The Smaller Boat Issue | Fatty Knees 8 *pg32* | Thistle Cruiser *pg36*

# Good Old Boat

*Inspiring hands-on sailors*

Issue 155: March/April 2024

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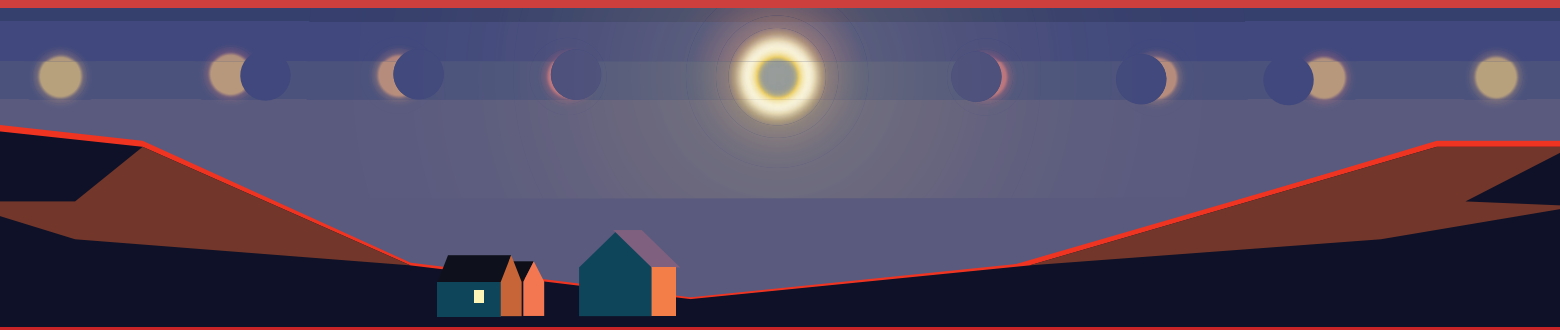

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# Good Old Boat

Issue 155: March/April 2024

## FEATURES



## DEPARTMENTS



**ON THE COVER**

John Kelsey and his partner Meesh sail their 1977 Downeast 38, *Shambhala*, from their home waters near Vancouver, British Columbia. They've tackled a big restoration to bring the boat back to life, and eagle-eyed readers might recognize *Shambhala* from the cover of the January/February 2024 issue of *Good Old Boat*.

GOOD OLD BOAT

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The sailing magazine for the rest of us.

# Contributing Boats

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

### *Transmogrifier*, 1979 Thistle (modified to a "ThistleCruiser")

"After I churned through a half dozen unsuitable boats, she's a keeper — sails great, stable, easy to manage, super shallow draft, and I get to sleep inside."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRITZ SEEGERS

**Designer**: Gordon K. "Sandy" Douglass
**Owners**: John Churchill
**Home Port**: Ocala, Florida
**Fun Fact**: Our trailer-sailing group had a capsize clinic attended by some celebrities of our tiny cosmos. J.F. Bedard of Bedard Yacht Design in Tarpon Springs, Florida, saw the ThistleCruiser sailing and inquired about her design. When I explained her origins, he said he had mistaken her for an unfamiliar production boat. Most people who see her admire her lines, which I suspect has to do with the cabin and window shape and proportion.

*Turning a derelict Thistle into a ThistleCruiser on page 36.*

### *Esmerelda*, 1987 Catalina 25

"*Esmerelda* has been a very comfortable, forgiving teacher as my first solo-owned and solo-sailed boat."

**Designer**: Gerry Douglas
**Owners**: Alison O'Leary
**Home Port**: Edgewood, Rhode Island
**Fun (or not so fun) Fact**: My dinghy got attacked by a shark off Newport, Rhode Island — and I have video!

*Fine Print Follies on page 44.*

### *Lugano*, 1977 Islander 32 MK II

"What's interesting to us is that the boat was home for a young couple back in 1978. Apparently they were docked in the Bahamas, and I'm currently trying to locate them so I can learn about some of the boat's early adventures." If you have any leads, please email *Good Old Boat* editor Andy Cross at andy@goodoldboat.com.

**Designer**: Robert Perry
**Owners**: Betty Mitchell and Brian Richardson
**Home Port**: Urbanna, Virginia
**Fun Fact**: We are 64, and this is our first sailboat and the first boat I (Brian) have ever sailed. Quite an adventure!

*Window Dressing on page 20.*

# View From Here

It is with great sadness that I inform you that this will be *Good Old Boat* magazine's final edition.

It has been an absolute pleasure to meet and work with so many wonderful and talented people in the sailing industry, and I wish we could continue for a couple more decades together on this awesome adventure. Unfortunately, due to the skyrocketing costs of paper, printing, and shipping, the publication is no longer sustainable. After analyzing alternative publishing options from every angle and trying to come up with a more tenable business plan, the result is the same. Even pivoting to a digital-only publication was thoroughly analyzed, yet this would merely be a temporary fix and would necessitate a substantial price increase to be viable. Without cutting a budget that can no longer be cut any further — and we're not about cutting corners — we will close this final chapter of *Good Old Boat* as the greatest sailing magazine ever.

Since its inception in 1998, *Good Old Boat* has always been a remote company. We have never had the overhead expenses of a corporate office because all employees and contractors work from home, whether on land or sea. *Good Old Boat* didn't have a website when the business started and didn't even accept credit cards initially. Email was still in its infancy when the company was launched, but the technology soon caught up to us, and we too transitioned in many ways to keep up with the innovations.

Managing a remote sailing magazine had its challenges at times. One of my greatest memories of the challenges of communication and figuring out the best way to pay a writer — prior to the smart phone and electronic payment transfer apps — was purchasing hunting and fishing tools in lieu of sending a check directly to the payee. One of our writers, Geoffrey Toye, who lived off the land and sea in Wales and didn't have internet or a phone, would call me by payphone on occasion to ask for the balance on his writing account. I kept track of his published articles and the balance we owed him. He didn't want me to send an American check to Wales and risk losing a large portion to bank fees.

Instead, he would arrange the purchase of an item manufactured in the United States and have me send that manufacturer the payment deducted from his writing account. I sent payment for a new crossbow on one occasion and a new diver's knife on another. That was exactly the type of challenge that this small business could accommodate. Now, it's so much easier with the countless payment applications available. Considering we have a lot of writers who sail full time and don't have a dedicated mailbox, we've managed to work around those details to make a virtual company function.

At *Good Old Boat*, we've always kept our business operations in-house. We handle all our subscription fulfillment and customer service ourselves, rather than outsourcing these duties to a possibly less-personable company. This has allowed me the opportunity to visit with many *Good Old Boat* readers over the years. I've enjoyed countless sailing stories, ranging from terrifyingly eye-opening and tragic to wonderfully adventuresome and gratifying. And I especially enjoy it when I get invited to join sailors on their sailboats in locations around the globe. Sailors truly are the kindest people in the world.

In keeping with this ethos, rather than sell your name and contact information to the highest bidder, only to be pitched a subscription to another magazine that you may not want, *Good Old Boat* has chosen to stay true to our always-standing safekeeping and privacy policy. We will not sell or give away your information. And to compensate you for issues remaining in your subscription, we will send you a download link to all 155 digital issues of *Good Old Boat*.

We're compiling all the digital back issues and will release them via email next month. If you're reading this, you will receive the full back issue digital download.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support over the past 26 years. You made it possible to create a sailing magazine for the rest of us. Publishing articles about the affordable sailing dream was our goal, and this truly was a niche magazine for the DIY sailor who made the dream of sailboat ownership a reality.

Thanks again for your support of this small business. By supporting *Good Old Boat* magazine, you also gave your support to a broader community of independent writers, editors, photographers, and artists — all of whom are like-minded sailors. It was truly a community that made this business thrive since 1998, and this community — our sailing community — has been extremely welcoming and understanding from the beginning to this final chapter.

Farewell,

**Karla Sandness**
Publisher, *Good Old Boat*

# Snowy Boats, Bronze Beauties, and Tartan Delight

## Snow Daze

In late November, my wife and I were driving from our home in North Carolina to our boat at a marina in Annapolis. It was our tradition to take a final sail each year on Thanksgiving weekend. As we approached Maryland, it was apparent it had snowed. It was dark as we arrived at the marina, but although the piers were covered with snow, they were well lit. We carefully walked the long pier to our slip, where our Pearson 33 was under about 6 inches of snow.

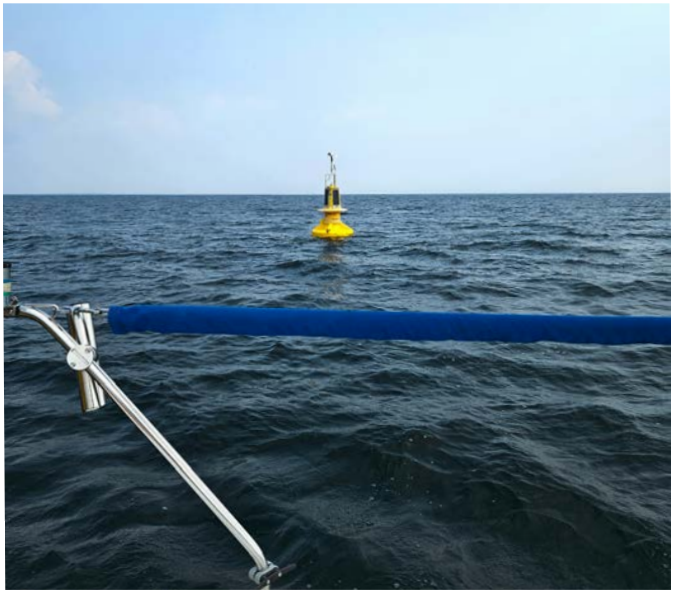
We carefully boarded the boat, handed over our duffle bags, swept snow from the cockpit with our gloved hands, and went below. I turned on the shorepower and a small electric heater, and filled and lit the alcohol stove. In about half an hour, the main cabin was becoming cozy. I expect our boat looked very much like the magazine cover on the January/February 2024 issue.

As we were settling in listening to a CD, the boat listed slightly to starboard, a sign someone had stepped on board. There was a knock on the side of the cabin and we opened the companionway. There was my son, who lived aboard another boat at a nearby marina.

"Hi Dad, just checking on you," he said, while handing down a small electric heater. We told him we already had one, but figured another would be useful. Satisfied that we were doing OK, my son left for his own boat.

I plugged in the second electric heater, then everything went dark — our boat and all the lights on the pier. We had apparently blown a fuse at the marina. I envisioned a difficult search and phone calls to find a marina employee.

I was completely dejected but put on my winter jacket, gloves, and hat, and with a flashlight, made my way back down the pier to search for a marina employee. Beside the pier gate was a large electrical circuit box. I'd passed it many times before but never noted it. I



**The Lake Simcoe, Ontario, weather buoy off the port side of *Katie Bird*, Shawn Glassford's 1986 Hunter 25.5. *Katie Bird* is homeported at the Hawkestone Yacht Club, just over an hour's drive north of Toronto. The club of 65 boats is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, and the weather buoy is a common landmark for members. It's a destination for a quick sail and is used during the club's yearly memorial race as a marker, as well as in its Veronica Cup race for women sailors. Club members also depend on it for wind and weather information. It is owned and maintained by Environment and Climate Change Canada.**

opened the metal door and saw an array of circuit breakers, and one notably was OFF. I flipped it and the pier was again lit, as was our boat. (Yes, I had unplugged the second heater.) We slept soundly and enjoyed our traditional Thanksgiving sail the next day with snow still on the deck.

**—Ken Thorn**
Carrboro, North Carolina

## Inspiration

Scott Racette, according to his wife, *Good Old Boat* author Ashley Gremel ("A Fair Lead," January/February 2024), has a very good memory! Jerry Powlas and I were amazed and flattered to see Jerry's long-ago vang/preventer idea pop up once again in *Good Old Boat*. It appeared in one of our very first issues in November/December 1998. The idea was copied by local sailor friends and readers far and near. As far as we're concerned, there's no higher praise from fellow sailors.

My own high regard for the vang/preventer system is illustrated in the following story that Jerry loves to tell. We were invited by a friend to crew on his boat during an informal "around the islands race." We would be racing on our friend's C&C 37 rather than on our own C&C 30. Fine. But I refused to go along unless Jerry and our friend Tom Clancy (yes, that is his real name) moved *Mystic's* vang/preventer to Tom's boat for the duration of the race. Let's just say that I was (and still am) a real believer in the boom control we had with the simple addition of a vang/preventer.

**—Karen Larson**
Superior, Wisconsin

## Vang Thangs

Just wanted to connect the dots between two articles in the January/February 2024 issue. For decades, I've been adamant about controlling the boom at all times: downwind, upwind, motoring, or at anchor. As discussed in "A Fair Lead," off-center vangs are a great solution for preventing jibes and controlling mainsail shape on or off the wind. With the vang and mainsheet tensioned, the boom is always precisely located and triangulated. Tensioning both off-center vangs also controls the boom when motoring (especially in rough conditions) or at anchor.

This is where the "Overboard" story kicks in. The tale describes how "the swing of the boom came back into my upper chest and flung me backward into the air," and that was with the main sheet tensioned. With the vangs attached with strong snap shackles, they can provide a ready means of hoisting a wet soul aboard if crew is present. The standard criticism of a mid-boom preventer is the risk of dipping the boom end in the water on a downwind roll. In such conditions, by all means rig a proper bow-to-end-of-boom preventer, but other times, having the off-center vangs is the way to go. In the event of a mainsheet or traveler failure, they can provide redundancy and control the boom on all points of sail until repairs can be made, with the windward vang positioning the boom and the leeward controlling leech tension. Also, the windward vang can be played out to control the motion as the boom comes across in a jibe, instead of the slack in the mainsheet coming up short. Yes, it is one more line in a cam cleat to pop loose when tacking, but getting clonked in the temple or thrown off the boat can ruin your whole day. Tame the boom at all times and stay safe and in control. As emphasized in the article, staying on the boat is rule number one!

Here is a picture of my 1980 Farallon 29, *Windrover*, on San Francisco Bay (above).

**—John C**
San Francisco Bay, California, and
Olympia, Washington

## Bronze Beauties

My thanks to Damien Contandriopoulos for his fine piece "Bronze Beauties" in the September/October 2023 issue of *Good Old Boat*. The moment I read "It all started because of a sailor named Ed," I laughed and knew immediately what was coming. I set the hook with my chainplate article, he bit, and it makes me very happy, especially in light of what he found on his boat, and happier, still, that he effected a solution before disaster struck. The first color photo in Damien's piece is a horror!

The problem with writing this sort of article is that it gives us all, myself included, reasons to lose sleep at night, and perhaps that is the whole point. Damien is not alone here. Some of the things I have written about certainly keep me up at night. If we as a group can educate boat owners and motivate them to take proper action, then we are definitely not wasting our time.

Thanks to *Good Old Boat* and to Damien for his excellent solution.

**—Ed Zacko**
Sun City West, Arizona

## Air Supply

I loved everything about the Simple Solutions article "Air Supply" in the January/February 2024 issue! The story shows what patient observation and

*continued on page 55*

# C&C 27 Mark V

## *A sleek racer/cruiser from the mid-'80s*

BY BERT VERMEER

Jan Bednarski was introduced to the world of water sports by his father near the prairie city of Edmonton, Alberta. Over the years, he built canoes and other small craft, took up dinghy sailing, and raced and crewed on various boats. He bought and refurbished a 16-foot, gaff-rigged plywood Lark designed in the late 1800s that he still sails occasionally.

Living on Vancouver Island in British Columbia, Jan wasn't necessarily looking for a boat to purchase, but his interest was piqued by a local listing for a C&C 27 Mark V. He bought the boat in 2015 and renamed her *Infinity*. Soon Jan, wife Martine, and son Sam sailed her off to Desolation Sound at the northern reaches of the Salish Sea, and many cruises and daysails followed.

### Design and Construction

The C&C 27 Mark V was developed in the early 1980s by the C&C design team led by Rob Ball and Neil Gilbert to replace the aging Mark I-IV series. First launched in 1984, the more performance-oriented design was slightly shorter, a few inches wider, and almost 1,000 pounds lighter. During the Mark V's production run, which lasted until 1987, more than 300 were made.

Improvements and modifications during the production years made subtle changes to the design. This review is focused on the 1985 version produced in Rhode Island. (For a history of C&C Yachts, see *GOB's* September/October 2002 issue). The hull of the Mark V, like its predecessor, is solid glass with a balsa-cored deck that incorporates plywood where deck hardware is mounted. Relatively hard bilges lead aft to a slightly reversed transom. Instead of a rudder post through the cockpit floor of the earlier models, the Mark V has a transom-mounted spade rudder, providing extra space in the cockpit and ease of maintenance.

The hull-to-deck joint is an outward-turned flange with the deck bolted through the anodized aluminum toerail. Through-bolts and bedding compound bond the hull to the deck. With the hull flange turned outward, access to the fastener nuts is outside the hull behind a vinyl cover — very convenient when occasional tightening is required.

The 4-foot 10-inch lead fin keel has a modern vertical profile, versus the shark fin style of the earlier designs. It is bolted to the shallow bilge sump. A factory option was a shoal-draft keel at 3 feet 6 inches, with an additional 360 pounds to compensate for the shallower draft.

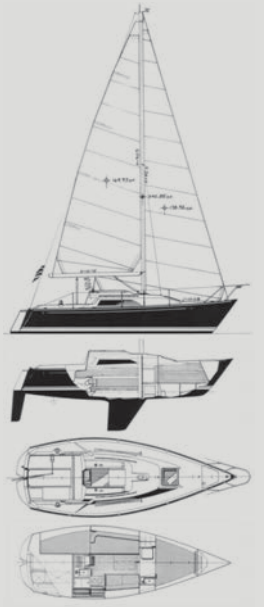
### Deck and Rigging

True to C&C's design approach of the time, the 27's deck is all angular flat planes with soft edges, quite a change from the rounded design of earlier models. This works very well when attaching hardware, since there are no radically rounded surfaces to compensate for when installing flat hardware. The coach roof slopes toward the small foredeck in a gentle, pleasing angle, with a hatch located just before the foredeck. The tall, single-spreader masthead rig is stepped on a cast aluminum plate with plenty of attachment points for turning blocks. *Infinity* was set up with some serious racing gear. The mast has a groove in the forward edge for a spinnaker pole car with blocks top and bottom. This groove is simply a rounded slot with no provisions for bearings of any kind; adjustment under load may prove difficult.

Next page, **typical of many '80s designs, the C&C 27 Mark V has a raked bow, relatively flat sheer, and sloping coach roof.**

All lines from the mast lead to triple-stacked deck organizers on the coach roof and then back to line stoppers and Barlow 10 winches at the trailing edge of the roof — very convenient for singlehanded sailors. There is no need to go forward to the mast when underway.

The upper and lower stays meet at the same chainplate, which could cause mast pumping in heavier seas. There is a provision for a detachable baby stay on *Infinity*, but it is rarely used. The chainplates are bolted



**The C&C 27 Mark V**

| | |
|---|---|
| Designer | C&C Design Group |
| LOA | 26'6" |
| LWL | 9'4" |
| Beam | 8'7" |
| Draft | 4.83' |
| Displacement | 1,715 lb |
| Ballast | 4,420 lb |
| Sail Area | 352 sq ft |
| Sail Area/Displ | 20.37 |
| Ballast/Displ | 38.8% |
| Displ/LWL Ratio | 162.18 |
| Comfort Ratio | 14.67 |
| Capsize Screening No | 2.26 |


C&C
599
239
599
239

The stays are well inboard on the sidedecks, against the cabin trunk. This provides for an exceptionally clear passage forward. Note the short sail track on the coach roof, halyards led aft, and the solid boom vang.

Interestingly, the stanchion bases are a polycarbonate material and show no signs of wear or damage.

The length of the cockpit is generous for a hull of this size. The 6-foot 2-inch seats are long enough for a nap, but not quite wide enough for a good sleep. A deep cockpit locker is accessible through a large hatch on the starboard side. A pair of two-speed Barient 21 self-tailing primary winches is mounted on the coamings forward of where the helmsperson would sit — perfect to the bulkhead in the main cabin and readily accessible. There is no indication of water intrusion on the bulkhead.

Long genoa tracks on the sidedeck are set well inboard, allowing for close sheeting angles. There is also a short jib track abeam of the mast at the top edge of the cabin trunk. This permits serious windward sheeting when the small jib is up in heavier airs. The backstay is split — perfect for simple tension-adjusting hardware.

The slotted black anodized aluminum toerail helps keep dropped tools on deck, and more importantly, provides unlimited fastening points for turning blocks. The stanchions and pulpits are rigged for double stainless steel lifelines, with a properly supported gate at the forward end of the cockpit.

The anchor well is amazingly deep and will hold plenty of rode and chain, along with the Bruce-style anchor.

Instruments are easily viewed where mounted on the aft face of the cabin, but interfere with sitting against it.

for singlehanded sail handling. There is no room for additional spinnaker winches on the narrow coaming top. The coamings are relatively low and provide limited back support. Access to the slightly sloped sidedeck is unobstructed.

The tiller intrudes into the cockpit but is easily lifted out of the way. A simple tiller extension allows for seating on the cockpit coaming, or even the sidedeck when heeled over. The diesel engine control panel is under the tiller on the transom, out of the way of errant feet, with the throttle control forward in the footwell. The mainsheet traveler crosses the companionway; the mainsheet does obstruct access to the companionway, but is well positioned for the singlehanded helmsperson.

## Sails

The previous owner of *Infinity* was definitely a racer! With the adjustable backstay, spinnaker gear, and sail inventory, this boat was meant to compete.

Aside from the mainsail, *Infinity* came with four headsails and three spinnakers. The fully battened mainsail and 120% genoa with foam luff are in very good condition. Two symmetrical (0.5-ounce and 0.75-ounce) spinnakers and one asymmetrical complete the sail inventory. On our test sail, we did not have the opportunity to hoist a spinnaker.

## Accommodations

This racer/cruiser has a surprisingly generous, well-thought-out interior for a 27-foot boat with a 9-foot beam. Oiled teak bulkheads and trim nicely complement the light fabric and headliner. Headroom, however, is a challenge at 5 feet 10 inches.

The galley is immediately to starboard, with a countertop two-burner propane range. This allows for more storage under the stove but eliminates an oven. The moderately sized insulated icebox is located in the corner of the counter between the stove and stainless steel sink. Adding insulation to the icebox would be a challenge. The sink has a hand water pump, which could be easily upgraded to a foot or electric pump.

To port is an open quarter berth that is a very comfortable single, or a double for a couple of youngsters. There is a mid-height open storage shelf that extends all the way to the forward bulkhead; a previous owner enclosed some of the shelf for extra storage capacity.

The cabin table is mounted against the teak bulkhead and slides amidships before folding down — a clever solution. A teak door provides a degree of privacy from the main cabin, but there is no

Steering with the tiller extension allows the helmsperson to sit outboard to view sail trim.

The V-berth is generous, a good 6 feet 2 inches long, and with the cutaway bulkhead on the starboard side, not as claustrophobic as some small boat cabins.

such illusion of privacy for the V-berth. Earlier editions of the Mark V had an accordion-style door installed between the head and V-berth. On *Infinity*, the bulkhead is cut away on the starboard side to visually open up the forward cabin. The head and sleeping quarters share the space.

The forward hatch is directly above and allows for stargazing while drifting off to the perfect night's sleep. It also provides excellent ventilation through both cabins. Unfortunately, the hatch is the only source of ventilation. With the hatch and companionway closed in foul weather, a Dorade-type vent would be most welcome.

## Mechanical

Unlike the original C&C 27s, which offered an outboard motor option, the Mark Vs were commissioned with a diesel engine installed under the cockpit sole behind the companionway steps. Considering that the engine compartment is uninsulated and open to the cockpit locker, I was pleasantly surprised by the minimal vibration and noise encountered while motoring. An enclosed, sound-insulated compartment would go a long way to reducing even that noise.

There is easy access to the raw-water pump and oil filter behind the companionway steps. Access to the primary and secondary fuel filters, along with the transmission, is through the large cockpit locker. A single starting battery is located beside the transmission with the single deep-cycle house battery in the cockpit locker. There is room for an additional house battery if desired, but a flat space would have to be created. The 12-gallon aluminum fuel tank is mounted behind the engine with a cockpit deck filler.

## Underway

Backing out of the slip under power was entirely predictable, and the Yanmar provided plenty of thrust to maneuver in tight spaces with the two-blade Gori feathering prop. The direct feel of a transom-hung rudder close to the propeller made directional control positive.

Out in the open, the lightweight boat quickly reached a cruising speed of 5 knots at 2,800 rpm, significantly below the rated continuous output of 3,400 rpm — leaving plenty of power in reserve when required.

The wind was light when we hoisted the mainsail and rolled out the 120% genoa,

perfect for a lightweight flyer like the C&C 27 Mark V. *Infinity* ghosted along in the fickle wind, accelerating briskly with every gust. In cruising mode more wind would probably be welcome, just to get the boat approaching hull speed. The IOR-influenced design that C&C favored in the 1980s produced excellent windward performance. Working to windward in the light breeze, I found tacking to be effortless and the effects of proper sail trim immediately apparent. The boat was a joy to sail. I could picture myself thrashing to windward in a fresh breeze, the tiller light to the hand while seated on the leeward gunnel. Unfortunately, that wasn't to be. The wind all but evaporated as the afternoon progressed.

If you're interested in club racing, the C&C 27 Mark V has just a few small fleets around the country, with PHRF numbers between 177 and 191 seconds per mile. Compare this to the venerable Catalina 27, introduced much earlier, in 1971, which comes in at 210; the Cal 3-27 of 1983, which rates 192; and the speedy J/27 of 1984, which rates 129 seconds per mile.

## Conclusion

It had been years since I had sailed a tiller-steered boat, and sailing the C&C 27 brought back many fond memories. The instant feedback that a tiller provides should be part of every sail training program. As successful as the original C&C 27s were, the Mark V was a significant leap forward in design. Production of this successful design probably would have continued had C&C not ceased operations due to financial difficulties. No, the boat does not have many of the "necessary" onboard amenities of more modern, tubby 27-footers, but it sails exceptionally well while providing basic cruising comfort. Instead of resorting to the iron genny in light airs, a C&C 27 sailor can ghost along in quiet satisfaction, sailing as a sailor should. Solid C&C construction and reliability are benchmarks worth retaining into the future.

We found quite a few used C&C 27 Mark Vs for sale on sailboatlistings.com, with asking prices ranging from around $9,000 to $14,900.

*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.*

**The fold-down table can seat four in a pinch but is best enjoyed by two.**

# Owners' Comments

I have done a lot of upgrades since buying my 1987 C&C 27 Mark V: Installed shorepower with new AC/DC panels, custom cockpit cushions, a new genoa, new sail cover, etc. I love the boat, but it is pushing 40 years old, which I believe includes the original Yanmar 1GM10 diesel engine. But she still runs well.

The boat is tender and sails very well in light air, as is common here in the South (Puget) Sound. When the wind picks up, it can be a little exciting to sail, but I have never had to reef the main to keep control.

Issues with the boat include the flush-mounted windows that tend to leak.

—**Mike Hauser,**
Olympia, Washington

For 20 years, my boat partner, Bob Gauthier, and I have owned a C&C 27 Mark V, Hull #69, made in Niagara-on-the-Lake in 1985. We mostly use the boat for club racing and a little bit of daysailing. The Mark Vs were produced in both Niagara and Rhode Island. The two versions are the same, with the exception that the Rhode Island boats have a different mast section, which is stiffer than the mast on the Niagara boats.

Build options included a Yanmar 1GM or 2GM engine (pretty rare, but they do exist) or outboard. The *Smoke* racing deck layout, with two Barient 10 winches on each side of the companionway (instead of one), also had jib tracks on the cabin top and a self-tacking Harken traveler. *Smoke* was Hull #2, with wheel steering, and was raced by the factory team on Lake Ontario. C&C also built the Wave 26, which is the Mark V hull with a shoal keel and shorter rig.

The boat is well balanced. She is a bit underpowered in light air and stiff in a breeze. She is stable downwind, even with a spinnaker up in 15 to 20 knots.


The Mark V has a solid build. Most boats have had blister issues in the solid fiberglass hull. We refinished *Distant Thunder's* with InterProtect 2000 almost 18 years ago and now fix two or three small blisters each year. The deck is balsa-cored, but with solid glass under most of the fittings.

The baby stay chainplate is tied into the forward bulkhead, which is not well anchored to the cabin floor at the bottom. As a result, there is some flexing of the chainplate at the deck. All Mark V boats I know of have had some leaks at the fitting, and some rotting balsa in the area. We filled in an 8-inch diameter area with epoxy a long time ago and have not had a problem since.

The original through-deck fittings for the mast wiring and VHF cable were poorly

installed and need to be replaced, and any wet balsa in the area cleaned up — a minor fix.

The original non-skid on the deck has not held up too well, and the deck is slippery. I see an increasing number of Mark Vs adding KiwiGrip.

The engine compartment is tiny. The main battery is accessed through the cockpit locker but sits on the opposite side of the shaft, so it is really hard to remove. The area under the cockpit aft of the engine is particularly hard to get to if hoses need replacing.

The factory prop and 1GM combination is underpowered. We changed to a Flexofold prop, which gave much improved power in waves or chop, and especially in reverse.

The original bedding for the windows leaks on virtually all of the boats. The design does not use a frame, just adhesive, so when the boat flexes, the bond breaks. Two useful solutions are to purchase a retrofit frame kit or rebond the windows with a combination of 3M double-sided tape and Sikaflex adhesive.

**—Jim Wente,**
Toronto, Canada


I owned a 1985 C&C 27 MK V for three years. It was one of the most fun boats to sail, but could be overpowered and a handful to control in a stiff breeze. I found the boat to be very well put together and it felt solid.

My wife said if I got a boat with hot-and-cold pressure water, she'd sail more. I traded the 27 for a Landfall 35 with all the creature comforts and she still didn't come sailing. I tried to buy the C&C 27 back from the guy I sold it to. He said no.

I think it was the prettiest boat in the marina.

**—Jeff McCarthy,**
Vero Beach, Florida

# Dinghy in the Neighborhood

## *Bringing an old boat back to life provides relief in trying times.*

BY ANTONIA LEWANDOWSKI

My husband lifted the shabby dinghy off the bed of the truck, slid the decrepit 8-foot hull onto a rolling cradle, and parked it in the driveway.

Years earlier, we had trailered our first sailboat, a 19-foot Com-Pac, into west Florida waters. Later, we owned a Nonsuch 30. But having sold that prized vessel, we were now boatless. Kirk, known to our sailing community as Captain, always maintained that part of the fun of having a boat was working on it.

"Better than mowing the grass," he said, while wheeling the boat over to the left bay of our garage.

I recognized a restoration project when I saw it. "Where'd this come from?" I asked. "You buy it?"

"No."

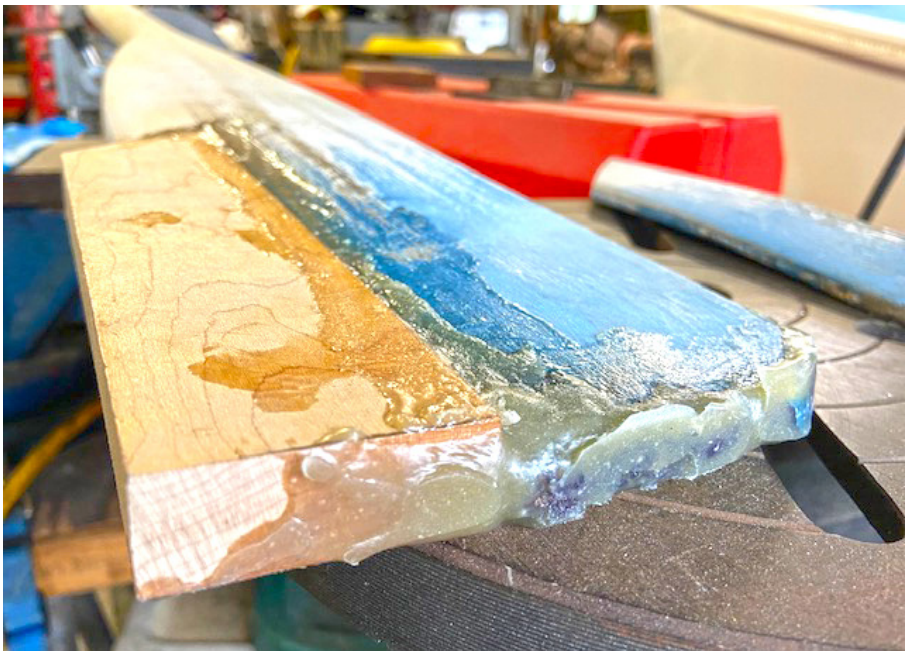
The facts came out, but not right away. I learned that a buddy at the marina needed to get rid of his stuff. The dinghy took up space in his shed — "for years," my husband emphasized. He added, "It's a sturdy, classic boat. Beautiful lines."

He lightly smacked the dinghy's port side and grinned. Was I going to support the project?

The dinghy had shown up midway through the isolation of the Covid-19 pandemic, when closed venues and masking had us spending more time at home. Our house stood at the edge of a public park. Once Kirk raised the garage door and set his machines buzzing, neighbors walking their dogs stood the required 6 feet away and curiously watched him work, shouting out questions. We learned our neighbors' names and their dogs' names. Sailing friends who used to meet weekly for chicken wings at a sports bar phoned for updates. It was clear that the restoration was going to bring temporary relief for everyone's new solitary lifestyle.

The first step of the project took us to the computer for information. The dinghy was from Salty Boats of Maine, a company known for its small vessels of laminated fiberglass and choice woodworking. We talked with the company's owners, Bruce and Cabot Trott, and from their website learned about the Salty 8's original materials. It featured oak gunnels, knees, and breast hook, with fiberglass bow and stern seating and a midship seat of solid mahogany. A fully functioning Salty can carry a maximum load of 400 pounds, we learned.

**Captain Kirk works on creating a new gunnel for the dinghy.**



Two damaged oars found at a salvage site were fused with white oak remnants to create new blades.

Kirk inventoried his supplies stored above the rafters of the garage and on shelves surrounding his lathe, drill press, Shopsmith, and other machinery. It was late autumn, cool enough in Florida to work outside. He assembled his tools and materials and put in a call to the Salty factory for the knees and breast hook, components that needed to be replaced. The factory advised Kirk to build his own gunnels, since shipping the long arcs would be expensive and impractical.

The next step was assessing the condition of the hull. Kirk set the vessel upside down on the cradle. With fiberglass, he repaired the hole in the skeg and patched the cracks and blisters, then sanded the hull. After cleaning the hull, he primed it with a spray gun, sanded it further, and painted it white.

A day later, he positioned an old door on two sawhorses to make a template for fabricating the gunnels. The wood strips needed to be laminated. Kirk sketched a template and screwed the wood blocks into position about 6 to 8 inches apart. One at a time, he glued and clamped four ¼-inch strips of white oak into place. After sanding the finished assembly, he fit the gunnel strips to the dinghy's knees at the stern and the breast hook at the bow. This step of the process took a few hours a day for about two weeks.

Then Kirk revamped the seats with cosmetic trim. He left the original mahogany rowing seat in place. For the stern and bow, he used bird's eye maple and cut it to fit the molded fiberglass. He laid the wood on top of the fiberglass, adding spacers of scrap wood to achieve a perfect fit. To match the gunnels, he stained the slats in mahogany on both sides. After they were dry, he glued the slats to the seats with GE silicone caulking. The result proved visually dramatic.

"Ready for sea trials?" I asked.

"Not yet," Kirk said. "See those oar locks? The dinghy needs oars."

On an afternoon sortie to a marine salvage yard, we found and bought two damaged oars. Once home, I held the ladder in place as Kirk searched the rafters of our garage for pieces of white oak stored there.

"Now I know why you save everything," I said.

Kirk fused the oak to the broken blades with epoxy resin and let the oars harden. Over the next couple of days, he shaped the new oar blades using a right-angle grinder and 36-grit sanding pad, and left them to cure. Later, he sanded the oars smooth. As a final step, to keep the oars from slipping out of the locks, he purchased an oar leather kit from West Marine. He installed the leathers on the oars, hammering them in with small brass pins. With the oars at a jaunty angle, the finished dinghy looked bright and fresh, ready for the water.

On a sunny day, we called a few friends to assist with the launch and sea trial. It was a perfect morning, with light wind and calm water. After slipping the Salty onto the bed of our sturdy Ford truck, we headed toward the local causeway. Arriving, we heard seabirds circling above the narrow beach that provided access to the Intracoastal Waterway. Our friends Ralph and Lenka unloaded the dinghy and pushed it forward, steadying it in

Bricks and spacers were used to ensure the slats for the aft seat were in the proper place.

**Newly crafted oars were the final touch for the fully refinished Salty 8.**

knee-deep water. Ralph climbed in and Captain Kirk pushed him off. The Salty floated easily, even before Ralph reached for the oars. Pumping out to deeper water, he yelled back to us at the shore,

"Good balance. I'm going to head over to those sailboats at anchor."

From our spot, we saw a captain holding a coffee cup wave from the deck of his Pearson 26 Weekender. Another sailor pulling up his anchor shot Ralph a thumbs-up. After a few minutes, Lenka's daughter, Minnie, waded into the shallow water and jumped into the dinghy. Ralph rowed farther east and nodded back to us. Minnie called and waved. Finally, they headed in and we guided the dinghy back to shore. We agreed that the Salty proved itself a reliable and elegant vessel on the water.

Yet a final question remains. What will be next for the dinghy and for its craftsman? We realize that once a project's done, there's emotional loss. At the same time, the dinghy reminds us of a job well done, a vision met, and a contribution to recycling and reusing, rather than opting for the city dump.

In the garage, the boat still attracts attention from neighbors. People like learning about its history. In the near future, we will likely sell the boat or give it to a grandson for his fishing expeditions. In the meantime, there's little chance that Captain Kirk will get bored. Recently, we drove to a friend's backyard to check out a dilapidated 16-foot sailboat on a trailer. It came home with us and now sits on the side of the house under a tarp. There's no hurry.

More recently, Kirk built a model sailboat from wood scraps that's destined for Minnie's 5-year-old brother. As always, working on a boat is better than mowing the grass.

*Antonia Lewandowski, a native of New York City, moved to Florida about 30 years ago and learned to sail. She is a poet and writer, author of* Tangled, *a poetry collection, and* Out of the Woods, *a chapbook. Antonia is a 2024 recipient of the arts agency Creative Pinellas' Emerging Artist Grant. Her poetry has been twice nominated for a Pushcart Prize.*

# A Shrinking Fleet

## *From pocket cruisers to beloved classics, dying boats need to be saved.*

BY JIM PAPA

Last spring, the yard where I store my sloop for the winter cleared out a small trove of derelict sailboats. An enterprising crew of Floridian salvagers, prospecting their way north in the pandemic's wake, showed up at the gate looking for sailboats to scrap. They wanted the lead keels and aluminum spars, which left them a handsome profit even after paying to dump the old hulls, still outfitted with valuable hardware, at the landfill. For the yard, it was a win all the way around. Potential liabilities were removed, valuable winter storage space was reclaimed, and years of lost revenues were put to an end. For the scrappers, it was a quick if dirty buck.

The first boat to go, an Ericson 35, had been a regular on the local race circuit years ago; her skipper, commodore of a local yacht club for a time, had been a passionate sailor. The boat had played a big part in his and his family's life. But the boat had sat neglected for over a decade, and the last time I saw her, she lay askew on the scrapper's trailer alongside her cutoff keel and severed mast.

Two days later, a Newport 28, her hatches long left open to the weather and her torn headsail lying for years in a moldy pile on the foredeck, met the same fate. After that, a diminutive blue Kestrel was unburdened of its ballast and stripped of its rig too. Several more vessels were butchered in similar fashion before slipping through the yard's gate on their way to an ignominious end, after which the Florida crew packed up their Sawzalls and moved on, pockets full, to fresh pickings in other boatyards.

There's something sad about watching a once beloved boat cut up for scrap. Especially troubling is that none of these boats, and many others that have met or will meet similar ends, were beyond reclamation. Sure, restoring and rebuilding fiberglass boats when they've long been let go is not for the faint of heart. The work is dirty, hard, and slow, and without the proper safety gear, generally bad for one's health.

The prospect of cutting open fiberglass decks and re-coring them, grinding down and filling blisters, replacing water-damaged bulkheads, and going to war with toxic mold and peeling paint would give many boaters pause. Long days decked out in goggles, respirators, vinyl gloves, and Tyvek suits aren't much fun and will test even the most resolute do-it-yourselfers. Unless you commit to completing the work on a strict timeline, enthusiasm can wane, if not sputter out completely, like a rusty old Atomic 4.

**The author's 1965 Sailmaster 22, rescued, restored, and sailing after 15 years on the hard.**

You'd think there'd be more of a market for these older, sea-kindly, and frankly, often better built boats, especially as they grow more difficult to find. Set against the price of a new boat, these old boats really are bargains if someone is willing to put in the time, work, and money. Junking them hardly makes sense. And yet these lovely little ships are often abandoned. They grow black inside and out. Their deck cores rot. Uncovered sails turn yellow and brittle, and raccoons claw their way through wooden cover boards to build winter nests below.

Given the long list of tragedies in the world, the loss of an old fiberglass sailboat whose hull was laid up when the Beatles were still together or the Vietnam War raged is arguably no big deal, especially as interest in sailing in North America has long been on the decline. The dwindling cadre of new sailors, beguiled by beamy salons, chrome handrails, and mainsails that furl into the mast at the push of a button, aren't likely to shed tears over some (to them) tubby Tartan 27 in whose leaf-filled cockpit a wild garden has taken root. Mention the boat's Sparkman & Stephens pedigree and you'll likely get a quizzical look, followed by, "Who?" Point out the sensible bridge deck and you might be met with a preference for sugar scoop transoms, an extra wide companionway, or other more contemporary features that suggest dockside convenience and ease.

It's not simply that styles change. A sailboat's design should have much less to do with fashions, fads, and marketing gurus than with satisfying the timeless requirements needed to go safely to sea, even on sheltered or inshore waters. Early fiberglass sailboat designs borrowed heavily from their wooden predecessors, descendants of working boats that proved safe and seaworthy over several centuries. A good bit of seagoing wisdom is embodied in their lines, which have resulted in some of the most comely and capable little cruisers ever drawn. Such virtuous traits ought not to be dismissed or forgotten.

The automotive industry might turn out a successful model by the hundreds of thousands, tweaking its shape and interior each year over a decade, before adopting



Top right and below, **a wayward Kestrel 23 awaits rescue and rehabilitation.**

**If not restored, long-forgotten "classic plastic" boats are likely to be scrapped.**

a radical new design. With those kinds of numbers, it can take decades for popular automotive models to finally disappear from the roads. But building fiberglass sailboats has always been a very different game. A builder's run of several hundred to a thousand for any small cruising sailboat is a respectable accomplishment. Anything far beyond that — such as the supremely popular Catalina 22, of which more than 16,000 have been built — is an anomaly. Meanwhile, the stock of traditional pocket cruisers, sailboats under 30 feet with cabins in which one can cook and sleep, grows smaller every year.

This is largely the result of changes in an ever more difficult industry. Boatbuilding is a dicey business. Builders go under for all sorts of reasons, and most who have survived several cycles of boom and bust soon discover that there's less risk and more profit in building larger, more luxurious models equipped with lots of high-end gear. It's easier to make a buck marketing more expensive boats to a smaller pool of well-heeled customers than to try selling thousands of smaller, more prosaic craft to workaday boaters.

Sailboat builders are no exception and may just be the most fervent adherents to this approach, given their small slice of the recreational boating market to begin with. Except for a few rare holdouts, such as Hunter, Com-Pac, Catalina, and Seaward, smaller cruisers just aren't being built in anywhere near the numbers they once were, and those numbers were never very high. The result is that most small fiberglass cruisers in existence today were built decades ago, and even with new additions, the fleet shrinks every year.

Even older boats in excellent condition are sometimes let go due to the increasing difficulty of securing even simple liability insurance for vessels more than 25 years old. When insurance is available, rates are high, and most underwriters now require professional surveys. A survey can easily add hundreds of dollars or more to the cost of an older project boat, dissuading even ardent do-it-yourselfers from taking on boats that may need thousands of dollars in repairs.

And economics is not the only force working against the survival of older, more traditional fiberglass designs. Every boat within a few miles of the ocean risks being destroyed by a hurricane for several months each year, which in the Northeast is just about the entire boating season. My own boat, a 1965 Sailmaster 22 that I rescued after it had been left for 15 years on the hard, has survived hits from a half dozen hurricanes or superstorms during her long life on Long Island's Great South Bay. But that's mostly a matter of luck.

A Category 3 hurricane that makes landfall can destroy hundreds, even thousands, of boats in its path. Inevitably, this includes a good number of old sailing classics. Many of these older pocket cruisers under 30 feet won't be replaced, even by newer models.

And so every Yankee Dolphin 24, Cape Dory 25, Bristol 24, or other such shapely, sea-kindly vessel destroyed by a hurricane or storm represents an irrevocable loss to the fleet. Some newer pocket cruisers may occasionally exhibit an eye-catching sheer or a salty doghouse, but beneath the waterline, their relatively flat-bottomed hulls and stub keels, designed to slip more easily on and off trailers than between seas, often prove dull and uninspired.

I don't know whether health issues, financial trouble, divorce, or death lie behind the vessels I see abandoned. Most of these boats were seaworthy when hauled for the last time, and could be again. Fiberglass, after more than 60 years, has proved itself something of a miracle material. Balsa deck cores, plywood bulkheads, and wooden stringers might rot, and keel bolts and aluminum rigs can corrode or fail after years of use. But unlike an old wooden boat left on the hard for many years, it's a rare fiberglass boat that won't still float. Weather and microbes can't break fiberglass down; insects can't bore through it; animals won't eat it. If you want an old fiberglass hull gone, you are going to have to do the knuckle-bruising job yourself or pay someone.

But for lovers of old sailboats, the thought of destroying these vintage vessels borders on sacrilege. We rescue them from boatyards and backyards, snatch them from scrappers, and safeguard those we sail from hurricanes. We keep them bashing their way to windward through the summer chop, and running with the white horses far out on the sea. When we finally pass them on, we do our best to make sure they find good homes.

One day, perhaps, the maritime museums will find a place for them alongside their wooden brethren, and newer sailors will finally notice them. In the meantime, those of us familiar with their virtues will continue to reclaim and rebuild these old sailboats we fall in love with.

*Jim Papa, poet and essayist, is a professor of English at York College of The City University of New York, where he teaches creative writing. He sails his Sailmaster 22 on Long Island's Great South Bay.*

# Window Dressing

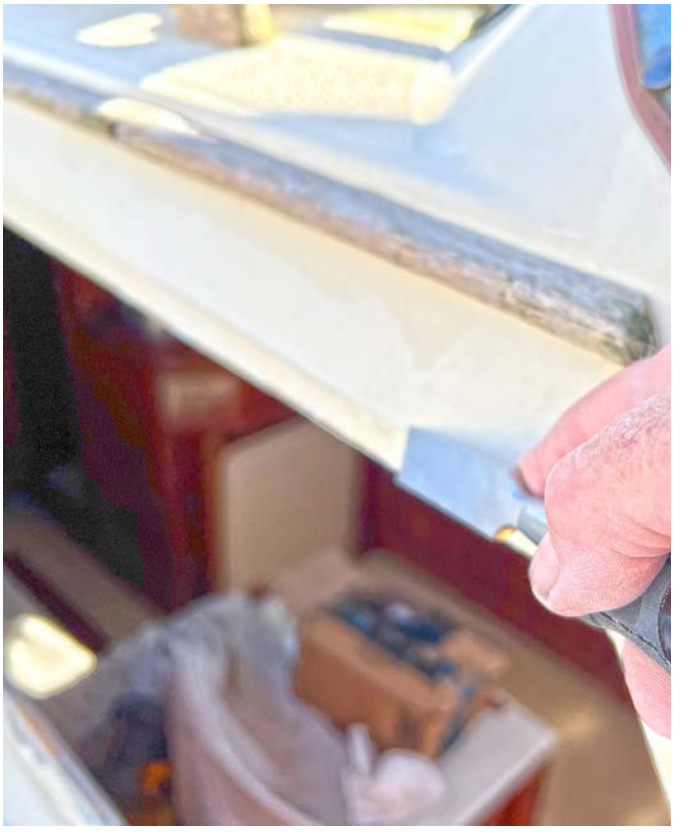
## *Tips and tricks from a window replacement on a couple's first sailboat*

BY BRIAN RICHARDSON

Window replacements rarely fall under the category of "simple," and this job on my newly acquired 1977 Islander 32 MK II wasn't without its difficulties, but there were some simple tricks I learned along the way that made it much easier.

Three months ago, my wife, Betty, suggested out of nowhere that we spend a Saturday looking at sailboats. We live in the mountains on a sheep farm, so this was a bit of a surprise. We'd had a motorboat when we were dating, but I had no experience with sailing and Betty had zero interest in a powerboat. If I ever wanted to get back on the water, I needed to embrace the huge learning curve.

We drove three and a half hours to Urbanna, Virginia, on the Rappahannock River near the Chesapeake Bay. The first boat we saw was a 1977 Islander 32 MK II. It was priced at only $11,000, and Betty said, "Go for it!" Someone suggested getting a proper survey, but that cost didn't really add up to us, so we just took a chance. Sometimes in life that's what you have to do, and as we get older, there is less and less time for indecision. We are 64 and neither of us had ever owned a sailboat, but the only hope for some old boats is a new owner who is eager and willing to dive in and do the work. Thus, we adopted our Islander.



Top to bottom, **the original windows in the author's Islander were a leaky mess.**

**Careful use of a wood chisel removes the majority of the old silicone.**

The boat turned out to be dry from the bottom up and wet from the top down. Some tape stopped one leak, but the windows were a mess. Digging into potential replacements, I was told that the original type of windows was unavailable. So I called Maritech Industries Inc. in California, which makes custom marine windows, and spoke with Mark — who, to my surprise, said he had made my boat's first set of windows and would be happy to make her last set. Mark obviously knew everything about the Islander windows and had me take a lot of measurements. He strongly suggested making the windows out of tempered glass rather than plexiglass. The glass comes in tinted gray or bronze, and a local canvas expert advised that gray tint looks best on boats with a blue sail cover, dodger, and bimini. Bronze looks better with green or tan. It's best to think this through with someone who understands colors.

Mark gave me detailed instructions to complete the installation. I'm sure there are many different techniques, but I figured I shouldn't argue with the guy who has done it for a lifetime, and the knowledge Mark imparted to me was indispensable. The job turned


**Remove any trace of old silicone with acetone on a Scotch-Brite pad, then use denatured alcohol to get rid of acetone residue.**

out great, and I'm grateful to share some of what I learned in the process.

The best tip Mark provided was to round off one edge of a putty knife and tap it with a small mallet to remove the old silicone seal between the frame and the boat, working the putty knife between the window frame and the fiberglass and going all the way around. One thing to note is that Islander windows are held in by the interior frames, which I had already unscrewed. Some windows may be mounted differently, with bolts. Rounding the edge of the putty knife with my belt sander prevented it from digging into the frame and allowed it to travel smoothly around it.

Once the frame and window were off, I was left with the unenviable task of removing all the old silicone. I was skeptical about using a ¾-inch wood chisel to remove the remainder of the old sealant, but it was the perfect tool for the job. I purchased fine and extra fine Scotch-Brite pads to help with the final remnants. They both worked, but the fine pad was much quicker than the extra fine, and I didn't notice any scratches. Scotch-Brite and acetone removed the rest of the old caulk, and denatured alcohol took care of the acetone residue. I then cleaned the window frames with alcohol to remove any oil left by my fingers.

Another tip is to fit the window on a dry run before applying caulk, silicone, or whatever you choose to go with. (Don't ask me how I know.) For any tight spots that don't quite seem to fit, you can use a Dremel tool with a sanding drum to shave them down. When it's time to handle the window for installation, use a glass suction cup from your local hardware store — it's eight bucks well spent.

From there, tape the windows to a point near the edge but leave a little area on the radius. The caulk bead needs to be the size of your little finger, which is a lot of caulk. I took Mark's advice and used Dowsil 795 Silicone Building Sealant, applying it to the windows only and not to the fiberglass. If you miss, you don't want to be cleaning silicone off the frames; you can avoid that problem by applying it only to the inside lip of the frames. Once the caulk is applied, time becomes somewhat limited.

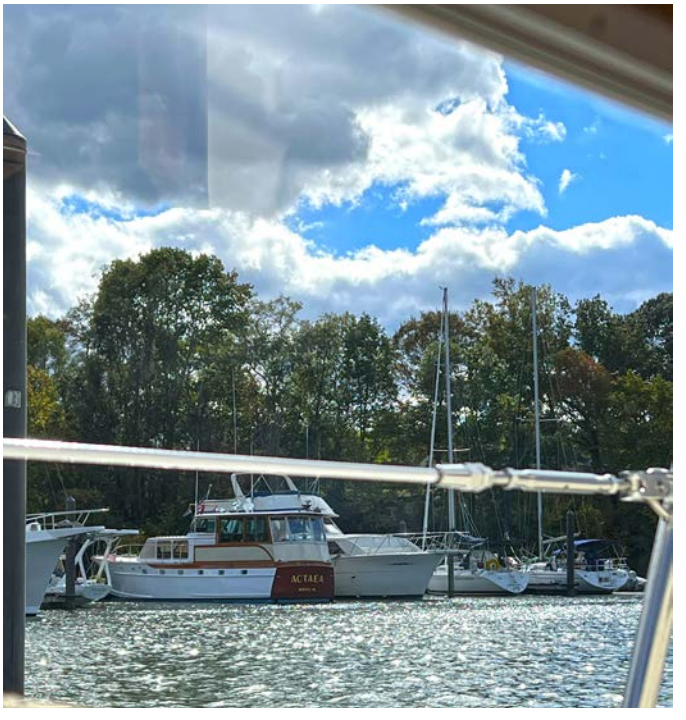
After installing the windows, though you might be tempted, do not push them from the outside. Instead, use the screws to pull them in. Start with the center screws and work out to alternating sides until the window is pulled into place. The frame is plastic, so don't tighten the screws too much. In my install, I stripped one screw, but fortunately I had another screw in the next size up and corrected my mistake.

When the screws are tightened, work as swiftly as possible to remove the excess caulk before it hardens. For this, my thumbnail and paper towels worked great. The final step was to immediately pull the tape and dip my finger in turpentine for one final wipe to smooth the edges.

The result is a window that is better than the Islander had when new, and the tempered glass provides a crystal clear view that we didn't have from the cabin before.

I've never bonded with anything without being invested in the creative process, and that's certainly how it is with my 1977 Islander 32 MK II. Sure, there's still a long way to go, but my affection for her will only grow.

*Brian Richardson and Betty Mitchell dated in high school before she went in 1977 to Franklin College on Lake Lugano in the mountains of Switzerland, where she began sailing. A decade later, they became reacquainted, got married, and honeymooned on the Rappahannock River near the Chesapeake Bay. They've since moved to a mountaintop farm in Virginia, where they live and raise sheep, but they dock their 1977 Islander 32,* Lugano, *directly across the river from where they honeymooned.*



**The view through the new glass window is much better.**

# Twin Boys and a Boat

## *A Montgomery 12 becomes a family project that perpetuates the love of sailing.*

BY CLINT KOERKENMEIER

Restoring a 1974 Montgomery 12 sailing dinghy with my identical twin boys, Jackson and Connor, was a way to feed our love of sailing and for all three of us to pull away from our electronics and spend time together working in the garage.

While our project started during the summer of 2022, when the boys were 11, our fondness for sailing and the water began long before. Jackson and Connor began sailing with my wife, Mendy, and me at the Boulder Yacht Club on Carlyle Lake in southern Illinois. They were 2 years old, which was challenging at times, but we found a way to make it work. We would anchor our 1982 Hunter 25 and let the boys swim and play at the beach. When it was time for some rest, my wife would put them down in the cabin for a nap, then we would weigh anchor and sail as much as we could before they woke up. We learned early on that wearing them out at the beach made for much more peaceful sailing.

As Jackson and Connor got older, the boat's interior transitioned from a nursery where they would nap to a full-size pirate ship cabin. The first order from the little scallywags was to put up the pirate flag. While Mendy put on their life jackets, I dutifully hoisted the Jolly Roger. We learned a lot on that first boat, including how to dock when your outboard runs out of gas, getting to know every old sailor (they know every trick), and the importance of packing enough animal crackers to feed every seagull in the region.


The family's new-to-them dinghy was in rough condition when they brought it home.

On one of our memorable excursions, we ran aground under sail. The boat came to a complete stop fast and spun around. The boys came up from the cabin wanting to know if we were going to sink. In the back of my mind, I thought, "I sure hope not!" The forgiving bottom of Carlyle Lake is mostly mud; thankfully, we didn't sink that day.

Since then, we have had three moves, from Missouri to Texas and now to Tennessee, and sailing has remained a cornerstone for our family no matter where we are living. We have owned several cruising sailboats, upgrading every few years when we could. Each boat had its own character and challenged us in different ways. Spending nights in our Com-Pac 23, *Melinda Leigh*, on Galveston Bay was one of the most memorable experiences. We would spend the day on the Kemah Boardwalk, a theme park with rides, shops, and restaurants, then anchor out in the bay and sleep on the boat. On one occasion the boys forgot stuffed animals, so we had to win some at the boardwalk before setting sail; luckily, I am really good at balloon darts. Several years later, the boys still refer to that day as the best day ever.

Such experiences fueled my boys' love of the water and sailing. But they really found their passion for sailing at the Houston Yacht Club, where at age 7 they began solo sailing. They attended sailing camp, learning to sail on Optimists. Since then, they have been honing their skills at Harbor Island Yacht Club in Nashville, and of course with us on the family boat. Their love for pirates has not diminished — they

**Many weekends were spent working on *Daisy Mae* in the garage.**

wanted to get the Optimist named *Black Pearl* every day at camp.

Shortly after sailing camp in 2021, they asked if I would get them a little boat of their own. My first response, like that of every good husband, was, "Let me talk to your mother." I was probably more excited about the idea than they were. I grew up working on old boats and know the sense of pride and wealth of knowledge that come with putting in the effort yourself. My dad taught us the value of hard work and the importance of appreciating what you have; both were important qualities for me to instill in my children.

That night, I searched Facebook Marketplace for a small project boat. I wanted an Optimist or a Sunfish, but couldn't find any that were within our budget. We live seven hours from the nearest coast, so there are fewer used boat options in Tennessee than we had in Texas.

After about a week of searching, I finally found a Montgomery 12 that needed a lot of love. It had been behind a barn for several years, and its owner was moving and needed to get rid of some of his treasures. It had been a club race boat before the man bought it, and the little boat had a lot of nautical miles under her keel. The Montgomery came with the club's race harnesses, and since the owner was moving, also a lot of extras. We were excited to get his boxes of hardware, lines, rigging, oars, and more. The harnesses were what Jackson and Connor were most excited about. They wanted to do more racing and were pretty sure their newly acquired boat would be the fastest at Harbor Island Yacht Club.

We spent almost a year of Saturdays and some weeknights working on the *Daisy Mae*, named after the boys' Goldendoodle. I think their mother was a little disappointed about this, as our big boats have always been named Melinda Leigh after her. However, *Daisy Mae* was the name they both wanted. Their grandmother quickly got to work making lettering for the stern, and also thought the boat needed proper seat cushions. The boys made stencils out of butcher paper and we sent them to their grandmother and a friend, who made beautiful custom seats that attach to the bench.

Overall, *Daisy Mae* needed a lot more than new seat cushions and lettering, including both wood and fiberglass work. Thankfully, we could do most of the work ourselves. We began sanding, stripping, painting, and varnishing. I figured it would be easier to tape the wood when we painted the hull than to do the reverse and tape off the entire boat. After nine coats of varnish, the brightwork shone like it was coated in glass.

From there, we cleaned and sanded the hull and watched a few YouTube videos on rolling and tipping and the best paint to use. There was a lot of discussion about hull color, and we landed on West Marine's white. This was incredibly controversial between the two boys, since one wanted yellow and the other wanted white. Three rounds of rock, paper, scissors settled the decision.

When it came to the fiberglass work, we had to bring in an expert. There had been an attempt to repair the mast foot in the past, and it either wasn't done correctly or over several years of the hull being full of water, the "repaired" fiberglass had begun to peel up and was providing no physical strength or protection for the cedar core.

One weekend, the boys' grandfather drove down from Illinois to help lay the new fiberglass on the bottom of the boat. We removed all the old repairs, exposing the cedar core, and then laid down the fiberglass. Fortunately, the bottom of the boat was solid, and it was only the top layer that was an issue. The cedar was still strong and appeared to be unharmed by years of exposure to the elements.

The boys learned a lot throughout that year of boatwork. Not only did the boat need attention, but the trailer also needed new bunks, lights, and wheels. I think everyone should know simple wiring and how to change a tire, and this was certainly

**Taping the hull to prepare the gunnel for sanding and varnish.**

With no wind, the dinghy makes for an ideal swimming platform.

a fun way to learn. One of the things they learned was the importance of making a list prior to driving to the hardware store. After multiple trips to Tractor Supply and the hardware store, we were able to change the wheels and also purchased the supplies to cut and wrap the new trailer bunks. Using the staple gun to cover the bunks with carpet was a big hit.

Finally it was time to put everything together. A challenge I hadn't thought about was rigging a boat that came in pieces and without instructions. I spent a lot of time on the computer looking at pictures of Montgomery 12s to see how to set up the boat. What I learned was that it is way easier to simply pull into the yacht club parking lot with a project than it is to try to figure it out on your own. There were many sailors eager to help us get her sailing, and through their generosity, we came up with the hardware we needed to get the sails up.

The final thing the boys thought the boat should have is a motor. For Christmas, their uncles Travis and Derrick bought them a trolling motor and a battery; *Daisy Mae* was complete and ready to sail.

We were finally able to take her for a sail in January. Nashville in January is cold, but the boat was finished and the boys wanted to go sailing, no matter how chilly it was. I told them the weather had to be above 50 degrees before we could go out. They diligently watched the weather, and as soon as temperatures hit the mark, we were on the water. It took a little while to get everything working as it should, but in the end, we were able to sail around the cove near our house.

Since then, we have had a lot of fun on *Daisy Mae*, and she turns a lot of heads. We officially christened her on Aug. 19, 2023, on Old Hickory Lake near Hendersonville, Tennessee, with the pastor at Our Lady of the Lake Catholic Church, and the chaplain of the boys' school, officiating the blessing.

Jackson and Connor couldn't be prouder of their little boat. When we took it to Harbor Island Yacht Club for the first time, you would have sworn that they had just sailed in with a million-dollar yacht. They were beaming with joy, and I was a little proud myself.

*Clint Koerkenmeier and his sons, Jackson Koerkenmeier and Connor Koerkenmeier, restored a Montgomery 12 in their garage. The boat is named* Daisy Mae *after their Goldendoodle. Like the boat project, this story was a joint effort and was written by the three of them.*


Finished and decked out in full regalia, *Daisy Mae* receives her blessing.

# Frankenstein's Galley

## *A classic plastic gets a modern electric galley.*

BY JAMES FREDERICK

As I write this, I am about a day's sail from American Samoa, bound for Fiji. *Triteia*, my 1965 Alberg 30, is running wing and wing with following seas about 3 feet high. It is dinnertime, which seems to be the time of day that Neptune decides to increase the rolling of the ship, no matter what seas I find myself sailing in. He must find great entertainment in watching sailors brace themselves and fight to keep their balance as their gimbaled stoves swing with wild abandon.

Since the seas are a bit much at the moment for cooking safely on the range, I have placed a fresh swordfish steak coated in olive oil and seasoned with salt and pepper into my electric air fryer that I retrofitted into my old gimbaled stove. This luxury is the result of a fairly simple but massively rewarding project.

In Honolulu in the spring of 2022, as I was preparing *Triteia* for cruising, I was faced with the need to upgrade and convert my galley. The galley had always had an alcohol stove, first the original built-in version and later, a gimbaled alcohol stove I installed that was something of a Frankenstein's monster — a pressurized alcohol stove that had been gutted, with an Origo two-burner stove bolted in place of the original range.

I had bought the unit cheap at a marine surplus store in Southern California, built an enclosure, and installed it onboard *Triteia* in 2018. I never minded the alcohol stove and was happy to not have explosive propane gas onboard. But in Honolulu, I was faced with a dilemma; in many places around the world, you simply cannot buy denatured alcohol. I had read this fact time and time again, and it seems the

Above, ***Triteia's* original alcohol stove and oven, removed and ready for conversion.**

At right, **with the old stove and oven parts removed, the shell is prepared for the new appliances.**

main reason for the prohibition is that denatured alcohol is sometimes consumed as a surrogate alcohol, which can lead to blindness or death.

This left me with two options. I could either convert the galley to propane or upgrade my batteries to lithium and go all electric. *Triteia* is 30 feet and has very limited stowage, and installing a propane locker would cause me to lose a large amount of space, because I didn't want to keep the canisters on the aft deck. There was also the cost of buying a new propane stove and all the required hoses and fittings, and I still did not like the idea of having explosive gas onboard. I know there are probably thousands of boats on the water with propane that have never had any explosions, but the few videos I have seen online of boats that did were enough reason for me to not be a fan. I had also read about cruisers having trouble finding fittings to fill their propane tanks as they moved from one country to another.

My only concern about going electric was the cost of lithium batteries and ensuring I could keep them topped up with my limited room for solar panels. In the interest of full disclosure, the decision was made for me when I received a full sponsorship from Dakota Lithium, followed by a sponsorship from Renogy Solar. I installed two new 200Ah lithium batteries, giving me a total of 400Ah. Lithium batteries can be safely taken down to almost 0% without damage to the batteries (not to mention the fact that they maintain 12 volts as they deplete). Then I replaced my two 100-watt solar panels from Renogy with two new 200-watt Renogy panels, giving me a total of 400 watts. With the new system up and running, I was ready to upgrade my galley.

There are some amazing electric stoves on the market — none of which I could afford. So I opted to retrofit my old alcohol stove into a modern electric induction range and oven. It turned out to be a very simple conversion that I was able to do in a few days after I had all the parts delivered. I went with a two-burner induction range top from Empava and managed to find one that perfectly fit in the top of my old gimbaled stove. Available space was also the determining factor for which convection oven air fryer combo I would use, and I found that the GE Mechanical Air Fryer Toaster Oven combo model with convection mode fit nicely in the space I had to work with. I purchased both appliances on Amazon.

When it was time to start the retrofit project, I was amazed and pleased to find the entire stove was simply bolted together, instead of fastened with rivets as I had expected. I just had to unbolt the stove and discard the oven box and its insulation. Then I cut a large hole out of the thin sheet metal back to allow for ample airflow and fabricated a new bottom out of ¾-inch marine plywood that I coated in epoxy and painted. The wooden bottom helped give the stove some structure that had been lost from removing the rigid oven box.

I then screwed the original metal bottom on top of the new wood base for ease of cleaning and as possible fire protection. The toaster oven has 2 inches of clearance on each side and 1 inch of clearance top and bottom to allow for substantial airflow. I installed rivet nuts on the underside feet of the oven, allowing me to bolt it securely into place.

The range was easy to install and sat perfectly in place. I used a hole saw to make several large ventilation holes below it, allowing for better airflow for that

Top right and middle, **the complete build, with the new electric stovetop and toaster oven, which has an air fryer and convection cooking mode.**

At right, **wiring for the stove and oven fit neatly behind the unit.**

unit as well. On the backside of the oven, I mounted a power strip and neatly zip-tied the appliance cords together, covering part of them with a thick rubber hose to prevent any chafe on the back edge of the oven. Once all the appliances were in place, I finished off the build-out with old teak I had been saving, putting teak trim on the face below the range and teak framing around the convection oven to help keep debris out and also make it beautiful. The teak details made the unit look period-appropriate beside *Triteia's* dark wood interior.

I then wired the appliances to a dedicated 3,000-watt Renogy inverter. This inverter has done an amazing job and only gave me a warning once, when I tried to run both burners and the air fryer at the same time. I have a 2,000-watt Victron MultiPlus inverter for the house bank and decided to also have a dedicated inverter for my galley so that if something happened and it burned out, I would still be able to use my house inverter to power the galley if needed. Since no system is foolproof, I also have a small Jetboil propane camping stove with a few small canisters as backups, should something happen to my electric galley or electrical system.

I have been using the electric galley for over eight months and have logged more than 4,000 miles under the keel. In all that time, I have never had to limit my cooking due to lack of power. The lowest my batteries have gotten down to is 25%, after riding out a week of thunderstorms. I was prepared to break out my small generator, but the sun finally came out, and after three days of sunshine on the solar panels and a four-hour motorsail, the batteries were back up to 85%.

Converting to lithium and an electric galley was one of the best upgrades I have done to *Triteia* in the years I have owned her. With the electric galley, I am able to use an electric kettle for my morning coffee and plan to buy a bread maker as well. These are all appliances that would not be possible to use with lead acid batteries without also running a genset.

It feels great to use all renewable energy, and the fact that I never have to track down cooking fuel feels even better. If you are looking to upgrade your galley or electrical system, I highly recommend looking into lithium batteries and an all-electric galley.

*James Frederick is currently circumnavigating on board his 1965 Alberg 30 sloop, SV* Triteia. *After years of adventure sailing in Southern California and then Hawaii, he untied the lines for good and pushed off to see the world. You can see videos of his galley install, lithium conversion, and solar upgrades at his YouTube channel, Sailing Triteia.*

**Bagels, anyone?**

# Form and Function

## *Turning the interior of a bargain trailer-sailer into a comfortable pocket cruiser*

BY ROBERT VAN PUTTEN

When hunting for an old fiberglass sailboat to adopt in the spring of 2022, I found many sitting forlorn in backyards on rusted-through trailers, full of rainwater and leaves. Prices started at "Please haul it away!" I passed on the free boats and looked for one that was mostly ready to sail.

The heyday of the trailerable sailboat began in the 1960s, with fiberglass boats popped out of molds and featuring incredible curves and gleaming gelcoat finishes. Gone was the need for slips or moorages, and annual hauling for maintenance that past generations of boaters had put up with. These boats were simply towed home behind your car, parked in the yard, and maintained with little more than soap, water, and wax. The idea was a boat that a family could own without the boat owning the family. It was a novel concept that sold well.

Manufacturers made tens of thousands of these boats, and thanks to the longevity of fiberglass and resin, used ones are still available. Some designs were inspired; others, not so much. Some are great performers under sail, while others are better for playing house in.

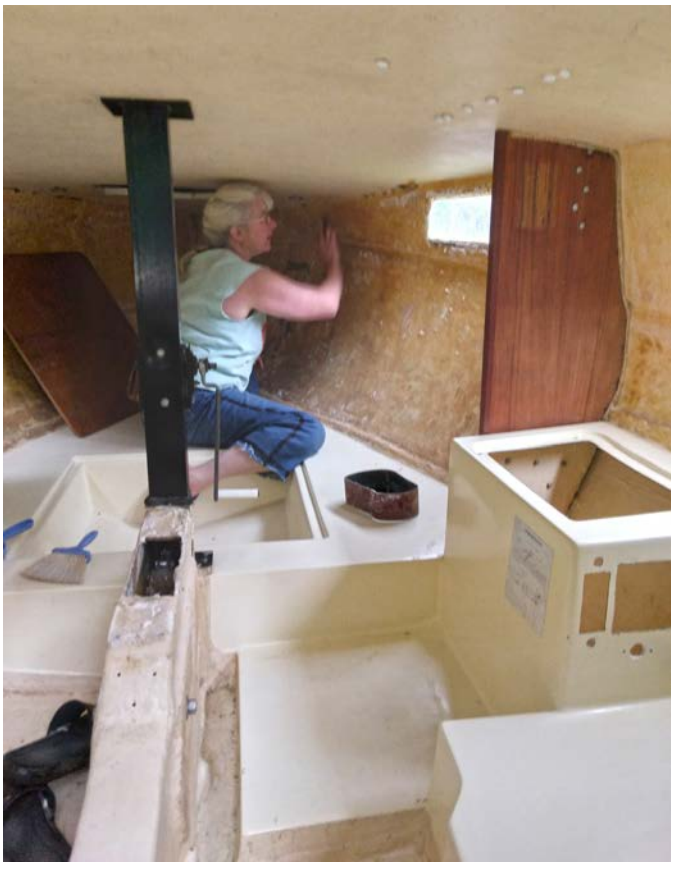
Eventually I found a 1978 San Juan 21 that had spent decades in an old chicken barn. The rigging and sails were basically good, the cored deck sound, and the hull still gleamed under the dust and grime. The same could not be said for the interior. Moldy carpet covered the floors and old cloth was glued to the walls. The cushions were damp and stank of mildew. The forward hatch was broken. There were brittle plastic light fixtures, a cassette player, and a knotmeter of late 1970s vintage. The electrical panel was corroded, with a long-mummified battery, and the chainplates leaked, dry-rotting the bulkheads.

This boat was for sailing, not playing house. The headroom down below was only 4 feet at best, but the raised, flush-deck cabin allowed us to sit on the quarter berths without knocking our heads against the side decks. The V-berth had 3 feet of headroom at the head and not much less at the foot. Two people could sit comfortably on it, reclining against the cabin walls and facing each other.

As we sat in the mildewed cabin amid a jumble of old gear, we could see the potential to make her into a cozy little den. We fell in love with the boat, which is the most important part. Towing her home was exciting yet uneventful, an odd combination. At 1,500 pounds, she towed easily behind our 16-year-old Jeep. This was a boat we could own, that could take us on many adventures, yet would not own us.

We parked her on the lawn and spent days scrubbing her out. Cushions, carpet, cloth from the walls, bulkheads, electrical system, and wiring were torn out. We scrubbed the walls with 80-grit sandpaper and painted them with mold-killing primer, including under the cockpit. Then we sat inside, sketch pad on lap, deciding what was to become of the interior. Working on an old, cheap boat is liberating because the investment is minimal and we couldn't make it worse than it already was.

We drew up lists of things we wanted; storage, a two-burner propane stove, some counter space, a place to stow the porta-potty, a small folding table, and a good



**After the old fabric was removed, the walls were scrubbed with 60 grit sandpaper, then painted with mold killing primer.**

mirror for shaving and putting in contact lenses. Things we didn't want were plumbing, a sink, or a complicated electrical system. A sink takes up room, is often too small to be useful, and isn't needed on a boat low enough for us to touch the water from the cockpit. Modern rechargeable lights and handheld electronics make an electrical system on a small boat a needless complication.

The remodel started in the bow, where I cut out a fiberglass bin above the V-berth that had been used to hold the anchor and rode. No way I was going to stow a muddy anchor and dripping rode above my bed. I replaced it with simple plywood shelves for clothes, glued in place with thickened epoxy. Then I started on the main cabin.

The original layout was pretty standard for boats this size, with a V-berth forward and quarter berths aft, separated by small molded storage bins, one of which had held the battery and electrical panel. The centerboard trunk bisects the cabin. The quarter berths were wider than needed for sitting and the voids inside them were unused space, so using a 4-inch angle grinder, I sliced 6 inches off the starboard quarter berth, going back under the cockpit 2 feet. This gave us more foot room and space to hang a folding table on the centerboard trunk, and enabled us to slide the porta-potty under the cockpit.

While I was at it, I cut away the battery bin forward of the quarter berth and the flat spot molded into the floor intended to hold the potty at the head of the V-berth. In the port quarter berth, I cut a big hole to make a hatch to access the unused space within for storage. (Of course, I wore a hooded Tyvek suit, gloves, and respirator for all this cutting.)

During the demolition, I discovered the hull liner had separated from the hull in several places. This isn't unusual, as fiberglass boats are typically made from three big molded pieces — the hull, liner, and deck — and stress can crack the joints between them. Thankfully, another virtue of fiberglass boats is that they are easy to repair. I slathered thickened epoxy into the cracks between the hull and liner and covered them with fiberglass tape set in more epoxy. Cutting open the starboard quarter berth exposed a cardboard tube glassed to the hull to stiffen it, which I ground away because that area was now part of the floor. The quarter berths are a structural element, and I needed to reinforce the area where I'd removed these pieces.

I laid fiberglass mat down in epoxy on the exposed areas of the bare hull, extending well inside the quarter berth. Then I epoxied ¼-inch birch plywood on top of that, using a 55-pound anvil to force the plywood into the curve of the hull. I put another layer of fiberglass mat on top of the plywood, and finally, laid down fiberglass cloth for a new, smooth floor. I made a new front for the starboard quarter berth out of ¼-inch birch plywood with ¾-inch square

Above left, **the starboard quarter berth and battery box were cut away, the floor reinforced, and cracks in the hull liner repaired.**

Below left, **trekking poles made handy adjustable cross braces while the glue set.**

Below, **ribs were laminated in place from strips of Douglas fir using contact cement.**

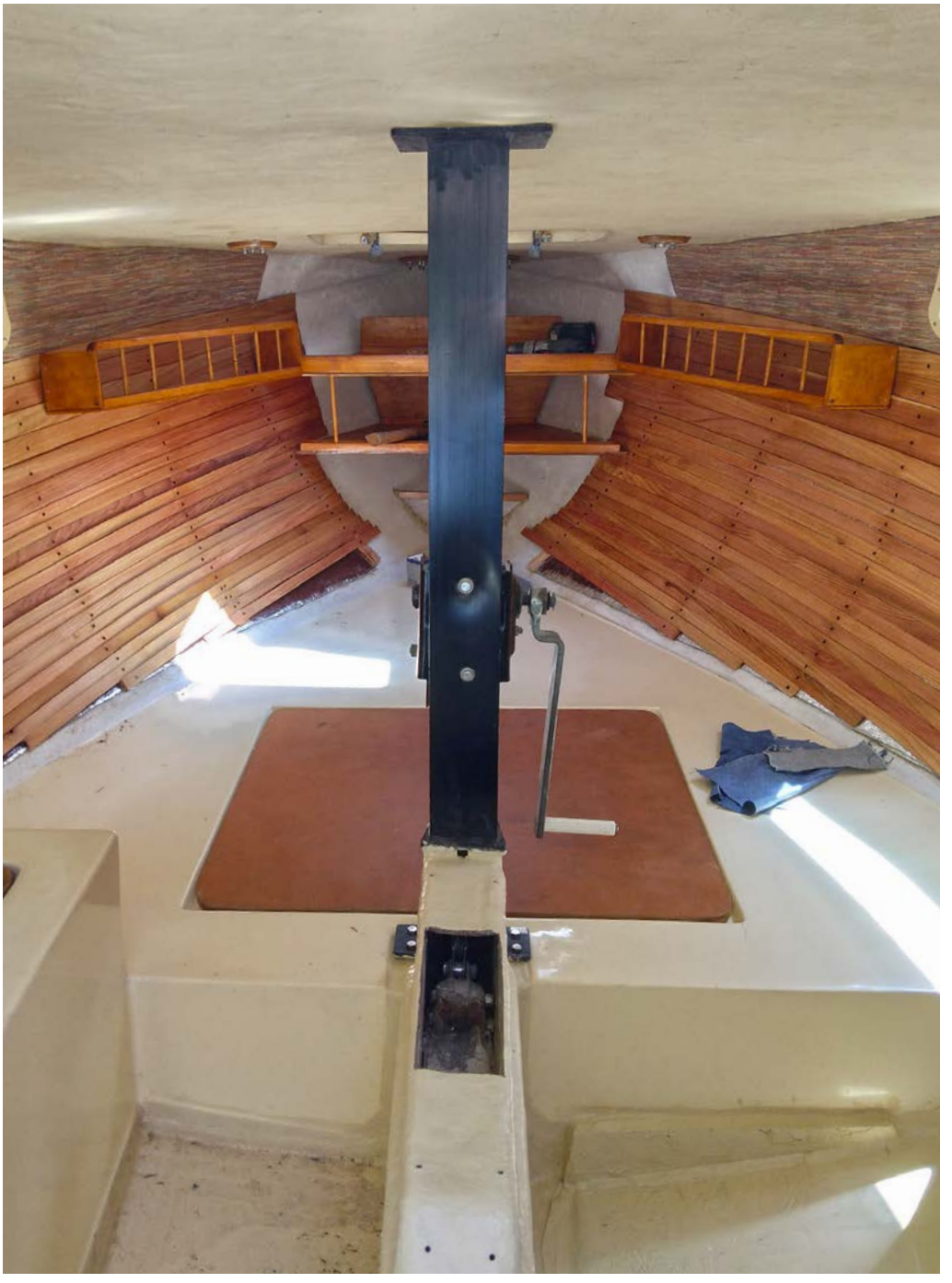

framing on the inside, glued and screwed it in place, and added epoxy fillets outside.

Then I turned my attention to the port quarter berth. I made a plywood hatch to fit the opening, with stiffening ribs on the inside. Next came the hard part. The quarter berth extends back under the cockpit some distance. To keep from losing things inside, I installed a bulkhead about 2 feet aft of the hatch. I did this by reaching in and fitting cardboard templates by trial and error, transferring the shapes to plywood, and sticking them in place with sloppy fillets of thickened epoxy. Finally, I sanded the storage space reasonably smooth and painted it.

For peace of mind, I drilled holes in the rear of both quarter berths and the front of the V-berth to access the remaining voids within, and poured in two-part expanding foam. It would take about 22 cubic feet of foam to float the boat when swamped. There isn't sufficient volume for that, but the foam does help stiffen the hull, and it turns the V-berth into a collision bulkhead. The foam under the V-berth would prevent water intrusion in the event of a hull breach forward, at least for a time. After the foam cured, I patched the pour holes with epoxy. Call it cheap insurance.

A neighbor gave us a roll of insulation left over from lining his garage — it was ¼-inch closed-cell with foil on both sides, perfect for the boat! My wife measured, cut, and fit the insulation to go on the walls above the turn of the hull. When she was happy with the fit, she wrapped the insulation with upholstery fabric and quilted it together on her sewing machine, then glued it in place with contact cement.

Now for the woodwork. I was inspired to line the cabin with cedar by a friend who has done this to dozens of boats, installing vertical ribs and fixing long, horizontal cedar strips to them. I made ribs by slicing Douglas fir 2 x 4 scraps into ⅛-inch strips with my table saw, and laminated three layers of them together with contact cement. I chose contact cement because we had a gallon and I thought its instant grab would make things easier. This did work, but in the future, I'd stick with epoxy. Next, I took cedar fence boards that had sat in my father-in-law's basement for years and milled them into 2-inch by 5/16-inch shiplap using his fancy tools. When the ribs were done, we fitted insulation between them and attached the cedar strips with polyurethane glue and short brads. Trekking poles made handy adjustable cross braces while the glue set.



**The V-berth is insulated, lined with cedar, and fitted with shelving.**

The shiplap worked well in the main cabin and in higher areas, but close to the V-berth I had to use strips about ¾-inch by 3/16-inch to fit the tight curves. I painted the insulation behind them brown so any gaps wouldn't be noticeable. We finished the strips with a single coat of amber shellac, a natural material made from a resin secreted by female lac bugs on trees in the forests of southeastern Asia. Once a popular wood finish, it has been largely replaced by cheaper and tougher stuff. It worked well and its scent complements that of the cedar.

Next came new plywood bulkheads, fitted by taking the shape from the old. I extended the port bulkhead to the centerboard trunk to provide backing for a galley counter. This turned the V-berth into a distinct space, a separate room.

When the bulkheads were in, I made a tall storage cabinet topped with a 4-inch rail where the starboard battery bin had been. This was quite a chore because nothing was level and all the surfaces the cabinet touches are curved. Thankfully, I'm no perfectionist, and I simply did the best I could by guess and by golly and with cardboard templates, transferring the shapes to plywood that I framed with small sticks ripped to size on the table saw. It's one of the best features of the cabin, holding water jugs in the bottom and a week's supply of food on the shelves. The top holds bread, fruit, and vegetables.

The storage space inside the port fiberglass bin was difficult to access. To make it easier to get at, I cut the top opening much bigger and stiffened the edge with a wood rim fitted inside. Then I installed a hinged, ¾-inch plywood galley counter over it, extending it to the centerline, where the other end rests on the centerboard trunk. A 3-gallon propane tank sits on the floor below the counter, lashed to the bulkhead, and feeds the stove bolted on top and the propane heater. I fitted a small drawer repurposed from an old desk under the counter to hold utensils, adding an elk horn toggle to keep it closed.

We needed a rack for dishes, and the wasted space along the curved hull side of the galley counter seemed ideal. This was another case of inventing something to fit the space. I made cardboard templates, then transferred the shapes to ¼-inch plywood and framed them with small pieces of oak ripped on my table saw. It works great, holding cups, bowls, plates, frying pan, and more.

Above the galley is a small spice rack and medicine cabinet I made of oak pieces — again, ripped to the right size and thickness on my table saw, then glued and nailed together. You're probably noticing a pattern here; my table saw is essential for this kind of cabinetwork, but there are no dovetails or anything fancy anywhere, just simple lap and butt joints. The medicine cabinet door is thin plywood fitted with a mirror my wife found at a yard sale. It's perfect for shaving and dealing with contact lenses.

To finish the interior, I made shelves to go above the V-berth and racks to stow paddles and whisker poles under the cockpit while my wife sewed cushions, pouches to hang above the V-berth for clothes, and pockets to hang along the sides of the hull under the cockpit to hold charts, companionway drop boards, umbrellas, kites, and more.

**A lift-out hatch and interior bulkhead were added to the starboard quarter berth to make a stowage compartment.**

There was still plenty of work to do on the boat's exterior, but that is a story for another day. We easily got all of the initial work done in one summer. That's probably the biggest advantage of trailerable sailboats. The boat can sit out on the lawn or in the driveway, accessible to work on when the opportunity presents itself or inspiration strikes — and heck, all my tools and supplies are at home too! The cost of the project was surprisingly little. The wood was free from old furniture, fence boards, and the like. Any special tools I didn't have, I borrowed. All I had to pay for was some hardware, glue, and fiberglass materials.

The improvement to the boat is nothing short of astonishing. Living out of a duffle bag in a cramped plastic turtle shell dripping with condensation amid confused jumbles of paraphernalia can be laughed off for a time, but a real cruising boat needs a cozy and snug cabin wherein one can truly be at home. It should be finished in warm, natural wood and cloth surfaces that don't attract condensation, and the available space adapted to the functions of living; one must be able to cook, eat, and rest comfortably. There must be adequate storage, including a spot for your toothbrush. Customizing the boat makes it more serviceable and functional, and can actually make it feel larger.

The smaller the boat, the more challenging this may be, but nothing offers the carefree freedom, adventure, and solitude like an affordable and easily handled pocket cruiser.

*Robert grew up on Long Island Sound, where he and a buddy sailed a Super Snark to destruction. Eventually he moved to the Pacific Northwest, where he canoed happily for decades. One day on Ross Lake in Washington state, he and his wife were hammering the water as if killing snakes, trying to round a point in a canoe in high wind and waves, when it occurred to him that it might be nice to once again have a boat that could harness the wind.*

# Fatty Knees 8

## *The little boat that could*

BY MARISSA NEELY

In an era of increasingly bigger boats, sometimes it's the smaller vessels that steal the show — like our beloved Fatty Knees 8 dinghy. Despite its modest size and funny name, this dinghy has earned a well-deserved cult following, thanks to its smart design.

The Fatty Knees 8 dinghy, often referred to simply as the ″Fatty Knees″ or "Fatty," was designed by renowned naval architect Lyle Hess for celebrated sailing legends Lin and Larry Pardey. "We wanted something that would be a good cargo-carrying boat," Lin told me over the phone. "The limitation was that it had to fit under the boom, be 8 feet long and as light as possible, but strong."

Hess, who also designed both of the Pardeys' Bristol Channel Cutters, was up for the task. He decided to use the classic fishing wherry boats as inspiration, since they were designed to carry weight and allow the rower to sit in multiple locations to compensate for the displacement, which is how the Fatty Knees got its notable T-shaped seat.

The Fatty Knees' range of capabilities, paired with the Pardey stamp of approval, are what make this fantastic little dinghy one of the most versatile small boats you can find.

### A Sturdy Tender

Made from robust fiberglass, the Fatty Knees is built to withstand the rigors of life as a tender. It can handle the daily challenges of ferrying passengers and supplies between the shore and your larger boat, but also arguably can be repaired easier than an inflatable tender.


Above, **Lin and Larry Pardey aboard their beloved Fatty Knees 8, *Cheeky*.**

At right, ***Cheeky* safely stowed aboard Lin and Larry Pardey's *Taleisin*.**


**The Pardeys' *Taleisin* and *Cheeky*, rafted alongside a fellow Bristol Channel Cutter.**

"One day when we were anchored by one of the South Pacific islands, Larry went ashore to get water and he came back with a hole in the dinghy after having a run-in with a coral head," Lin recalled. That evening, they hoisted *Cheeky*, their Fatty Knees, aboard and got to work fiberglassing the hole. *Cheeky* was back in service once the resin had cured, continued to be used heavily by the Pardeys during their 15 years cruising aboard *Taleisin*, and is still in use by *Taleisin's* new crew some 35 years later.

While visiting Cabo San Lucas, Mexico, my partner, Chris, and I needed to ferry around 300 pounds of extra cargo — diesel, provisions, boat parts, and more — from the shore to our boat, which was anchored about a mile away. The Fatty Knees' lapstrake construction, known for its strength and stability, allowed us to carry the extra weight without compromising performance. As we ventured through the harbor channel, encountering a 3-foot chop, our little boat powered over the waves, leaving onlookers in awe. Unlike some of the struggling inflatables attempting the same course, we stayed dry, thanks to the high freeboard. And that's when it hit us — yet another "I love this boat" moment.


***Winglet* loaded with diesel and provisions in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico.**

The stability of the Fatty Knees is what inspired Lin to bestow ours with the name *Winglet* when we asked her to choose a moniker. In an email, she explained that the name was inspired by our current boat, *Avocet*, and our previous dinghy, *Little Wing*. "I also think of the stability and efficiency of the little Fatty Knees dinghies," she wrote, "and this reminds me of the reason winglets have now been added to jet airplane wings to improve both stability and efficiency, and save energy. Quite fitting for a Fatty Knees, I think." And so our dinghy became known as *Winglet*.

## Propulsion Options

Although the Fatty has a well-balanced design that makes it easy to row, it has other propulsion options. With a sail kit and daggerboard, this little dinghy can be transformed into one of the most fun little sailing boats to cruise around anchorages, harbors, and other areas. Chris and I can both fit comfortably aboard while sailing but have also squeezed another person in, still leaving us with a decent amount of freeboard.

"I can't count the number of times we invited local youngsters (and often not so young folks) to share a sail on little *Cheeky*," Lin said. "I often recall the time when a cruising mother asked if she could borrow the dinghy for a few hours. When she came sailing back, she sighed and said, 'What bliss, a chance to get some real peace and tranquility and feel like I was playing at the same time.'"


Above, ***Winglet*** **and** ***Walnut*** **ghosting along on an evening cruise.**

Although Chris and I have had the pleasure of sailing our *Winglet* through many anchorages, sailing is our least used mode of propulsion. Instead, we primarily use our 2-hp outboard to get us safely to and from shore, and although many may argue it is slow, I like to counter with a simple question: "What's the rush?"

Whether you choose to row, sail, or motor the Fatty Knees, you will find that the boat handles phenomenally.

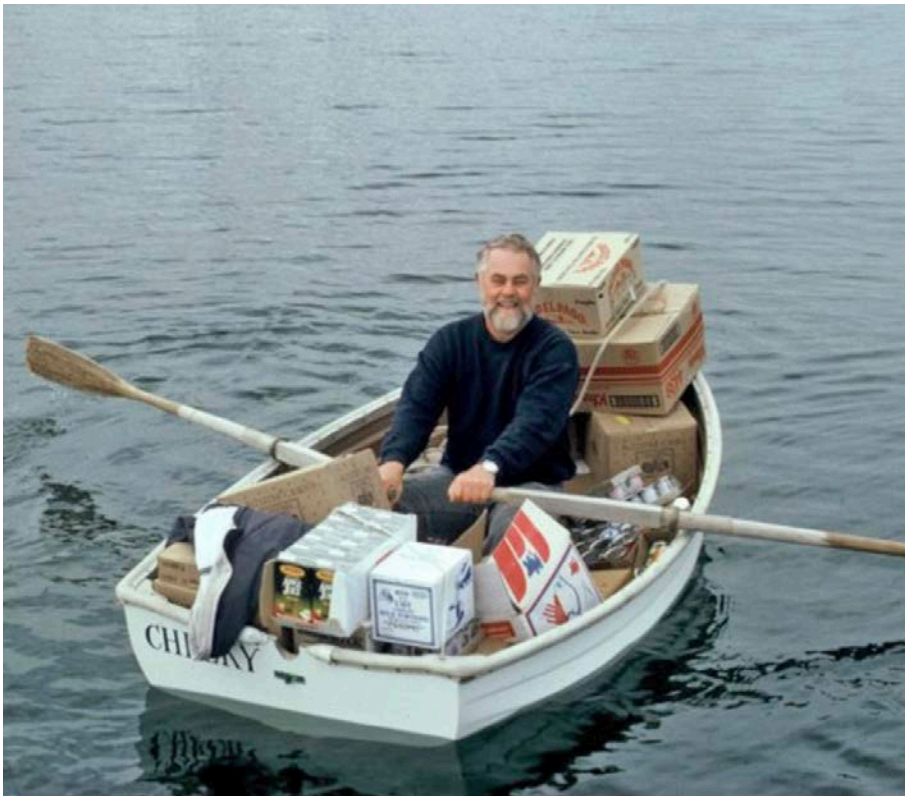
## Seamless and Simple

Beyond merely captivating with its visual allure, the Fatty Knees 8 embodies practicality. Its size allows for effortless handling on and off the water, while the robust fusion of fiberglass and marine plywood guarantees longevity. A sound investment, this dinghy is a reliable and

At right, **the author's partner, Chris, rowing their Fatty Knees 8 in San Francisco's Aquatic Cove.**

At right, **Larry Pardey proving how capable the Fatty Knees 8 is for hauling cargo.**

Below, **Larry sails *Cheeky* in a good breeze.**



enduring choice for sailing enthusiasts, standing resilient against the test of time.

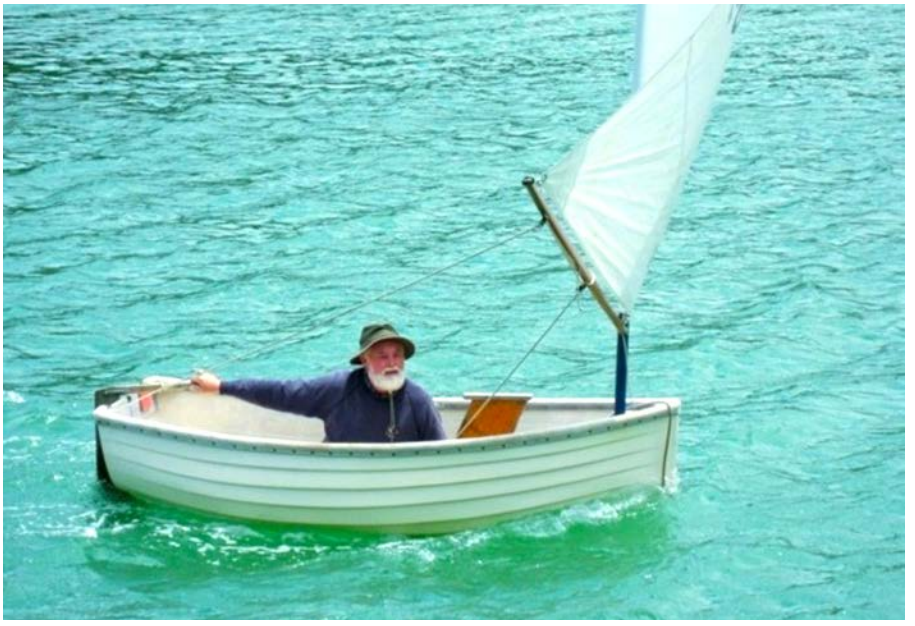
"I acknowledge the merits of an inflatable tender, but I genuinely miss the simplicity of a hard sailing dinghy, reminiscent of my days cruising on *Taleisin*," Lin said. "Easy to row, enduring, and a joy to sail. Besides, seals can't puncture it, like what happened to a friend's inflatable at South Georgia Island."

She reflected for a moment, then added, "If there was room for it onboard *Sahula* (the boat she currently cruises on), it would be here." Lin's *Cheeky* (the 3rd) remains a cherished possession, utilized during her time at home in New Zealand.

While the Fatty Knees 8 dinghy may boast modest dimensions, it stands as a giant in terms of versatility, durability, and classic charm. With its multifaceted uses, modern features, and enduring design, it's no surprise that sailors and other boating enthusiasts hold this petite vessel in high esteem. Whether navigating bustling harbors or savoring the thrill of wind in your sails, the Fatty Knees dinghy unquestionably earns its place as a sailing classic in its own league.

My partner, Chris, and I were captivated by this tender long before we became the proud owners of our 1979 Cheoy Lee 41, *Avocet*. We're delighted to possess a piece of sailing history that continues to prove its worth on all our cruising adventures and to demonstrate that bigger and faster is not always better. Sometimes the finest things in life come in capable and compact packages.

*Marissa and her partner, Chris, have lived aboard their 1979 Cheoy Lee, 41* Avocet, *for five years and have been cruising since 2022. Read about their refit or follow their journey on YouTube (Sailing Avocet) or their blog at svavocet.com. Follow Lin Pardey on Instagram @pardeylin.*



# Turning a derelict Thistle into a ThistleCruiser

*When the right boat proves elusive, a sailor tackles a major overhaul.*

BY JOHN CHURCHILL

My search for the ideal beach cruiser started several years ago, when I decided to compete in the Everglades Challenge, an unsupported race of about 300 nautical miles for small boats, canoes, and kayaks. I bought a wooden Core Sound 17, a popular model for this event; unfortunately, the builder's deviations from the plans decreased her stability and impaired her positive flotation, making her unsuitable.

After an exciting sail on a friend's WindRider 16, I purchased one, modified her a bit, and started the Everglades Challenge. A torn sail put me out of the race, but I realized that I preferred a less organized and competitive environment. Additionally, while the WindRider only drew 18 inches, beaching with her fixed keel and rudder was difficult, and I wanted more shelter than the two previous boats offered.

My next choice was a Peep Hen, a spacious 14-footer with a great cabin and shallow draft. After participating in the Florida 120 rally, an annual cruise for small boats, it became apparent that the grave compromises in her sailing performance were unacceptable. These exercises in picking my poison gave me a much clearer idea of what I wanted. The next boat had to sail well, have a centerboard that would kick up in shallows, not have a fixed keel, be stable and self-bailing, and provide some minimal accommodations.

I came across an ad on Craigslist for a Thistle — "$750/needs work," it said, and there were a few poor photos. She wasn't my perfect boat, but at that price, it was certainly worth a look. I grew up as a boat-crazed kid in Indiana and knew about Thistles. They were far out of my reach as a child, but I was captivated by their lines and beautiful woodwork.

I was predisposed to like the boat, but I was disappointed. It had clearly not been sailed in years. The tarp covering it was ancient, allowing leaves and debris to collect inside. The woodwork was decayed and the roughly brushed paint was peeling, but the fiberglass hull seemed intact and the boat was complete with rig, sails, and a trailer. I made a lowball offer, half hoping he would turn it down, but he didn't. Towing her home, I realized I didn't

Below left, **a thwart, this one terribly rotted, meant to reinforce the centerboard trunk, is typical of the boat's original woodwork.**

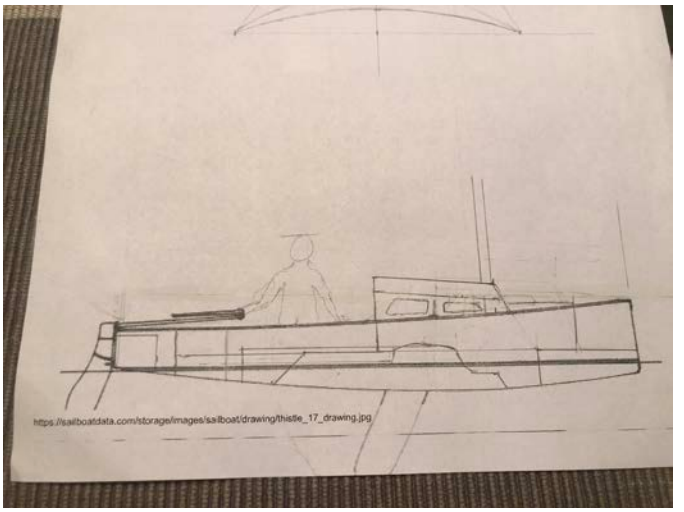
Below, **the slatted rear deck had some rot in every piece, but the hardware was salvaged for later use.**

really know what I wanted to do with her. With childhood visions of the beautiful Thistles in mind, my plan was to do the woodwork needed to pretty her up, which I didn't think would be too expensive.

Once I got her into my shop and started poking and prodding, I discovered that the woodwork was in much worse shape than I'd realized. Nearly every piece was dry-rotted and needed to be replaced. Turning to the internet, I got my next rude awakening. Those beautiful replacement rails alone would be over $1,000.

In an effort to help determine what I wanted to do with the boat, I signed up to crew at a Thistle regatta. When conditions turned gusty the second day, it took all three crew to keep her upright, and on the last race, we put the rail down briefly and partially swamped the boat. Comparing the fleet's display of glossy gelcoat, stunning brightwork, modern go-fast gear, updated spars, and new sails to my pitiful project with her peeling paint, ancient blocks, obsolete mast, wooden boom, and blown-out sails was a reality check.

It would take many hours and likely well over $10,000 to have a boat worth much less than that, which still was unlikely to be frontline competitive. Furthermore, the need for three crew to sail the boat effectively, and her lack of self-bailing ability, convinced me that her original design was unsuitable for my needs. But her speed potential, light weight, and shallow draft were undeniable assets. The decision to transform her into the "ThistleCruiser," my ideal high-performance beach cruiser, was easy and gave me a new sense of direction.




**The author made a scale drawing, then filled in the fixed structures for flotation tanks and a centerboard trunk, allowing him to include these while designing cabin and cockpit additions.**

> **At that price, it was certainly worth a look.**

I got out my sketch pad and measuring tape. The book of class rules she came with included a set of lines, which made drawing my modifications easier. I planned to build her new deck and cabin using the tack-and-tape technique with which I was familiar. I wanted a self-bailing cockpit that was long enough to lie down in, a cabin with a full-length bunk, space for a portable toilet, a forward anchor well like my Peep Hen, an icebox accessible while sailing so I didn't have to bring an awkward cooler, and some lockers for watertight storage. With a little modification, I could incorporate the existing flotation tanks as bulkheads and for storage.

More modest goals gave me freedom to reuse her antique hardware and modify the original sails. I would step the mast in a tabernacle for easy raising and set the jib


**The stripped-out hull is ready for reconstruction. The fiberglass components were kept to maintain hull shape and stiffness.**

At left, **the forward cabin face is installed, with deck beams running to the forward bulkhead. The cabin sides and aft bulkheads are mocked up using ⅛-inch paneling salvaged from a friend.**

Below, **the centerboard being reinforced. The connection was loose, so the author wrapped it with fiberglass and additional uniaxial carbon fiber strips set in epoxy.**

on a furler. The mainsail is enormous and needed slab reefing, which is not allowed by the class. The fixed rudder would have to be changed to a kick-up type. In designing the cabin, it was apparent that the hull was not shaped for interior accommodations. It is optimized for speed — narrow forward and shallow aft. The centerboard trunk was a defining feature and set the height of the cockpit floor, allowing it to drain through the trunk's open top. The cockpit seating was moved to rail height for greater comfort; raising the cockpit floor added flotation up high, which helps with self-righting. The aft flotation tank and 6-foot 6-inch cockpit length pushed the main cabin bulkhead forward.

To minimize added weight and windage and retain her attractive lines, I wanted to keep her cabin profile low. It took many tries to get the right look to the portlights. There wasn't enough width and depth to fit a quarter berth, so the bunk went forward and I accepted the compromise of limited headroom over it. This still left room for an anchor well, using the forward flotation tank as its floor. There is headroom in the cabin only when seated on the sole. Not wanting to alter her balance, I kept the same relative mast position, though that limited my hatch options.

I removed every bit of wood and hardware, leaving just the hull. The chainplates came off easily, since the backing blocks had rotted away to dirt. With all the extra fastener holes in the rail area, it was obvious that this was not her first makeover. I decided early on that I was aiming for a functional finish rather than anything fancy. Her beauty would be in her utility. Lumberyard ⅜-inch plywood and ordinary lumber were the order of the day. A quick scraping dislodged the worst of her peeling interior paint, followed by a quick wash to remove accumulated dirt. I stripped the upper edges of the hull and locations for the new bulkheads of paint, almost the only laborious sanding I did on the whole project.

With a bare fiberglass shell, I was ready to start her transformation. I fitted the

Far left and left, **the centerboard trunk was rebuilt to the original design.**

anchor well bulkhead and taped it into place. Throughout the project, I used paneling salvaged from a friend's home remodeling project to make patterns and mock-ups before cutting the actual components. The hull edge needed reinforcing, so I added inwales fore and aft, and a breasthook later. This followed my overall approach of a rough design outline, with details to be sorted out as the build progressed.

I cut and installed the forward cabin face. Attached just at the hull edge, it was quite flimsy at first, but stiffened up once I added 1 x 2 longitudinal deck beams for the forward deck. I had the cabin top camber from my drawings and used this curve for the forward deck as well. I fitted the forward deck and glued it to the beams with epoxy, temporarily securing it with drywall screws. I then taped the deck edge.

The next step was to cut and fit the aft cabin bulkhead. This had to go over the centerboard trunk, so the centerboard came out, and like every other part of the boat, it needed some attention. It is a solid piece of mahogany, the lower half being a lead casting secured with brass side plates. The critical upper forward corner of the board was rotted, so I repaired it with some scrap oak. There was some movement between the lead and wood segments, so I reinforced the joint with fiberglass and epoxy, with a few strips of leftover carbon fiber thrown in for coolness. The centerboard arrangement is a little unusual as it is not hinged on a pin, but rather, rides on rollers along the top edge of the trunk, with a reel and tackle arrangement providing mechanical advantage to raise the heavy board.

After replacing the pieces along the trunk edge, I taped the aft cabin bulkhead to the hull sides and the flotation tanks, and cut hatches where the forward and side flotation tanks extended into the cabin for storage. Once both cabin bulkheads were in, I installed the rear cockpit bulkhead. To stiffen the rear cockpit floor, I placed a centerline beam from the aft end of the centerboard trunk to this bulkhead. Partitions under the floor prevent gear from disappearing into the inaccessible depths of the cavernous lockers.

After slapping a quick coat of paint on the inside of the hull, I installed the cockpit floor with a slot for the opening of the trunk. The outer edges of the floor rest on the side tanks. I then installed the faces of the cockpit seats. On the port side forward, I cut away the top of the flotation tank and placed 4 inches of insulation all around for an icebox, taping the joints

**The cockpit is completed — except for a million other details that came later.**

with aluminum duct tape. I then installed the seat tops and taped those seams.

While I still had easy cabin access, I reinstalled the centerboard and placed the wood stanchions that support the pennant system and double as mast compression posts. I tied in the stanchions, which I cut down from some ancient yellow pine 2 x 4s I had in the shop, with the deck framing.

While the boat was still open, I fitted the rudimentary cabin joinery, which was little more than a flat area for a bunk to starboard, a vertical panel forward to port to create a storage bin, and a small cabin sole for a flat spot to set a possible portable toilet. As the shrouds would now be attached to the cabin sides, I made knees to support the cabin sides in this area, attaching them to the forward face of the flotation tanks. The cabin sides in the chainplate area were reinforced with an extra layer of plywood.

Fitting the cabin sides was one of the most challenging parts of the project. I imagined I would just bend them into place, but the hull edge was too flexible and the ⅜-inch plywood was too stiff, though I had already cut the holes for the portlights. I never achieved a fair curve on the cabin sides, despite using a variety of tricks trying to bend them. I then closed her up by installing the cabin top. I had planned this carefully to make sure a single 4-foot wide piece of plywood fit. I added a 1 x 1 toerail to the cabin top, an essential safety feature missing on my Peep Hen, then taped all the remaining seams and installed the plastic cockpit seat hatches I had picked up at a consignment shop.

Another challenge was the rudder. The Thistle rudder is a fixed blade design that is not easily modified, and good foil shape is important for windward ability. A kick-up cassette design seemed ideal, but the Thistle tiller passes through an opening in the transom and I couldn't figure out how to engineer it. While mulling over my options, I came across a daggerboard on Craigslist for $35. While the foil shape was great, the top was a little too thick and the flats were asymmetrical. I eventually split the top, crushed the rear part with big clamps, and epoxied it back together, building out the flats symmetrically with chopped fiberglass and body filler. I cut cheeks from ¾-inch plywood and the new tiller from one of those great old 2 x 4s. I sold the original rudder and tiller to a sailor for $200.

I added coamings around the hatch and cut the portlights from ⅛-inch polycarbonate left over from another project. I made a mast step for the cabin top and cut a tabernacle from a section of 4-inch square aluminum tube. I fabricated a plastic hinge plate and added it to the base of the mast, with a ¼-inch stainless bolt used for the pin. After installing the

Top left, **the ThistleCruiser is ready for the initial mast raising, with the mast in the tabernacle and supported in the crutch.**

Top right, **when the mast was raised, the author had to figure out the proper mast rake and corresponding forestay length.**

At left, **capsize testing confirmed that she floats high and the cockpit will not fill with water. The masthead float is of sufficient size to prevent turtling.**

Left, **making good speed flying the spinnaker and full main in a very light breeze on St. George Sound on the Florida Panhandle.**

Below, **just a few inches of draft allows her to be beached for the night after a great day of sailing during the Florida 120 Rally.**

chainplates, I took careful measurements, cut the shrouds, and added new mechanical terminals.

The forestay was too short.

Unconventionally, I added a turnbuckle at the upper end, which allowed for both adjustment and retention of the original tensioning system at the lower end. It was only when I got the mast up that I realized how remarkably overcanvassed this boat is. Concerned about capsize recovery, I made a crude pivoting masthead float laminated out of two thicknesses of 2-inch insulating foam board.

After I was happy with the boat's structure, I removed the hardware and gave her decks two thick coats of white oil paint. I then taped off and painted beige non-skid in an attractive pattern. The strip I sanded along the upper edge of the hull was still bare so I painted it black, echoing my hero Moitessier's *Joshua*. After reinstalling all the hatches and portlights, there were still myriad fittings to be added for running rigging, anchoring, and docking. Many of these were either original or came out of my parts bin. I hadn't really thought through how I was going to build the hatch cover. As a quick temporary solution, I made a canvas cover supported by fiberglass rods that continues to work well.

Her original trailer was in the same pathetic condition as the boat. I was surprised it made it the 100-mile trip home. I replaced it with another that ultimately needed the axle replaced and also bearings, tires, and lights. Moving her onto the new trailer in preparation for her first sail was an adventure in itself.

I launched her and did capsize testing, which showed that she was very stable, self-righting from about 80 degrees with the centerboard down. Importantly, with the cabin out to the sides of the hull and the cockpit seats at deck level, she floats high while on her side and comes up without taking on any water. Her masthead float is effective at preventing her from turning turtle.

On her subsequent maiden voyage, she exceeded my expectations. She is fast and weatherly, is a delight to sail on all points, ghosts along in just a breath of wind, and floats in just a few inches of water. Generous reefs in the main keep her docile. Her cabin, though cramped, is adequate for a singlehander's needs, and a boom tent can provide more space if I wish to spread out. And best of all, the icebox keeps ice for five days.

After some thinking, I named her *Transmogrifier* after my favorite cartoon character's invention and had a sign shop make up her name in his childish scrawl. According to the Oxford dictionary, transmogrify means to "transform in a surprising or magical manner." Seems fitting.

*John Churchill grew up a boat-crazy kid in Indiana. He built a raft at age 6, sailed Snipes as a teenager, and worked his way toward salt water and bigger boats. He has sailed a Cape Dory 26 singlehanded to Bermuda and back, and a Bristol Channel Cutter transatlantic with his father. Now in Florida, John sails* Nurdle, *a Bristol 35.5 (and former repo) that he's rehabbing for extended post-retirement cruising.*

# Forestay Grabber

## *A clever solution for raising a mast on a small boat*

BY JOHN CHURCHILL

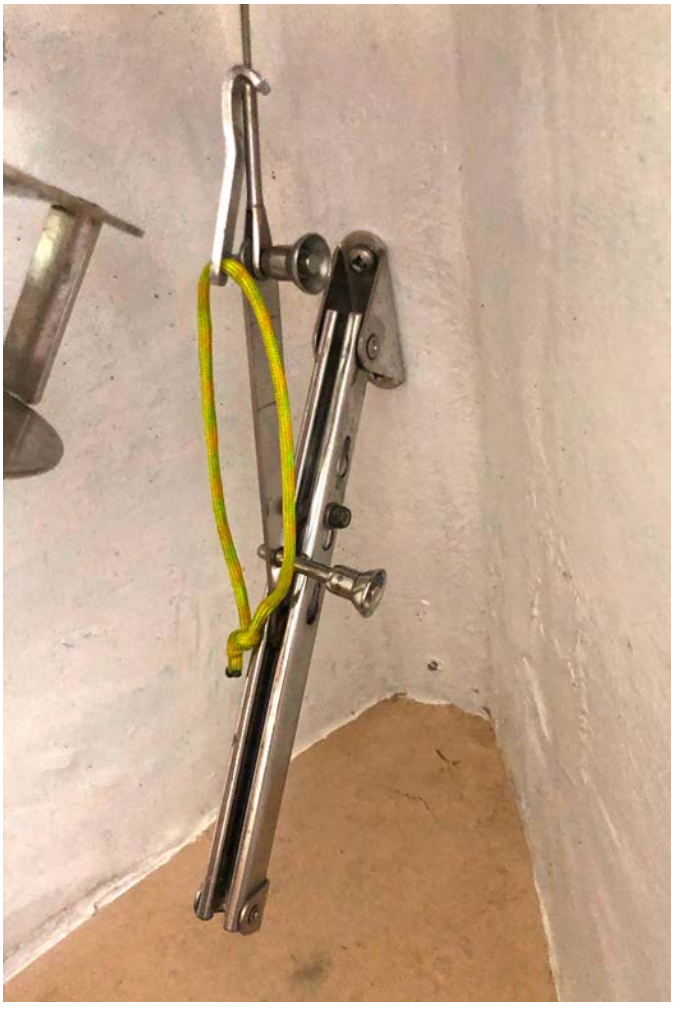
I have a renovated/repurposed 17-foot Thistle trailer-sailer named *Transmogrifier* for daysailing and beach cruising (see page 36 for the full story). The mast is light enough that I am able to raise it manually once the butt is secured in the tabernacle, which is good, as I typically sail solo.

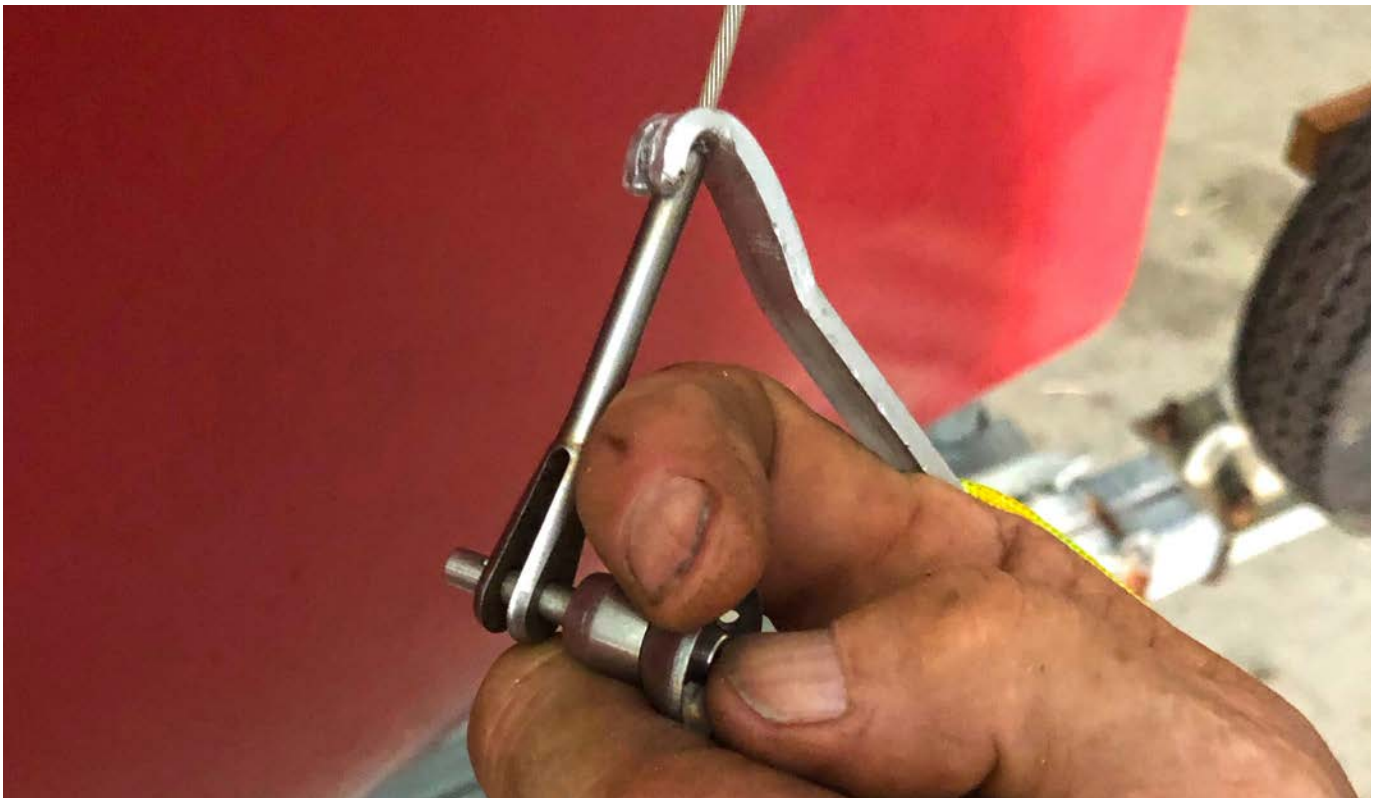
The boat's shrouds are led slightly aft and become taut as the mast is raised, which keeps it from falling off to either side. When the mast is up, there is only a slight rake, so there is not a great tendency to fall aft. However, the thought of losing control of the spar and having it fall before I have the forestay connected makes my blood run cold. Using the jib halyard to support the mast is a common solution, but my boat has wire halyards with a somewhat cumbersome winch arrangement, making this less suitable for me.

The problem is accentuated a bit on my boat because to connect the forestay, the forked swage has to be passed through

Bottom left, **the finished grabber with lanyard is easy to make and incredibly functional.**

Below, **the grabber is in place, with the forestay secured to the tensioning lever inside the bow.**





a hole in the breasthook and then connected to the tensioning device with a pin. While I have eased pin installation by replacing the standard clevis pin with a quick lock pin — the type with a plunger that releases the detent ball — I still have to hold tension on the forestay while inserting it. Since the stay is only 3/32-inch and the swaged fork is low profile, there is not much to grab onto. If I lost my grip on it, I doubt I would be able to save the mast. I needed something to get a better grip while leaving both hands free to align and insert the pin.

The solution was inspired by a chain grabber, which is commonly used with anchoring arrangements on larger boats. I adapted the simple slotted fork design to my needs. I bent a 3-inch piece of 1/8-inch x 1/2-inch aluminum flat stock into a U shape at one end. I used a metal cutting wheel in a grinder to cut a slot of the appropriate width, then filed the edges to a smooth, round shape. Drilling a 1/4-inch hole at the other end allowed me to attach a lanyard that I can loop around my wrist. Finally, I made a slight bend in the middle to make the piece easier to grasp.

Now, once the forestay is passed through the hole in the breasthook, it is easily secured with the grabber. Having adjusted the length of the lanyard, I can then apply tension to the forestay with my wrist while leaving my fingers free to align and insert the pin. Once the pin is in place, the forestay tensioning lever is flipped and ... done! This simple little device has made mast raising much less stressful.

*See page 41 for John's bio.*

Above, **when tension is applied via the lanyard, the author's fingers are free to manipulate the swage and pin it into place.**

# Fine Print Follies

## *Lessons learned from a $99 "unlimited" towing policy*

BY ALISON O'LEARY

I was sailing with an old friend on my 1987 Catalina 25, *Esmerelda*, on an exquisitely beautiful July evening. We were catching up on news about family and long-lost high school pals when the sun went down and the wind breathed its last sigh of the day. The moon was a sliver in the western sky over Rhode Island's Narragansett Bay, and we were a couple miles at most from my yacht club mooring in the Providence River.

I reached over the transom and easily pulled the cord on my 4-stroke Honda 9.9-hp outboard. The engine started right up, as it always does. It was a shame to end the fun conversation I was having with my friend Terry, but other boats were bombing past us on their way into a nearby marina and our time was up. We furled the sails and put the engine in gear.

But nothing happened.

Not being a boater, Terry looked at me, confused. "What's going on? The boat's not going anywhere," he said.

I was sure there would be a logical fix that would get us underway quickly. I looked over the engine and everything seemed fine. There was water coming out of the lower unit, bubbles churned from the area around the prop, and the green light was on, signaling that the oil was fine. But *Esmeralda* wouldn't move when we put the outboard in gear and turned up the throttle. I was mystified.


ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM PAYNE

It was a situation I felt prepared for, despite being baffled by the engine's nonresponse. I had towing insurance, a $99 annual add-on to my regular policy I'd never needed it before (and haven't since), but it was getting dark quickly. I put my steaming lights on and hung a battery-operated lantern on the boom, hoping to avert an accident with powerboats zooming home after a day out.


My phone had about 10% percent battery, of course, and I wasn't sure who to call first. I tried my insurance company to ask how to use my tow insurance, but there was no answer. Then I was down to 8% battery. I looked up a tow service online and called, explaining where I was stranded and what I thought was going on. I asked what it would cost, despite having the $99 unlimited insurance.

"It's $750 to start, but if I have to dive on your prop to untangle something or release you from a hard grounding, it will go up from there," the guy responded. He was 40 minutes away, he said. Shocked by the price, I told him I'd call back.

Being close to a major waterfront city and nearly surrounded by marinas, there had to be other options, I thought. I checked


my phone for any other marine tow services — including in Providence, which was 15 minutes away by powerboat — but found none.

Getting desperate, I called the original tow company again. The guy agreed to tow me but started asking a series of unexpected questions, including what my home address was. I provided the information but wanted to know if he was underway yet. It was dark, and we were drifting close to an active shipping channel where a freighter could appear at any moment. I tried not to think about it.

I wondered if calling the Coast Guard was a better choice under the circumstances. We were a hazard to navigation, certainly, but did our situation rise to the level of a rescue? Was it a true emergency? We were not in immediate danger of sinking or other harm. The boat was sufficiently illuminated to warn others. My only concern was not being able to get out of the way of any tugs or freighters that routinely pass through to the Port of Providence. If I waited until a freighter came into view it would probably be too late to call the Coast Guard, but I just couldn't rationalize it. I consoled myself that we were drifting east, out of the channel.


These were things I should have known, but I'd never experienced this situation in my years of sailing. I kicked myself for not having a solid plan for such a common event. Signing up for towing insurance but not understanding the ins and outs of its use is not a complete plan, but it's better than nothing.

The towboat needed a credit card number. OK, I responded, I know my American Express number by heart. No, he said, Mastercard or Visa only. In the back of my mind, I realized that they weren't interested in my $99 towing insurance, that this was only the beginning of a long process of paying and reimbursement that could get sticky.

Terry handed me his credit card before I could ask. "Charge anything you need to," he said. Maybe he was getting worried too.

It took the towboat another 40 minutes to find us in the dark, but we were hooked up and at my yacht club dock in a very short time. It was about a 5-mile trip. We joked that the quick ride would clean some of the summer's growth off the hull. It wasn't so funny when

we were told the ride cost $1,260.

Terry was reimbursed as soon as I got home that night, but my ordeal continued as I filed the necessary documents with my insurance carrier. I held my breath waiting for the $1,260 check that never came.

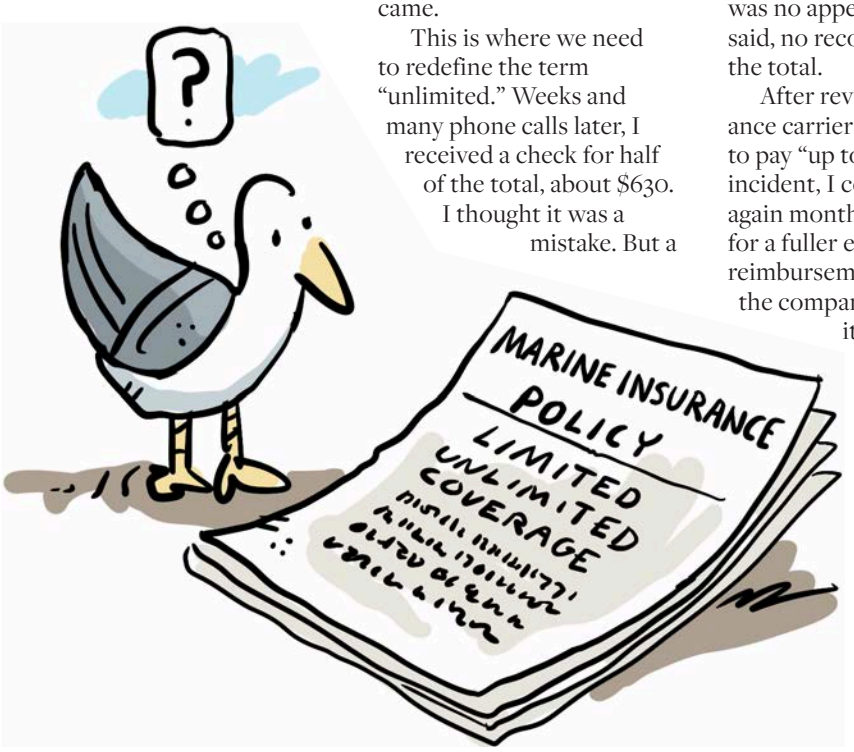
This is where we need to redefine the term "unlimited." Weeks and many phone calls later, I received a check for half of the total, about $630. I thought it was a mistake. But a representative of the insurance company said, "We never pay more than $250 an hour for towing." And that was that. There was no appeal process, she said, no recourse. Just half of the total.

After reviewing my insurance carrier's online pledge to pay "up to $3,000" per incident, I contacted them again months later, hoping for a fuller explanation of the reimbursement. Of course the company subcontracts its marine insurance out to a specialty carrier, which reviewed the claim. The same representative I spoke with previously reiterated the company's position: "We never pay more than $250 an hour for towing." End of explanation.

An online review of other tow insurance options shows that most will only tow to "the nearest repair facility" rather than to the boat's home port or dock. I wondered how that would work, tying up to a strange dock late at night and miles from one's car. Maybe I should be thankful that wasn't part of the ordeal.

This year, I opted to renew the $99 towing rider on my insurance despite knowing there was fine print that might trip me up again. My rationale was that I was at least able to recover half of the cost. Overall, it was an unfortunate yet important lesson to learn the hard way.

*Alison O'Leary is an author and public speaker from Massachusetts. www.alisonoleary.com*




## The Takeaway—AO

Since this happened, I've made mental notes when friends post "funny" photos on social media of their boats being towed. It seems that no two incidents are ever the same, especially when it comes to insurance.

One told me she and her husband pay about $200 annually and make good use of it. Their outings regularly end with a photo of a towboat. A particularly extensive tow started in Provincetown, at the tip of Cape Cod, and ended in New Bedford, about 50 miles away. They seem to be routinely rescued from Martha's Vineyard and returned by tow to the New Bedford area. They've never paid more than their initial fee, she said, but she added that they've never been towed at night. They insure directly with the towing company, not through their regular policy.

Another friend, a gorgeous blonde from Florida, told me that her $99 towing insurance once covered a 12-hour tow for miles around the southwest coast of the state to a slip she rented near Miami. But it seems the companies have wised up since then. As I discovered, they advertise "unlimited" but don't take that at face value.

We never figured out why the engine wouldn't push the boat that night. I've certainly thought about it a lot, as I would if $620 fell out of my pocket somewhere. Could the current in the Providence River have been a culprit? There are times, at peak flow, when it prevents me from making much progress sailing in the channel, but I think the engine would have made some progress against it that evening — and when we drifted for an hour, we didn't go far.

Is it possible we were entangled in some unseen ground tackle that came off when the towboat pulled us to the dock? That is a logical conclusion, even though it's not an area of many lobster or crab traps, such as Maine's coastal waters.

Another guess is marine growth around the prop (after just two months in the water) might have prevented normal propulsion. We cleaned/scraped all of the growth off the next day, without any before and after testing, and the engine has run perfectly ever since.

It's the $620 mystery, an expensive reminder to read the fine print.

# Desiccating Heads

## *A solution for smaller boats and sensitive waters*

BY DREW FRYE

Let's be honest — toilets aboard small boats are tricky and can be icky. My first cruisable boat, a Stiletto 27, had a chemical toilet and I hated it. While daysailing, I was constantly lugging it ashore and often home for dumping and cleaning. On cruises, the smell made the cabin hard to live in when we had to button it up for bad weather. My next boat, a PDQ 32 cruising cat, had a conventional holding tank system, and I kept it in perfect tune. My family appreciated that it was reliable, odor-free, and effectively just like home.

Then I downsized to a Corsair F-24 trimaran, and it was back to a chemical toilet. I even tested all the new chemicals side by side in a row of improvised chemical toilets (buckets), only to learn things hadn't gotten any better. Capacity is very limited, a few days at best. In the winter, the chemicals freeze. The toilets are heavy and my old back didn't fancy the idea of lifting 40 pounds out of the forepeak and shuffling through the tiny cabin, up the steps, through the companionway, and across the deck — and then down the dock and to the marina toilet, if they allow that (many do not), or to home and back, which was the normal practice.

This is when I began investigating desiccating and composting toilets, which I'd been hearing about for some time. User reports were very positive, including from some friends with a sister PDQ who had swapped their marine head for an Air Head composting toilet for full-time cruising in the Caribbean. Perhaps there was something to it. I decided to dig deeper.

### Desiccating Head Basics

First off, these are not "composting" toilets in the true sense. That process takes a month at the perfect temperature, with active aeration and perfect moisture control, and six to 24 months under more ordinary conditions to produce actual compost. Instead, the goal of a desiccating toilet is to dry the waste into a form that does not smell, is more compact (the solids are actually 75% water), and is less objectionable to dispose of. The result can be composted, but the waste can also be disposed of every one to three weeks in a dumpster (we'll come back to that). In reality, these toilets act more like a litter box in that they dry out the solids. How is it, then, that these desiccating systems don't stink?

**The author replaced his boat's chemical toilet with a custom-built kit unit he made to fit the space.**

One central and vital feature of all desiccating heads is that they separate the solids from the liquid by means of a urine diverter (a sort of funnel) under the seat, sometimes supplemented by a sealed trap door. Urine is very high in ammonia, results in a wet mess, and triggers the odor-causing reactions in the mix.

In a desiccating head, the solids are very quickly dried on the surface by a wicking absorbent, causing a crust to form and trapping any odor inside. A thin layer of the absorbent over the waste filters and breaks down any odors that seep out. The urine goes in a separate tank, where a chemical treatment (vinegar is common) prevents it from fermenting and getting nasty. Covers and other design features further contain odors, and many units are fitted with a tiny fan, which drafts through the solids area, removing any smell and assisting with drying. That said, many users, not wanting to cut a hole in the deck, never connect the fan and report that it works fine as long as they are diligent about urine separation.

Most commercial units include a hand crank or electric mixer to blend the waste into the absorbent. The crank promotes efficient drying, thus maximizing time between services, but it can tangle with toilet paper and make cleaning laborious. With simpler units, a layer of absorbent is added on top each time it is used. With the layer type, the bucket can be lined with a plastic bag, making cleanout easy and contact-free.

The urine container will fill every few days and need to be dumped, either overboard where legal, into an onshore

Now-defunct company C-Head's churn and non-churn units.

commode, or in the woods safely away from surface water.

I'll only comment on units I have either used or at least worked with, since the market is growing rapidly.

## What's on the Market?

Although I eventually went down the DIY path for my small, mostly daysailed trimaran, larger, well-engineered units by Air Head and Nature's Head offer proven, higher-capacity solutions for cruisers.

Nature's Head and Air Head are both taller than a conventional toilet (20 inches, versus 16 to 17 inches) to accommodate the composting bin. A large solid waste bin with a hand-cranked agitator is in the back and a small urine container is in the front. The basin includes a urine separator and a closable flap over the solids bin. Both connect to a fan. The solids container can typically go two weeks between services with a crew of two, and the urine tank a few days. A challenge on many boats is the footprint, about 20 inches high and 20 inches wide, which is considerably larger than the typical marine head.

Nature's Head recently introduced its compact Weekender toilet. The name is misleading; the holding capacity is only reduced by about 30%, so it holds over a week's worth of waste. However, it's only 17 inches tall (the width is unchanged), enabling it to fit in smaller boats than the original. The mechanics are the same.

Another unit, C-Head, had a small following, mostly because its smaller size fit more places. However, limited market acceptance was a challenge and the company closed soon after the inventor, Sandy Graves, passed away in 2022.

The OGO Origin, introduced in 2022, is similar in capacity and size to the Air Head and Nature's Head, but with electric agitation and a few more bells and whistles. Whether it will prove durable is not yet known. In early 2024 the company introduced the OGO Nomad, a simple separating toilet much like the kits I describe below, without agitation and using a bag for the solids. Its smaller size (12.38 inches tall and 13 inches wide), light weight, and low price should make it competitive with kits. I might have gone that way had it been on the market four years ago.

An Air Head on a Rapido 40 trimaran, which has the advantage of being a low-weight unit.

## Desiccating Head Kits

You can save a good bit of money building your own kit, but more importantly, create something to fit the exact space you have in your boat. A typical kit includes the seat and cover, an integrated urine diverting funnel, and sometimes a few bits of hose and adapters that you may or may not need. You are responsible for sourcing the waste containers and building the structure. A mixer is not included, but that can be considered an advantage, because a simple solids bucket can be lined with a bag. Service then becomes as simple as tying up the bag and replacing it with a fresh one. For a weekender like me, that sounded a lot better. Zero cleaning — just double-bag it and take it to the dumpster on the way to the car.

I picked the Separett 501 kit as the basis for my DIY head, combined with a fiberglass battery box I could modify, cheap plastic containers, and a few bits of plywood. I couldn't have bought anything that would work better. Perfect fit, low odor, easy care. A few dollars for a urine bottle; $20 worth of epoxy, glass, and materials; a few hours of labor; and $159 for the kit on Amazon.

Free Range ($63) and The Throne ($98) sell just the diverter, so you will need to add your own seat, a minor addition. A dockmate used a Free Range kit to build his head right into an existing bench, with a hinged top.

## The DIY Approach

Because no standard design would fit the space I had, I built my own toilet. I could have built the base from plywood and sheathed it in fiberglass, but I stumbled across a pair of discarded fiberglass battery boxes that I could splice together into a perfect fit. Since the exterior would not be visible, I left it unfinished and focused on a slick interior for easy cleaning. A standard 3-gallon bucket would not fit because of the reinforced rim, so I cut a 5-gallon bucket down to about 3 gallons and

At left and below, **Drew used a pair of battery boxes to make the lower part. The unit would be enclosed in a well, but he wanted the toilet to have a smooth, well-finished interior.**

reinstalled the handle. In retrospect, a rectangular bucket, such as the type kitty litter is sold in, would have been an even better fit. A rectangular kitchen container with a tightly fitted lid fit the skinny space available for the urine container, and we added a filler neck and screw top salvaged from a laundry detergent bottle.

The Separett 501 kit provided a finished-looking seat and urine diverter. I cut a cover using ¾-inch exterior plywood, sanded it thoroughly, and painted it with multiple coats of white enamel for a finished appearance. A piano hinge ensures sturdiness and easy access. A sheet of fiberglass shower surround material is placed under the seat when not in use, blocking any odors that might escape. The unit is very light, about 14 pounds fully assembled. We opted for the no-churn method, instead covering waste with absorbent material after each use. By using bags, we minimize what must be lifted out and carried, and we double-bag it as soon as it is removed.

## Absorbent

Using an absorbent material to dry the waste is critical to a properly functioning system. In addition to visually covering the solids, the absorbent must also draw moisture away, allowing a crust to form. In fact, wicking ability is more important than absorption capacity, since sustained drying is the goal. Biodegradability and carbon-based bulking agents are important if the waste will be composted. Bulking materials in a compacted form are easier to store, but this can be a double-edged sword. For example, coconut coir is popular with long-distance cruisers because it comes in compressed bricks, but the downside is that the bricks must be expanded in an overnight process before they are ready to use.

Before settling on an absorbent, I tried several popular types for a week. I started with So Phresh Natural Aspen Pet Bedding shavings because that is what C-Head recommended. It comes in bags compressed to about ⅓ volume. The wicking and odor filtration were the best of the lot, but the light color does not camouflage the business as well as darker media. I tried the same company's cedar pet bedding, but found that the cedar aroma does not help, wicking is mediocre, and cedar does not compost well (it is naturally rot-resistant).

I also tried a mix of shavings and sawdust from a local millwork shop. This was very similar to the pet bedding, and even more effective. I tried just sawdust, but it did not dry as well and was a failure. It was the same with peat moss; it has enthusiasts, but we found it messy and less effective. Next, we tried coconut coir. The dark color camouflages the waste better, the drying was pretty good, and the odor control was admirable. The blocks expand to six times their original volume, but the process takes time and can create some mess.

We tried several pet litters made from recycled paper, but they didn't work well. We also tried some clumping litters, which were not as effective as other products and are not compostable.

Wood ash was recommended by a number of sites focused on sanitation for developing countries. The drying and odor control were better than anything else we tried, but it is messy to use. If we lived off-grid and had a wood burner, no question, this would be the go-to product, since its high pH and phosphorus helps with composting.

Flies can be a problem in summer, if the waste becomes too humid or is in the bucket too long. The best preventative measure is to sprinkle a little diatomaceous earth in the solids container every day. It dries the bugs out and they die. The U.S. Department of Agriculture even recommends it for livestock lots. Use about 2 cups per cubic foot of media, or ¼-cup per gallon. Once you get an infestation, and I never have, the most effective treatment is a cleanout and light spray with insecticide.

Swimming pool chlorine tabs or powder can help reduce odors. Sandy Graves of C-Head recommended suspending a small sachet of swimming

At right and below. **a desiccating head can be a tight fit on many smaller boats. A kit solves that problem. Holding tanks are not a zero-impact solution. Because of treatment problems, some cities require that all holding tanks and chemical toilet waste be treated separately. This is a multistep process, followed by further treatment at the sewage treatment plant (POTW, or publicly owned treatment works).**

pool chlorine (sodium dichloroisocyanurate) just inside of the lip of the bucket, but out of the line of fire. The dry chemical reacts with humidity in the air, releasing a slow trickle of chlorine gas, which oxidizes any odors that might still exist before they can leave the toilet. Instead of the slight musty smell that is typical, there is no odor, neither of waste nor chlorine. The chlorine reduces mildew and also seems to discourage flies. One ounce lasts two to six months, depending on humidity. Do NOT add the chemical to the media or the bucket. A small cup in a corner of the head box would also work and be easier.

Most of the commercial products are used with a fan to help speed the drying process. However, if you are careful to separate urine from solids, use an effective absorbent material, and have only one or two people on board, you won't need it. I don't use a fan, nor is there ventilation on the boat when we are not there.

## Urine Odor Treatment

Leave a cup of urine out for a few days and it will smell worse than poo. Urine is loaded with nitrogen and potassium, and will soon ferment into something unspeakably foul. Fortunately, there are effective treatments to stop this. Although we know the chemistry, again, we turned to field testing.

Sugar helps by pickling the solution, much the way jelly is preserved. But it only delayed the process a little, and then it was even worse. A few inches of white vinegar placed in the container before use stops the fermentation process by lowering the pH. It also helps keep the ammonia from being released. We don't care for the smell of vinegar, so we tried citric acid (add about 2 tablespoons per gallon). It is even more effective at controlling odor and better at cleaning the separator.

As with inadequately flushed urinals, scale can build up on the urine separator and become an odor source, so we keep a spray bottle filled with 1 teaspoon of citric acid per pint of water and use that as a between-use spray to keep the separator and drain clean and fresh. We also tested CLR Calcium, Lime and Rust Remover as a treatment and cleaner. Citric acid was better. However, the winner for odor control was Nilodor Bio-Enzymatic Urine Digester with Odor Neutralizer. It kills the odor without masking it.

Do not add bleach to the urine container. The hypochlorite will react with the urea, creating dangerous amounts of chloramine gas (yes, we confirmed this). Never add bleach to acid-containing solutions; chlorine gas will be released.

## Disposal

Whether holding tank, chemical toilet, or desiccating toilet, there is no getting away from disposal issues. Holding tank pump-out stations are not always available, and most close for the winter. The treatments used in chemical toilets, most commonly either formaldehyde or bronopol, interfere with the biological treatment process at the wastewater

**Ready for the next test cycle. Drew used kitchen bags and composted the waste during testing. Amazingly, the bags were normally completely unsoiled, with only a few traces of dry absorbent left behind. No yuck factor.**

plant. As a chemical engineer, I helped design a separate plant for the treatment of holding tank and chemical toilet waste for one of many cities that does not allow waste to be discharged directly to the sewer.

So where should we dispose of desiccating head solids? There have been problems with disposing of desiccated solid waste in bins next to a park bench, or too many bags in one bin. Common sense says to walk your boat rubbish and dessicated solids to the main dumpster. I am not aware of any specific federal regulation regarding small-quantity waste disposal from desiccating or composting toilets.

Home composting is another alternative. You can use the bags to transport waste home — the dried waste does not stick and will pour out cleanly. Do not use the finished compost for food crops, because human pathogens may remain unless composting takes place under very specific conditions that you will not be able to achieve. Also, be sure to control access and run-off.

As for the urine, taking the jugs ashore is simple. Many marinas forbid the disposal of portable toilet waste, but they're talking about the blue-treated mess from chemical toilets. Many users dump the urine over the side of the boat, but EPA rules prohibit discharging sewage within 3 miles from shore, and there really is a lot of nitrogen and phosphorus in there. In remote areas, disposing in the woods well away from surface water, like a camper, is appropriate.

## Observations

Physiology differs, and some people will find it more difficult to get waste in the right spot. It may help to urinate first, somewhat forward on the seat, and then slide back to finish. Mixed urine and solids will stink, requiring the waste to be dumped and making a fresh start. This is easier with a unit that uses a bag.

With a mix-type toilet, fill the bin with absorbent material, following the manufacturer's instructions. Mix a few turns after each use. With the layering method, start with about 2 cups of absorbent in the bag. Cover the solids with about 1 cup of absorbent before adding toilet paper, and then another cup of absorbent after. There's no harm in using more. It will just fill the bucket sooner, but you will discover that you need less than you think.

Alternatively, you can place toilet paper in a separate zip-close bag to save space in the head. Less absorbent material is required, and the desiccation will dramatically reduce the waste volume. We found that a 3-gallon bucket will last one person about 10 days, toilet paper and all, assuming the toilet is used exclusively. A 5-gallon bucket should easily last two people one week. If toilet paper is disposed separately, it will last two to three times longer and smell slightly less because the cover is more efficient. We tested both ways and concluded it comes down to personal preference and needs.

Spray the urine diverter with citric acid or Nilodor solution after each use to keep it clean and fresh.

We don't leave waste in the toilet if we are going to be away for more than a few days. It's simple to pull the bag and dump the jug. Others leave it until full. If you do that, I recommend adding some absorbent and extra urine treatment.

Venting can help, but it is generally not needed if the container is sufficiently dry. Following that thread, we experimented with keeping a container of calcium chloride or silica gel absorbent cylinders in the enclosure, but not in the bucket itself. That seemed to help, since the drier the absorbent and the deposits, the less potential for smell. But do not add desiccant (silica gel or calcium chloride) to the bucket; we are trying to pull water out of the bucket, not draw it in. This is why we use a cover material (absorbent) with superior wicking characteristics.

We're still fans of a well-installed and well-maintained conventional head and holding tank system for cruising boats. At the beginning of our exploration, we didn't expect much of the whole idea of drying or composting waste, but at least for some boats and some situations, we were wrong. Some areas lack pump-out stations, or those facilities might close in the winter. Perhaps your boat is very small, or you mostly daysail and don't use a conventional head enough to justify the maintenance. Fortunately, the alternatives to a conventional head have increased in recent years. There are new, smaller units on the market. There are kits, particularly well suited to custom fitting requirements.

We swapped from a chemical toilet to a kit-built desiccating toilet and would never go back. The benefits are numerous. You'll never clog the head again. The hoses won't permeate, the vent won't clog, and you needn't rely on the pump-out station to have good suction. You don't need to flush with antifreeze in the winter. These are all positives.

Good Old Boat *Technical Editor Drew Frye draws on his training as a chemical engineer and pastimes of climbing and sailing to solve boat problems. He cruises Chesapeake Bay and the mid-Atlantic coast in his Corsair F-24 trimaran,* Fast and Furry-ous, *using its shoal draft to venture into less-explored waters. He is most recently the author of* Rigging Modern Anchors *(2018, Seaworthy Publications).*

# Furling Disaster

## *A cruise leads to a harrowing experience and an important lesson for newbie sailors.*

BY ROBERT P. THIBAULT

It all started when I found an available mooring just a few yards' walk from our beach house in Little Compton, Rhode Island, on the eastern shore of the Sakonnet River. Having a nearby mooring fed our dreams of casual, easy evening sails in a little daysailer. Then came advice from everyone about needing a bit of privacy at our age, so the desire for at least a little cuddy cabin moved us to look for something a bit bigger than a 17-foot open boat.

My wife, Sue, objected to having a boat and trailer in our yard to mar the view of the water, which merged with my engineer brother Roger's advice. He reasoned that if we're going to be wintering in a commercial yard, why not consider the benefit of boats on which people are not the ballast?

Onward we went to search for slightly bigger keel boats and found our wonderful 1986 Catalina 25, which we named *East 'n West*. We may be newcomers to the sailing world, but even with the occasional stressful conversations that all newcomers have — when raising the sails, dealing with a balky furler, or just missing the mooring buoy — our family and friends know I am only joking when I call the boat "Bob and Sue's Folly."

This past July, though, an encounter with the unexpected led us to put all kidding aside. After hearing our experienced sailing neighbors later say in good faith congratulations, "Great, you just survived your first catastrophe!" I fought the urge to scream, in an equally good faith reply, "Are you out of your minds?" The experience taught us to never, ever pass up a personal check of the standing rigging after a spring boat launch, and especially after mast-stepping.

Oh, the sadness of it. Our boat had been put in the water and had the mast stepped and tuned by the yard several weeks earlier, and we had already sailed it 10 miles downriver to our mooring. We had our newly minted ASA 101 certifications in hand — an earlier cert I had achieved in central Texas, of all places, had become permanently misplaced, but it always helps to go over things again anyway. After a three-week interlude, we were back in Rhode Island and ready to sail.

With four or five days of shakedown sails that served as short confidence-building exercises, we were finally underway with a good breeze and Sue comfortably at the tiller. Our very experienced neighbors were sailing too, coming upriver from the Sakonnet Yacht Club to meet us and hail us as hardy sailors at last. I was on the phone with them to arrange visual contact when a sickening banging and slamming sound came from the bow.

Do you know what it is like to see the furler completely free of the bow chainplate while trying to sail? Do you know how wildly it can swing and bang when you have the genoa fully filled and trimmed? Luckily, my complete inexperience kicked in, and without regard for life or limb, I went forward, laid down, and started to furl the sail by hand. Do you know how hard it is to control a boat, much less steer

ILLUSTRATIONS BY FRITZ SEEGERS

it into the wind, when a fully unfurled genny and the front stay are loose? Difficult is an understatement.

Sue tried as best she could, while trying to decipher my stressed comments that were flying into the wind. I'm not sure it is possible to hand-furl a fully deployed 150% genoa under normal conditions without the leverage of the furling line, but I am assuming either a divine hand or an unusual amount of adrenaline — or both — came into play, and I somehow wrestled it into a near-fully furled position.

Isn't there a saying about there being no atheists in a foxhole? The bow and foredeck with a detached forestay swinging around your head is pretty close. Also, it didn't help that my usual difficulty with spatial relations had me unfurling the darn thing at first. Next, in an act of inspiration, if not sheer desperation and fear, I grabbed a nearby line and somehow lashed the darn furling drum to the nearest bow pulpit stanchion (in memory, I was not calling it darn).

After calling our neighbors to let them know we were all right despite the scream they heard as I threw down the phone when the forestay separated, we gingerly tacked and ran with the wind behind us back upriver toward our mooring — until, doing the quick geometric analysis in my head, I realized we were sailing without any meaningful forestay. Another stressed comment followed and we dropped the mainsail. With the faithful Tohatsu 9.8 chugging along, we made it back without incident.

The next morning's inspection showed that the clevis pin had fallen out of the forestay toggle, and the toggle had deformed and spread as it ripped out of the chainplate. Evidently, somewhere along the line, someone had forgotten to replace the cotter pin that held the clevis pin securing the toggle to the chainplate — or had put the cotter pin in so poorly or so undersized that it fell out when we were underway.

On my brother's advice, we used the new, very strong, and overly long topping lift (that we had luckily insisted on installing just weeks before and had not yet shortened), as a temporary forestay. We loosened the backstay, wrestled the furler and forestay into position, and replaced the clevis pin and straightened the fork. This time I put in a cotter pin that will not come out until intended. Retightening the backstay completed the task.

Every good sailing story deserves a good ending. The next day, we took *East 'n West* downriver and ventured out past the marker buoy for the Sakonnet River entrance to Narragansett Bay, and with Newport behind us to starboard and the Sakonnet Point Lighthouse behind us to port, we declared ourselves bluewater sailors at last. Every good near-accident story also needs a good lesson, and the one that emerges from ours is the one we started with — never, ever miss checking the running rigging attachments to the chainplates after stepping the mast, and never assume someone else properly put in the cotter pins.

*Bob and Sue Thibault call Santa Fe, New Mexico, home while splitting time in Little Compton, Rhode Island, and with their grandson in Rockville, Maryland, so* East 'n West *it had to be for their Catalina 25. Bob has practiced international and U.S. energy law for many years in Denver, and Sue is a retired assistant county attorney for child protective services. Aside from very occasional boat time over the years and Bob's long-ago sailing certification,* East 'n West *is their entry into this new sailing adventure.*

# Easy Seat

## *An inexpensive cure for a crowded cockpit*

BY ALLIE HOOGERWERF

**The completed stern seat on *Juniper's* starboard side. A wood dowel complements the wood of the seat.**

We are seasonal sailors on the Great Lakes, and summer is a time for having fun with our family and friends. We love having guests aboard our C&C 30 Mk1, *Juniper*, for daysailing adventures with drinks and snacks, but with our family of four and a few guests, the cockpit quickly becomes very crowded and hard to move around in.

To remedy this problem, we added wooden seats to our stern rail to allow crew members or guests to sit up and farther aft. The seats provide a place for passengers to view the action while sailing, but also remain comfortable and out of the way.

This is a simple upgrade that will dazzle your guests and increase comfort for your own passages. Homemade stern seats are the perfect addition to many boats and are highly customizable to meet your specific needs. Most projects we set out to do on the boat take longer and cost more than we anticipate, but these seats were easy to make and on budget.

**Support blocks were added to ensure the seats do not wobble on the rail.**

To get started, we created a cardboard template for the seat so we could play around with the appropriate size, shape, and position. Once we had a template we were happy with and that worked well for *Juniper's* cockpit, we traced the shape onto a piece of wood. We used a piece of 1-inch cherry that we had sitting in our basement, but many other types of wood should work just fine. Ideally, you'll want to choose something that matches your boat's aesthetic and is sturdy enough to weather the elements.

When the tracing was done, we used a jigsaw to cut and shape the seats. We also cut two support pieces for each seat to provide a sturdy and solid fit — the supports are small wooden blocks that match the curvature of the rail they rest on.

With the seats cut, it was time to gather the proper hardware, which we sourced from Go2Marine, Amazon, and a local hardware store. The parts we used should work for most boats and included one Sea-Dog rail mount bracket ($10), two bimini deck hinge mounts ($15), two bimini top cap fittings ($13), a wooden dowel ($5), and wood for the seats (variable).

We then attached the rail mount bracket to the aft curve of the seat and placed the support pieces at outside points, attaching them with a screwdriver. Next, we attached the bimini hinge mount to the deck in a spot just aft of the coaming, using butyl tape around the screws to ensure the hinge does not cause any leaks. Then we attached the second hinge mount underneath and to the outermost part of the seat. Once this was done, we measured the wood dowel to length and shaped the ends to fit snugly in the cap fittings.

Now it was time to make all the wood pieces look nice and give them some protection from the elements. We disassembled all the hardware pieces and gave them a coat of varnish (you can use your preferred varnish and apply as many coats as you deem appropriate).

With the varnish dry, we reattached the seat to the rail mount and connected the hinges to the caps to complete the installation. After the seats were in place, we sat back and enjoyed great visibility and a comfortable place to take in the wind and the waves.

The new seats have given the captain space to sail the boat, while enabling our guests to be present without being in the way. Coming in at about $40 per seat, these are easily one of our favorite improvements we've made to our good old boat.

*Allie is an adventure enthusiast who loves exploring this beautiful world with her husband and two children aboard their C&C 30 Mk1,* Juniper. *They sail the Great Lakes from their home port of Muskegon, Michigan.*

*Continued from page 5*


Jeff D's Tartan 37

testing can do. Such elegant ideas are overshadowed in our society by a tidal wave of products and services hawked for profit. This magazine and other peer exchanges are vital fresh air.

—**Damon Lane**
Burlington, Vermont

## Dogwatch Reward

Just a "good work" note about the November 2023 *Dogwatch* newsletter. I especially enjoyed the piece on the Klackos and the one on the rescue of *Pixie*, both stories about our good neighbors in Canada. For this Michigan resident, Canada is literally my neighbor. I visited our neighbor each spring for about 30 years on an annual fishing trip. My brother spent time there in grad school and postdoc fellowships and was so impressed that he became a joint U.S./Canadian citizen.

—**Chris Campbell**
Traverse City, Michigan

## Tartan Talk

Years ago, I was at the *Good Old Boat* booth and asked if you had any info on Tartans in past issues because I had just picked up a Tartan 37 and didn't know anything about it. I had never seen one before and hadn't even heard of Tartan. I just knew it was a great old boat by looking at the lines and jumping on the deck. The gentleman I was speaking with went from zero to 100, and called over someone from the company and asked me to tell him what I had. He was even more excited and went on to tell me about the brand and boat, with glazed eyes and so much enthusiasm. I was floored.

Then I started sailing around, and people came over all the time to compliment me on my new acquisition. One guy, with a Hanse 50 that I had helped tie up, jumped off his boat and ran to mine and asked if I owned it. I laughed and said he had a beautiful boat, and he laughed and said he'd rather have mine. I had the beautiful boat that I always dreamed of.

Looking back, my parents didn't have a lot of money, and I remember sailing on a boat that had the interior burned out. My dad MacGyvered telephone cable with those huge turnbuckles and cable clamps to hold up a homemade pipe mast. The two sails were a full 180% genoa and an old cotton main. There were no winches, just cam cleats, and our rudder was homemade. He did the best that he could and now, years later, as a dad, I fully appreciate his efforts and that impact on my life, and will be forever grateful for his legacy. I remember promising myself that one day I will have a beautiful boat!

Being a working man, I paid $30,000 Canadian for her, and slowly, every year, upgraded a few things, and I'm now really close to unveiling something very special after an extensive refit. This was, in part, due to the impact of whomever I spoke to way back at your booth that gave me the confidence to invest in my little ship. She will be launched in spring 2024, and I haven't been this excited since my honeymoon.

—**Jeff D**
Hamilton, Ontario

## Boats for Sale

### Catalina 30

1977. Outstanding Lake Superior sailboat. Includes wheel steering, radar, chart plotter, roller-furling genoa, nice mainsail, bimini, dodger, all halyards led aft to cockpit, 3GM diesel engine (overhauled 2019/very low hours). New larger prop matches larger engine, shorepower, enclosed head w/shower, new bottom paint, 2 banks of dual group 27 batteries w/automatic charger. Beautiful shape w/above average care and ready to sail anywhere. Spacious salon/galley w/stovetop, sink, icebox/large countertop. Sleeps 7. No dingy/motor. Cornucopia, WI. $12,500.

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

### Sabre 38 MkII

1990. *Summer Savory* is a prime example of the classic Sabre 38. Cruising comfort, impressive speed, shallow shoal-draft wing keel, wonderful functionality while sailing or at rest. Updated electronics, 300 watts of solar panels, 4 AGM batteries. Thoughtful upgrades make this a Sabre worth considering. HIN/IMO: HWS38175K990. Branford, CT. $84,000.

**Nick Van Drimmelen**
**vandrimm@yahoo.com**

### Victoria Frances 26

1982. Chuck Paine design, seldom seen on market. Lovingly maintained by owner for 36 years. 1982 1GM Yanmar with new cylinder head in 2022. Club-footed jib 80%, hank-on jib 120% almost brand new, never used by current owner! Interior varnished and spotless. Depth sounder. Bottom maintained every year by yard. Email for pictures and info. Located East Coast mid-Florida. $32,000.

**Margaret Pesaturo**
**321-412-5943**
**thmargaret1@gmail.com**

### Bristol 32

1976. Ted Hood design, full keel. Auxiliary Atomic 4 engine. Mainsail modified with Doyle StackPack in 2021. Headsail Schaefer furling. New self-tailing winches. Sailed only in Great Lakes. Sleeps four and has plenty of storage. A true sailing classic. Includes a steel cradle. Rentner Marine, Chicago, IL. $15,000.

**Art Smith**
**773-538-6979**

### Alberg 35

1964 yawl. *Calypso* was built in Bristol, R.I. Hull #111. 35′ LOA, 9′ beam, 5′4″ draft. Full suite of sails: Doyle StackPack, full batten main, Doyle genoa on Reef Rite furler, mizzen, spinnaker, main & mizzen staysails. Westerbeke Universal M4-30 diesel w/640 hours (since new). C-Head composting head. Decks completely rebuilt. Raymarine radar, GPS, depth finder, Icom VHF, etc. Solid classic cruiser in seaworthy condition. Onancock, VA. $12,000.

**Parker Dooley**
**757-999-2088**
**pdooley23410@gmail.com**

### Allied Luders 33

Well maintained Allied Luders 33. Sail all winter and then store for $140/month or sail her home. Many upgrades. Newer through-hulls and seacocks, Lofrans Tigres windlass, Rocna anchor, newer sails, pro-furl, solar panel, Raymarine autopilot-wheel pilot 4000. Westerbeke 21 with new exhaust, cutlass bearing, shaft log hose. LPU hull and deck. San Carlos, Mexico, on the Sea of Cortez. $18,000

**Anne Slater**
**annedslater@gmail.com**

### C&C Landfall 35

1981. S/N 003. An ideal couple's cruiser. Single owner, professionally maintained. Always a freshwater boat. New main, asymmetric spinnaker, electric windlass, 500Ah house battery, 1kW inverter, Garmin GPSMAP and radar, autopilot, refrigerator-freezer. Signet instrumentation found nowhere else. Steel cradle, ShipShape custom cover, Avon dinghy, Honda 4-cycle outboard. Docked in northern Wisconsin. $40,000.

**Dean Hedstrom**
**651-490-0109**
**dean@dkhedstrom.com**

### Ericson 35

1971. One owner, fresh water only. 10 sails: 150 thru storm & spinnaker. Atomic 4 engine with electronic ignition. Raytheon instruments. Marine VHF radio, GPS. Dinghies: molded mahogany and a soft-sided Avon, Mercury 3-hp outboard. Lake Superior paper navigational charts. New Force 10 propane cook stove. Upgraded head and holding tank. New upholstery. Auto bilge pump. Self-steering device. 6 winches. 4 anchors. Many extras. Washburn, WI. $25,000.

**Kurt Hamann**
**319-626-6227**
**kurtphamann@gmail.com**

*Continued on next page*

## Boats for Sale

### Classic Cape Dory 19 Typhoon Weekender

1965. Gently sailed & constantly maintained. Often referred to as "The Littlest Yacht." Equipped w/new tanbark 135 genoa on Schaefer furling; new mainsail cover; lifelines from pulpit to pushpit; new electrical panel for running, masthead & cabin lights; 3 Barlow 15 winches (one for anchor); bronze ports, winch mountings and motor mount; V-berth cockpit cushions; porta-potty. Includes heavy-duty trailer. $7,950 USD. Selling separately: Torqeedo long shaft electric outboard motor, model 1103 C, w/915 Wh portable battery (3 hp equivalent) w/less than 100 hours usage w/travel bags $1,950 USD. Brighton, Ontario.

**Alan Hallworth**
**613-475-9846**
**ahallworth@sympatico.ca**



## Products

# Don't Give Up the (Little) Ship

## *When it comes to sailboats, bigger isn't always better.*

BY CRAIG MOODIE

"Buy a bigger boat." That's the refrain we've often heard from friends and family. The reason: *Finn*, our Barnstable Catboat, might not be the ideal boat for where we sail.

She's a beauty, no doubt. She's built from the classic mold of a Beetle Cat. My wife and I have sailed her into her late adolescence, and she's still as graceful as a feather. She's become a friend — and family. But she's only four feet longer than *Ringy*, our eight-foot dinghy. Surely a bigger boat could handle conditions in Buzzards Bay, a funnel-shaped body of water between Cape Cod and mainland Massachusetts infamous for its sporty summertime sou'westers, with more aplomb.. Over the years, either the wind has begun blowing harder more often or we're becoming less intrepid about venturing out in our yachtlet in anything smarter than light airs.

Besides, coaming-cracked knees and cockpit-crunched coccyx hurt more and heal slower when you've reached old cricket status. What are two sexagenarians doing sailing what was once dubbed "a boy's boat," anyway?

The image of two codgers (sorry, Ellen) in a dinky boat, along with a desire to widen our sailing horizons, drives me at times to seek out a different boat in a fever of nautical excitement and fiscal denial: Imagine where we could go — Cuttyhunk, the Vineyard, beyond. Imagine sleeping, cooking, cloudspotting, stargazing, hoisting a glass aboard as we have on other people's boats. Imagine skippering a sturdy vessel ready for (almost) anything.

With the mantra "Buy a bigger boat" ringing in my ears, I've considered boats of different stripes — Folkboats, Cornish Crabbers, and Sea Sprites among them. They may have struck our fancy, but not enough to compel us to strike a deal for any we've run across.

The one boat we continued to gravitate to was a Marshall Sanderling, which is a natural upgrade for dyed-in-the-wool catboaters. A Sanderling named *Comin' About* was once moored within easy hailing distance of *Finn*. We used to look on with envy as the owners and their guests lounged in the capacious cockpit — on benches, no less — while we bumped knees and adjusted cushions on the cedar cockpit planks to assuage our tailbones. A Sanderling is the boat for us, we said.

When the fever spikes, I scan the Catboat Association's listings and forward image after image to Ellen, saying, "This is the one."

A few years ago, we ran our hands over the hull of a Sanderling for sale called *Saunterer*, which was on the hard in Chatham, and might have forged ahead but for the price. We continued to talk about buying one, but never acted. Did we hesitate because long ago my mom owned a Marshall Sanderling yet gave her up after sailing her only a handful of times, for reasons she kept to herself?

Then, in April 2023, a phone call came in while we were driving to Easter Sunday dinner. My sister and brother-in-law, longtime sailors whose sailing situation was shifting, were offering us their shipshape and Bristol fashion Rhodes 19 for the sum of one American dollar — including trailering the boat up the Eastern Seaboard to us in North Falmouth on Cape Cod. A free boat, essentially, delivered, and a classic in her own right.

"Yes!" we both said over speaker phone, gushing appreciation and giddy with excitement.

"No!" keened an internal voice as I sleeplessly thrashed around our bed all that night. Let the internal debate begin.

Reasons to take her: Virtually free. Sweet design. Bigger than *Finn*. More sea-kindly in a blow. Did I mention free(ish)?

Reasons not to take her: Oh, I dredged up reasons, all right. We'd have to move the mooring to deeper water because she drew more than *Finn*. We'd have to deal with an outboard. We didn't want to impose on my sister and brother-in-law: Did they really want to divest themselves of their beloved boat when they could make a profit from her? We didn't know if we'd really like sailing her. We'd have to ...

My old conservative Yankee streak widened. One of the main reasons we bought *Finn* was her workboat pedigree. Even a diminutive catboat — a design from the 1800s used for fishing the waters where we sail — appealed to my pride as a former commercial fisherman. I loved her lines and lineage.

Simplicity was another. No engine to quit on us. No mechanics to hire. No travel

lifts. No docks. We could just beach her to work on her or to take on people or gear. Maybe I balked because I've reached a point where I have no need for extra headaches. Maybe I don't at heart want to challenge us by sailing beyond our home waters of Megansett Harbor and Buzzards Bay. (I've had a bounty of challenges over my life on the water, thank you very much.) Maybe a world in a raindrop is enough for us.

But did we really need to choose between the boats? Why not keep *Finn* and take the Rhodes too? We could, of course, but did we really want to add to our flotilla that already numbered a catboat, a dinghy, and a kayak? Taking the Rhodes would mean dealing with another set of burdens. She was lovely — but her timing was off.

One evening I finished buttoning up *Finn*. We rode on the mooring on mercury-slick water at dead low tide. The sun set warm and golden on my bare shoulders from across the bay. I stood on the rail, watching a couple of quahoggers only a hundred feet away by the exposed rocks, raking for littlenecks. I looked down to see schools of minnows switching back and forth off the stern and a green crab stalk on the silken sand between the bottle-green grasses waving 3 feet below.

Then one of the quahoggers called out, "You've got the prettiest boat in the harbor!"

Indeed. How could we not stand with her? A bigger boat might well lie in our future.

But for now, we're not giving up our (little) ship.

*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.*

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