, and its sun band gleamed a bright red to match the new paint on the hull and the mast.

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*Sundown* heads up the Potomac River with the bit in her teeth and the hull graphics on display.

We still have a lot to do, with the topside needing new paint in the near future and many other projects still on the list. But for now, we are happy that *Sundown's* hull and mast have been restored and are shining brightly. We have been told already by many passing boaters that, "She looks like new!"

I like to think Gordon Lightfoot would have been pleased to see his old boat rejuvenated, and the gleaming new paint on the hull makes me think of a line from his famous song: "She's been looking like a queen in a sailor's dream ..."

In this sailor's dream, she certainly does look like a queen. 🍷

*Marc Carraway is a lifelong sailor, a former high school principal, and a longtime professional musician who has sailed all over the Chesapeake Bay and in the Mediterranean. He and his wife, Lisa, live in Urbanna, Virginia, and sail their Ericson 39B, Sundown, with their dog, Stella, in between gigs with his band, Scuffletown.*



# Sink-Up

## *Upgrading a galley sink with an unconventional but practical alternative*

BY ASHLEY GREMEL

It's often said that the galley is the heart of a vessel — making the galley sink the central artery that carries water in and out of the boat and supports the endless flow of dishes, cups of coffee, and pots of grains.

When Covid-19 lockdowns went into effect, I was living aboard my Pearson 365 sloop *Azimuth* with my partner, Scott Racette, in Alameda, California. We had spent the previous five years living aboard around San Francisco Bay, but the boat had been more of a crash pad during the week as we spread our time between office jobs, outings with friends, racing on other people's boats, and other "third spaces" like the gym. We often yearned for more time on the boat to sail, relax,

and address the ever-present project list. Suddenly we had it in spades.

The start of the stay-at-home order held plenty of uncertainty and concern, so we leaned into what was right in front of us. Lingering projects were crossed off the list in quick succession as we more easily paired time and effort with materials and skills. We lightened the mood with a daily tea time before heading back to the V-berth and navigation desk for our Zoom calls and other office work.

The dishes seemed to continually pile up in our 9-inch sink. We were eating every meal on board and it seemed like dirty cups, plates, and bowls were self-generating while our backs were turned. Washing the dishes was our least

favorite chore, and we seemed to be washing them constantly.

During this time, the saying "creativity loves constraint" became a constant refrain to keep us looking on the bright side of things when so much normalcy was cast aside. We put on our thinking caps and turned to the U-shaped galley to reimagine it.

One of our first projects on board had been installing an Ikea drying rack in the space underneath the companionway stairs and over the engine. But we discovered that the increased frequency of washing dishes was allowing fresh water to drip from the drying rack, through the hinges, and onto the engine. A new location was needed, unless we wanted to

add drying dishes to our routine as well.

Both corners of *Azimuth's* galley are difficult to fully reach from my 5-foot 1-inch frame, and the aft corner was particularly persnickety. It housed a top-opening cabinet that had a tendency to collect water runoff from the sink. We often used the counter space on top of this cabinet, so items stored



The original galley layout of the Pearson 365 included a small, 9-inch sink and adjacent deep storage cabinet.





At left, **Scott marks the cut and drill locations for the new faucet.**

Below, a **jigsaw came in handy for cutting the countertop open to fit the dimensions of the new sink.**



there were infrequently used and mostly relics from when we lived on land and had larger kitchens. During one of the countless brainstorming sessions about optimizing our vessel, it occurred to me that we could turn the entire aft end of the galley into one big sink.

Measuring ensued. Then I turned to the internet to find a stainless steel sink, slightly deeper and wider than our existing sink and about five times longer. We landed on a 42-inch-long sink from Overstock and arranged delivery to align with a week when we were house-sitting for a friend. We knew the installation would take over the cabin and were fortunate to have some extra space during that time.

Sourcing a new faucet was a little trickier than a simple Google search. The new sink's size left limited countertop space, and the faucet height was limited by the liner and cockpit bench above. We also wanted to switch to a faucet that had one knob with temperature controls, rather than two for hot and cold. I scoured the internet, but ultimately found one at a kitchen and bathroom supply house in Oakland. The Franke faucet had a steeper price tag than I'd hoped but seemed to be the only suitable option. I drove over to the plumbing supply store in East Oakland the next day, and the clerk said this was one of the first orders he'd seen from an individual, rather than a large condominium developer. Oh, the places we go for boat parts!

The installation was a fairly straightforward process, aside from the nerve-wracking feeling of cutting such a large hole in the boat. Removing some soft wood from years of small but steady water droplets was a relief, and we rehomed most of the items in that cupboard to friends or the free pile at the marina. After one touch-and-go moment, we finagled the sink into its final resting spot and caulked it into place. The faucet was also a simple upgrade, after widening the hole from the previous faucet and connecting the hot and cold lines.



The sink came with a sliding cutting board and strainer that we used to dry dishes. This gave us more usable countertop space and a larger area to do dishes, give our cat baths, and do laundry while cruising farther afield. The extra capacity also allows dishes to pile up a little bit more before the sink becomes unusable for other galley tasks.

As our plans to untie the dock lines and go cruising intensified, the extra space under the sink created by removing the leaky cabinet helped house a new compressor for the fridge and a 1,500-watt inverter. This reconfiguration completely reimagined the space while also providing more ease for meal prep and dishes. The larger capacity sink also allowed us to stow loose items when the going got tough out at sea.

While this type of sink was designed to be undermounted beneath granite or some other countertop surface and is somewhat unconventional in a sailboat's galley, we can confirm that it has held up after over 9,000 miles under *Azimuth's* keel. 🌊

At right, **drain hardware** for the new sink lined up nicely with the previous sink's drain plumbing.

Below, **the new sink, drying rack, and cutting board shine.**

*Ashley Gremel is a writer, maker, and problem solver. She recently completed a voyage from San Francisco to the Chesapeake Bay with her husband, Scott Racette, and their salty cat, Cypress. The trio is settling down in Richmond, Virginia, and dreaming of the next cruise. Ashley writes weekly at [cloudsformoverland.substack.com](http://cloudsformoverland.substack.com).*





# Level Down

## *Creating usable storage in a deep galley locker*

BY NICA WATERS

“Got it.” I wiggled out backward from my shoulder-down position inside the locker, clutching a bag of blueberry muffin mix.

I found my footing, righted myself, and surveyed the mess of displaced items that would need to be put away before the baking project could begin. Such is life on a small boat, right? I sighed and started stashing. These muffins had better be worth it.

*Calypso's* original galley had a locker that we called the pantry. This vertical space,

outboard of the engine and aft of the sink, was where we stored provisions that didn't seem to go anywhere else — long-term supplies, daily use items, baking supplies, bread and cereal, snacks and crackers. The only access was from the top; that the locker went all the way down to where it intersected with the hull meant a lot of upending of contents to get to what I needed on a very regular basis. Containers for organization helped only marginally. The biggest issue was the depth.

Deep lockers are both the joy and the curse of life on board. The joy of good secure storage is not to be underestimated. The curse of having to unload every single item to reach what's at the bottom? That's also not to be underestimated. And let's not forget the need to basically do a headstand to get into the bowels of a deep locker.

Our recent refit of our 1976 Bristol Channel Cutter, *Calypso*, involved taking the galley down to the bare hull. The biggest obvious changes, other than the new counter,

involved moving the fridge, installing a new sink, and designing better outboard storage above the counter. All of these changes have made life aboard notably better — but the most ingenious, hidden upgrade was putting a shelf inside the pantry.

Keeping the pantry was never in question. Having a place within the galley to store items like bread and open bags of crackers is great. Unlike the settee lockers, you don't need to move a cushion to get into the pantry. But how to make that space more usable was important too.

Moving the fridge, which previously occupied much of the available space along the aft outboard section of the galley, opened up a sizable cavity for the pantry. More space, though, isn't beneficial if it is just a yawning orifice to be filled with easily lost critical stuff. Add to that the fact that the hull curves, so there's almost no flat surface on which to place items. What to do?

It was this hull curvature conundrum that got us



At left, *Calypso's* original galley, with the outboard storage dismantled.





At left, the new pantry space was so large that the author's husband, Jeremy, could sit inside.

Below left, larger items placed on top of the new hatch can be easily removed for access below.

Below, the size of the new hatch had to be just right, and a finger hole makes opening the hatch simple.

small enough that the entire shelf does not have to be emptied to get to it.

After we hit on this idea, we took some time to figure out the ideal height for the top level. At first we just eyeballed. Eight inches? Twelve?

envisioning a flat floor of sorts within the locker. The need to access the copious storage space below that floor led us to the hatch access solution. The result is a two-story

locker that is much easier to keep organized and offers incredible utility. Deep stores and seldom-used appliances go in the lower section, while daily use items including

containers of rice and granola, coffee paraphernalia, and snacks live on top. Our new bread machine even fits on the flat floor! The access lid is large enough to be useful but

Making it too deep would almost defeat the purpose, while a too-shallow space would render it useless. Our granola container, a repurposed 10-inch tall peanut butter





pretzel plastic jar, became our litmus test.

Once we decided on the height, we added an extra half-inch to ensure clearance on any tabbing on the underside of the counter. The floor sits 11.5 inches below the countertop. Jeremy installed tabbing made from pieces of 1- by 2-inch fir along the hull and the bulkhead, making sure there was

good support on all sides. He created a template using shim material and hot glue, then used ½-inch medium density overlay (MDO) plywood (sign plywood, not to be confused with particle board MDF) to make the flat surface. After a test fit, he removed it to more easily create the access lid.

How did we decide on the size of the access? It needed to be large enough to easily stow a 5-pound bag of flour, going in at any orientation, so that was the minimum aperture. We wound up with an opening that's 12 by 13 inches and situated in such a way that I can reach directly down into the locker without having

to lean over any part of the counter.

Tabbing on all four sides on the underside of the floor created a lip that the lid sits on, and the lid has a finger hole for easy removal. There is no locking mechanism, though I think if you wanted that you could install some kind of latch system like many locker doors have. A top lock would mean the whole level isn't flat.

I use the pantry (and thank Jeremy for the brilliant, simple innovation) every single day. There's a single layer of containers on the flat surface, at just the right level for me to reach what I need without

having to contort into small spaces. When I need to access the deeper stores, it's a simple matter to remove the couple of containers to get at the access hatch, and from there I can do my swan dive down to retrieve the bigger bulk item I'm after.

Recently — years after my blueberry muffin mix deep dive — I spied a bag of mix in the baking box when I was getting out the coffee grinder. Jeremy's enthusiastic, "Yes!" had me back in the pantry, reaching for the mixing bowls and baking cups that are stored on that false floor — no dumpster diving required. Ah, sweet relief.

**After a huge galley upgrade, Calypso has more functional storage and pantry space.**

The major changes in the galley are visible to anyone who looks. A before and after shot is fairly revealing. One of the biggest upgrades, though, has nothing to do with looks and everything to do with usability. 🍵

*Nica Waters and her husband, Jeremy, own not one, but two, Bristol Channel Cutters. They're currently finishing up a refit on the second one, Mischief, and will be cruising her in the Bahamas for the winter 2023-2024 season.*



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# Rudder Emergency

*On an ill-fated voyage home, a young family learns lessons in seamanship and community spirit.*

BY BERT VERMEER

All sailors start somewhere. As a teenager, I was infatuated with stories in *National Geographic* in the late 1960s of young Robin Lee Graham sailing singlehanded around the world in his tiny boat. I found building plans in *Popular Mechanics* and constructed a sailing dinghy out of cedar ribs and plywood. Like many, I taught myself to sail, reading about the fundamentals in magazines and books. Practical knowledge came from dodging oceangoing ships and tugboats in the Fraser River just south of Vancouver, British Columbia.

I was hooked, dreaming grandiose plans of a sailing future. Then life got in the way. Starting a family and career left very little time for recreation. Sailing took a distant back seat but was always there, waiting to return.

Years went by and eventually I convinced my wife, Carey, that a boat was in our family's future. As a young mother, she was nervous on a commercial ferry, let alone a tiny sailboat. But she also thought anything would be better than the 2 a.m. visit to a campground outhouse. We began to explore possibilities.

The average cruising boat of the 1970s was exemplified by the ubiquitous Catalina 27 or more luxurious Catalina 30. But with a very limited budget, even the decadence of a Catalina 27 was far beyond our reach. Instead, we found a robin's egg blue Balboa 20 sitting on a trailer in a yard with a faded "For Sale" sign taped to the bow. With sitting headroom in a cozy cabin, a portable toilet hidden under the V-berth, and a pressurized

kerosene countertop stove, this was something we could afford.

The little boat wintered in our yard on its trailer, swing keel tucked up under her belly, while I tried to figure out how the mast was going to go up. We were brand new to sailing boats of this size and had no practical knowledge, but the promise of the great unknown was so tantalizing. Our budget didn't allow for electronic navigational aids, and no sounder or knotmeter, or

even a VHF radio, graced the little boat. But we were set for weekend cruising adventures in the Canadian Gulf Islands.

On a mid-July day in 1980, we sailed from our home port in Ladner. It was 10 miles to the Sand Heads Lighthouse at the mouth of the mighty Fraser River and then 12 miles across the Strait of Georgia to Porlier Pass between Galiano and Valdes islands, one of the gateways to the Gulf Islands. This wasn't our first sail across these open waters and we were feeling quite comfortable — experienced, even.

After a few days of cruising the fabled islands in brilliant sunshine and light winds, it was time to head back home. Although we usually anchored in quiet bays, we decided our last night in the islands was going to be spent in our first "destination marina" — the friendly Telegraph Harbour Marina on Thetis Island. Being young and new to boating, we were somewhat shy about mixing it up with big boat owners, our little blue boat almost invisible among the collection of white fiberglass. We had a great time, enjoying the grounds of the facilities, the ice cream in the cafe, and the extremely helpful and informative staff. Dinner was on the hibachi in the sunny cockpit. This kind of cruising was new to us, and we loved it.

The morning of our homeward passage dawned like all



The Balboa 20 at anchor the day before the rudder failed, with young Nicky in the foreground.





At left, anchored at Tent Island, the family was blissfully unaware of the problems ahead.

Below, Bert works to repair his broken rudder on the dock at friendly Telegraph Harbour Marina.

the previous mornings, bright and sunny, with a light westerly breeze rippling the water. With dividers and parallel rulers, I calculated a course across the exposed waters of the strait back to the mouth of the Fraser River. With a westerly breeze, it would be perfect for crossing. The current prediction at Porlier Pass called for a midmorning departure to catch the slack turning to flood. We untied the dock lines and were soon underway. I thought it curious that although many boaters were up and about, no one seemed in a hurry to leave.

Our trusty Chrysler outboard powered us through a narrow dredged channel between Thetis and Kuper (later renamed Penelakut) islands toward Porlier Pass a few miles away. We hoisted the mainsail as the westerly filled in, and the noisy Chrysler was banished to silence on the stern. The hanked-on jib soon followed as we sailed through Porlier at slack and out onto the strait. It looked like it would be a promising sail, far better than powering all the way home.

Stretching away from land into open water, the seas started getting boisterous and the breeze freshened, with whitecaps dotting the water

ahead. On any given summer day, this area of Porlier Pass would see a plethora of aluminum car-toppers fishing nearby. But there was not another boat in sight. And it was a perfect day! The skies were blue and the sun was warm, with only a few low clouds to the west. On we sailed, full of confidence, the wind rising perceptibly.

Although the Balboa had a pulpit at the bow, there was no pushpit and no lifelines. In an abundance of caution, Carey took our 6-year-old daughter, Nicky, below. I figured it was more for her own peace of mind, since

she was not a comfortable sailor. I was having a blast. The *Titanic*-style life jackets were on and I was confident in reaching across to the Sand Heads Lighthouse 12 miles away. I couldn't see the beacon yet, but I recognized the background mountains on the horizon and knew where it should be. All was well as we started to surf down some of the larger waves.

Suddenly, as we swooped down a wave, the rudder failed to respond. I glanced back at the transom to see the bottom half of the rudder trailing on the surface. Yikes! A quick peek over the stern showed

that the fiberglass skin on one side of the rudder had failed, with the skin on the opposite side just barely hanging on. The little boat slid to leeward and the boom slammed over in a jibe. We were out of control. I released the jibsheet and mainsheet, scrambling forward to lower the mainsail and shouting down to the cabin for sail ties. A few frantic moments ensued as I hung onto the boom, the boat rocking viciously in the seas, while fighting the flapping main down.

I looked back to see Carey gripping the edges of the companionway, fear in her eyes. The struggle left me a bit short of breath, but the main was finally lashed to the boom. Now for the jib. With the boat spinning out of control, I had to judge when to leap to the halyard cleated on the mast, as the clew and sheets thrashed violently against





The author and his wife, Carey, relax in the cockpit after the storm, with the repaired rudder ready to go again.

the mast. With cold spray whipping across the foredeck, I crawled forward on the heaving deck to haul the sail down, jamming it into the pulpit and using the sheets to tie it down. Thoroughly soaked, I crawled back into the cockpit to find a white-faced Carey hanging on tight. I gave her a reassuring

smile, which was far from what I felt. We were in trouble.

Glancing around, I took stock of our situation. The boat was still afloat, with no water inside, and aside from being very uncomfortable in the rolling seas, we were not in immediate peril. But the rudder was useless, and there was no

way to repair it with the tools we had on board. The relative safety of sheltered water was at least 2 miles behind us to windward. But by now, the current in the pass would have turned against us. Did we have enough boat speed to beat the flowing water if we got back there? I had no thought of continuing

across the open water — we had to get back to the calmer waters in the lee of the islands. Without another boat in sight to provide assistance, it was up to us to get there.

Using a butter knife, I straightened the cotter pin holding the rudder onto the stern and dragged the fractured rudder onto the cockpit floor. It wasn't going to do me any good flopping about on the surface. Lowering our trusty outboard into the water, I began pulling, and it started on the second try. Leaning over the stern, I was able to pivot the motor and regain some directional control. Against the rising wind and building seas, we started powering back toward Porlier Pass at an agonizingly slow speed. The clouds that had been near the horizon were now almost upon us and the sun was hidden behind the ominous darkness.

Carey and Nicky stayed below, and I slid the hatch closed to keep the spray out. Every once in a while I'd see Carey's head pop up, checking to see if I was still there and all right. I would give her a smile, letting her know everything was under control. And it was. Uncomfortable, but under control. What seemed like hours passed as I leaned over the stern with one arm on the outboard. The salt spray was icy and the air temperature dropped rapidly as the cold front rolled over us. I was so pumped with adrenaline that I didn't notice the cold, but my arm and body were starting to shake. Hypothermia was becoming a concern.

As the waves finally subsided on the approach to Porlier Pass, I could relax a bit. Feeling a little more





The Balboa 20 on her trailer, ready for new adventures.

confident, Carey came back on deck. Nicky stayed below, standing in the companionway for safety. Playing the back eddies near shore, I throttled up to maximum speed to slowly inch our way against the now-adverse current in the pass. Years of dinghy sailing in the currents of the Fraser River paid off in identifying where the back eddies were likely to be. But where to go now? We would need to get the rudder repaired before we could head home, but we both had jobs to get back to and Nicky had school. Worst-case scenario, we would leave the boat somewhere and take a ferry home. We agreed to head back to Telegraph Harbour Marina, the nearest facility where we could potentially get assistance with the rudder.

The threatening skies were now fully upon us, rain spitting down with a promise of more to come, the wind still rising. We motored back into the marina and tied up at the spot we had left not long ago just as torrential rain started sheeting down horizontally, the surrounding flags and burgees snapping in the gusting wind. Soaked to the skin, I crawled into the tiny cabin and closed the hatch. We were safe! Time to get into

something dry and warm up some hot chocolate.

The rain didn't last long, and within an hour the skies were sunny again, the winds a whisper. We opened the hatches and put our wet clothing on deck to dry. Boaters on the docks, surprised to see us back, listened to our tale in horror. A crowd gathered. The gale-force front had been forecast, but without a VHF or even an AM/FM radio, we had not heard the warnings. Fellow boaters were oblivious to our plans to cross the Strait of Georgia and certainly would have warned us had they known.

Word of the broken rudder quickly spread. Boaters came from along the docks with saws, drills, and a large variety of nuts and bolts. The marina operators donated the plywood we needed to build splints on both sides of the rudder. I discovered that the fiberglass skin on one side had fractured just below the lower pintle and the foam core had broken, with only the fiberglass skin on the opposite side holding the top and bottom together. I was astonished that the thin skin held it together at all.

Before long, we had bolted on the plywood and

reconnected the top and bottom halves of the rudder. After mounting the repaired assembly back onto the stern, we had a working sailboat again. Since the gale warnings had been extended through the day, we prudently elected to stay another night. Fortunately, we always left a buffer day at the end of any sailing adventure to ensure we would not miss a day of work or school.

We found a close-knit boating community on the docks with a wealth of experience and knowledge that everyone was willing to share. We made new friends, toured boats, and shared drinks on a most interesting afternoon. Carey was fascinated with the powerboats. Not that she needed it, but I reminded her of our budget and that the cost of operating such boats was out of the question. Still, she could dream.

The following morning dawned clear and bright, with a forecast of light winds. One of our new boating friends offered to escort us back across the Salish Sea to our marina, an offer we couldn't refuse. As luck would have it, the return across the open expanse of water was anticlimactic. We motored over a

glassy sea with not a breath of wind, the jury-rigged rudder holding up just fine.

At home, I fabricated a replacement rudder out of marine grade plywood enclosed in fiberglass. It was identical to the factory model and probably twice as strong. Our family continued sailing that little boat for the rest of that summer. We were hooked on the sailing life. Though still not an avid sailor, Carey loved the social aspect of sailing and would tolerate the sailing part. We moved up to an O'Day 25 the following year, and then eventually to our first Islander Bahama 30.

Although we are far more experienced now and much more comfortable on a 30-foot boat, that first year on the Balboa 20, with its sense of exploration, still holds a special place in our memories. We learned to be prepared and self-sufficient, and discovered that in a crisis on the water, everyone is willing to help. We have returned the assistance many times over the years.

As sailors, we all have to start somewhere. And Telegraph Harbour Marina, a reflection of that remarkable afternoon, is still one of our favorite marina destinations today. 🌊

*Bert Vermeer and his wife, Carey, live in a sailor's paradise. They have been sailing the coast of British Columbia for more than 40 years. Natasha, an Islander Bahama 30, is their fourth boat (following a Balboa 20, an O'Day 25, and another Islander Bahama 30). Bert tends to rebuild his boats from the keel up. Now, as a retired police officer, he also maintains and repairs boats for several nonresident owners.*

*Continued from page 5*

At right, Susan Gateley's Com-Pac 23 prior to their big project to convert it to a solar-powered launch.

Below, the new setup is better equipped to take on the New York state canal system.

Karen Larson invited me to send her material, and I subsequently bombarded her with queries and essays, at least a dozen of which made it into the magazine. It was great fun to feature our fleet of good old boats over a 20-year period.

I had just gotten married, and between the two of us, we had accumulated a motley collection — the DIY dinghy built on the kitchen table, a 50-year-old homebuilt Crosby Osprey and her ancient Universal Blue Jacket Twin engine, two Chris-Craft sailboats we collectively owned, and finally, the culmination boat, a 47-foot wooden gaffer.

The massive rebuild of sorts that she underwent, along with changes in the local DIY boatyard ownership, helped tip us over the edge. Now fast approaching our 70s, we downsized to a trailerable sailboat with a hand-raised mast and backyard storage. This prompts my letter.

Like the Maine man who suggested you expand *Good Old Boat's* coverage to

powered cruisers, I'm offering another take to consider. This past spring, we did a serious hack of our Com-Pac 23 to create a convertible power/sail combo. Thanks to the proximity of several small lakes and the New York state canal system, we have waterways suitable for slow, small, low-powered motorboats. Our hack converted the sailboat to a solar-powered launch, but it's fully reversible.

After 10 days and 280 miles under sun power last month on the canal system, we returned *Tringa* to her mooring with panels removed and her mast reinstalled

to once again sail the wide waters of Lake Ontario. As my husband says, we are still solar, but now in "convective" mode.

Our convertible cruising was made possible by a previous electrification of the Com-Pac's auxiliary. John Vigor explains the motive for this far better than I ever could in his piece "Motor Mischief," in the July/August 2023 issue. After posting on Facebook about our sun-powered canal cruise, I heard from a Catalina 22 owner who was converting his trailerable to sun power. I wonder how many other hybrid dual-use solar/mini trawler/sailboat combos are out there? Maybe three?

— Susan Gateley  
Little Sodus Bay, New York



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Jimder40@Gmail.com

**Grampian 30**

1974 classic sloop for sale by owner. In excellent condition. A "lot of boat for the money," according to *Cruising World*. A good cruising boat, sleeps 6 with quarter berth, 6'4" headroom, two-burner propane stove, bow and stern pulpits with lifelines, twin track roller furling with genoa, refurbished main, tiller pilot self-steering, depth sounder, GPS, magnetic compass, Atomic 4 gas engine. North Channel Yacht Club in Spragge, Ontario. Includes cradle and mooring at the club. Spragge, ON. \$7,500.

**Aubrey Millard**  
647-985-1949, 705-849-3836  
svveledaiv@hotmail.com

**Hinckley Pilot 35**

1969. Sparkman & Stephens design. A classic beauty! Hinckley quality. Recent repower with Beta 30 diesel. Anacortes, WA. \$85,000.

**John Rose**  
206-484-0400  
johnmcbrose@gmail.com

**Catalina 30**

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**Jerry Noland**  
507-391-3244  
jerry@sailingsummersnow.us

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**Aubrey Millard**  
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svveledaiv@hotmail.com

**Pearson Invicta II 38**

1967. Truly a good old boat, set up for cruising. Equipped with a staggering amount of both operational and quality-of-life upgrades, *Saltine* has the function and comfort needed for just about any sailing adventure. She is ready for her next owners. Deal includes a 10' Caribe tender, box trailer (for extra gear), and boat stands. For the discerning boat buyer, this Pearson Invicta is it. Superior, WI. \$47,500. For more information/photos: <https://barkers-island-marina.com/yacht-details/?boatID=8917074>

**John Hoenig**  
715-392-7131  
bimyachts@gmail.com

**Sabre 32**

1984. Selling my father's sailboat. He's not using it anymore. Only 2 or 3 sails per season for the last 5 years. Yard-maintained (records back to 2004). Engine new in 2005. New Raymarine Tridata in 2023. No radar or GPS. Well cared for and loved, but not used. Manchester, MA. \$25,000 OBO.

**Brad Moriarty**  
857-919-1049  
bmoriarty1@gmail.com

*Continued on next page*

## Boats for Sale

**Pearson 26 Weekender**

1976. Great daysailer, ex PHRF racer, heavy-duty gear, spinnaker-rigged. Lots of accessories. Incl LS outboard, car trailer, steel cradle. Plymouth, MN. Boat \$2,000. Dinghy \$250.

Michael Barnes

763-557-2962

granite55446@gmail.com

**C&C Landfall 35**

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Dean Hedstrom

651-490-0109

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# Aging Into an Old Boat

*After a lifetime of sailing, an ideal last boat creates enduring memories.*

BY BILL JACOBS

There are many resources for learning how to sail. It is a fascinating subject with so many things to learn. But as far as I know, there are not any resources on how to stop sailing. It is like falling off a cliff.

I was fortunate some 50-odd years ago when I was introduced to sailing by a much older sailor who owned what I thought was the most beautiful boat I had ever seen — a sleek, 27-foot varnished mahogany-hulled sailboat from Norway named *Tumlaren*. I never changed my opinion.

Henry had noticed my enthusiasm and offered to take me sailing on Lake Michigan every Saturday for a month. He was a purist with a passion for details and perfection in every way. From dropping the mooring to raising sails, trimming, reefing, steering, and finally putting the boat away, cleaned and completely ready to sail again, each step was equally essential for Henry.

That was the beginning of my owning, racing, cruising, maintaining, and enjoying every minute on the water. The journey began in a 15.5-foot varnished mahogany Snipe that my new wife, Sue, and I named *Mistral* and learned to sail on. Many other sailboats followed. When we sold what I thought would be our last boat, no sooner was the ink dry on the contract than I realized I was laid up and grounded. My boat ownership was seemingly over.

Fortunately, I had already embarked on the field of freelance marine journalism, regularly producing articles

and photography for a number of boating magazines including *Good Old Boat*. While on an assignment to write an article about a custom 49-foot wooden trawler, *Roseate*, I met her owners and builders, Pat and Charlie Ball. Since then we have become good friends.

About 17 years ago, Pat saw a wooden sailboat in a Sarasota bayou that was partially sunken, with pumps running to keep her afloat. Pat recognized her as *Baby Doll*, which was designed and built by local boatbuilder George Luzier in 1965. She's a 27-foot sloop built of strip-planked juniper and clear spruce for the varnished bird's mouth mast and boom. Her 12-hp engine was a rescue from an old Crosley. She has a keel-centerboard configuration to provide access to the thin waters of the coast of Southwest Florida.

Pat located the current owner and bought her as is, had her hauled, and took her to George's shop, located in a small industrial neighborhood in the shadow of the many

new luxury condo buildings in Sarasota. George was delighted to see her in his shop again.

Over the next year, Pat and George did a significant refit. But Pat was in the construction business and work was beyond plentiful, so the amount of time he could spend sailing her was limited. After nine years of ownership, he was considering putting her up for sale.

One day after lunch, Pat and I went down to the dock where *Baby Doll* was being kept. I was immediately struck by her simple but elegant lines. Words or even photographs can't do justice to this amazing boat. I expressed interest in the boat, and within a week's time Pat and I became 50/50 joint owners of *Baby Doll*.

Our new partnership was successful from the start, though I always thought I had the better end of the deal. Being retired, I was able to use the boat much more frequently than Pat. But he was still the proud owner of this classic yacht, without having total responsibility

for keeping her in Bristol condition.

After many years of new boat ownership, I took great pride in the day-to-day maintenance of *Baby Doll*. Over the next five years, I took many friends sailing on her and always took a photograph of their smiling faces at the helm under sail.

During that period, my wife had major surgery for severe back problems. As a result, most of my sailing on *Baby Doll* was singlehanded. Being alone, sailing on Sarasota Bay for a few hours is a quiet and serene experience. Sure, the old Palmer engine was cranky to start, and raising and lowering sails could be a chore on breezy days. But once under full sail, her hollow but stiff hull settled in the water, slicing the waves and creating an unmatched sound. The helm was nicely balanced, the warm westerly winds driving the boat in accordance with the hand on the helm. Sailing just can't ever be better!

The memories of those last five years of sailing reminded me of how fortunate I have been to have had over 50 years on the water, and they will stay with me forever. 🍃

*Bill Jacobs has spent over 50 years on the water racing sailboats and cruising the Great Lakes, Florida, and the East Coast. Writing and photographing maritime subjects have been an integral part of his life, and he has been a regular contributor to this and many other boating publications, sharing stories and images of his journey.*





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