



messing about in BOATS

Twice a Month

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Commentary



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Our Next Issue

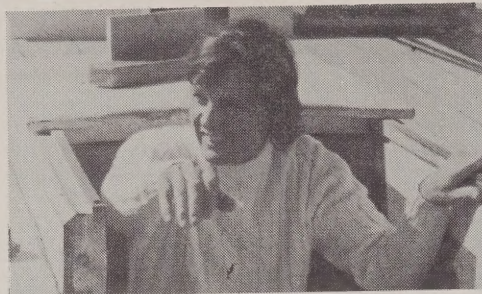
...will go into the mail about December 15th, and may be a bit delayed in the Christmas mail rush. Subscriptions received prior to that date will begin with Issue #16 unless otherwise requested. Subscriptions can be ordered beginning with Issue #4. Issues #1, #2 and #3 are out of stock.

In the Next Issue

...we expect to have several interesting stories for you. Mystic Seaport Museum is selling off a bunch of old boats, perhaps you've noted their classified ad. Why and how does this happen? We'll be looking into it. We've all been aware of sliding seat rowing, but how about "sliding feet" rowing? Find out with us. The Charles Mainville family, all six of them, have been making the rowing race scene this past summer in their own designed and built 21 foot pulling boat. Usually they win the class they are in. We'll be telling you all about this unique family effort. More too, so don't miss out.

On the Cover

... Ten men with paddles in action on the Sudbury River in Concord, Mass at the Concord Icebreaker Race. These war canoes are something to see, our report is on pages 7 - 9.



BOB HICKS

As we have come to know more and more people who are building, or have built, their own boats, it has struck us how many of them have turned out really nice craft for first boats. Not always simple ones either. Having been introduced to this whole field by WOODEN BOAT back in its early days, with its editorial emphasis on excellence and craftsmanship and the traditional ways, sort of acquired an outlook that people who build their own boats probably did begin with simple skiffs, or maybe got lots of education first by way of help from more experienced builders, or from courses taken, part time or full time, at various available boatbuilding programs. Not so. Some of the work we've seen has been first class work on not easy types of boats. In a recent issue we reported on Kevin Martin just starting to build canoes because he wanted to. In this issue we have the story on the Ace speedboat, a first boat built by Jim Forrest and Jeanette Denby, neither experienced or trained in such work.

Well, this does not mean that we have decided that anyone can build decent boats, who needs in depth instruction or apprenticing? Anyone who really wants to consistently build good boats FOR A LIVING needs a whole lot more skill because the time element intrudes. Careful novices can build good boats by scrupulous attention to detail. But the time spent! So, we do see the real difference between that lovely amateur built craft and a similar one built by a more skilled professional. Time.

What is encouraging about our discovery of so many people building really nice boats early in their careers as builders is the fact that it is not an arcane art requiring some sort of lengthy background learning the trade. A careful aware individual with woodworking skills can go right ahead and build a decent boat for himself, and should. We have found the impression prevalent that it is much too difficult for the beginner without some sort of training. There are dreamers out there wanting to begin to

build a boat but fearful of the possible insoluble problems they may face, or the unacceptable result of their maiden attempt. In short, fear of failing to achieve the degree of perfection and quality that purists espouse keeps some from even trying.

This pursuit of perfection is a bane on many activities, not just on boat building. The constant and unrelenting emphasis that the involved media and its spokesmen apply to how any activity is enjoyed tends to discourage those with some degree of self doubt. In sports, in fabrication of other sorts of artifacts, be they wood, metal, cloth, whatever, one gets a constant supply of articles on how this or that expert does his or her thing. So, yes, we should have a standard established, an awareness of how good one can become at something. But the implication that one MUST be that good, right off, or the effort is not worthwhile, does indeed discourage the hopeful.

We felt this for some time now, and when we decided to get this publication underway, one of our intentions was to bring to readers the stories of ordinary people doing nice things with boats, building or restoring. It seemed to us that such material would tend to persuade anyone with self doubts that others of similar inexperience have gone ahead with their dream projects and made them happen.

It follows then that we encourage readers doing such things to let us know. Their story will be of interest. We are not waiting around for such input, we can't and keep up our twice a month schedule. But, to supplement the stories we turn up, your input would be useful and would broaden our whole overview of this business of messing about in boats. The major boating publications, of necessity, focus on major happenings, outstanding people, attainment of perfection. We have a niche here for the more ordinary person infatuated with boats and the story he has to tell. Take advantage of it.



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What's happening...

JANUARY 5: PEABODY MUSEUM TSCA MONTHLY MEETING, SALEM, MA.

The regular monthly meeting of this Massachusetts north shore group of traditional small craft enthusiasts will be held in the Museum's education room at 7:30 p.m. For details on the program feature, contact Bob Hicks at (617) 774-0906. As of press time for this issue (November 15th) the program had not been finalized. Any interested person is invited, there is no admission fee. Membership in the group is available for a \$10 annual dues used to fund the winter long program series.

JANUARY 12-22: MARITIME COLLECTORS COLLOQUIUM, NEW YORK BOAT SHOW, NEW YORK CITY.

Experts in the field of collecting maritime art and antiques will hold daily lectures and conferences during the run of the New York Boat Show. This is aimed at serious collectors to provide practical knowledge for more effective collecting. The daily one hour lecture will be supplemented by the opportunity for one on one conferences at the Sea Heritage exhibit booth. For further information you can call Bernie Klay anytime at (212) 343-9575.

JANUARY 13: CANOE CAMPING WORKSHOP, TOPSFIELD, MA.

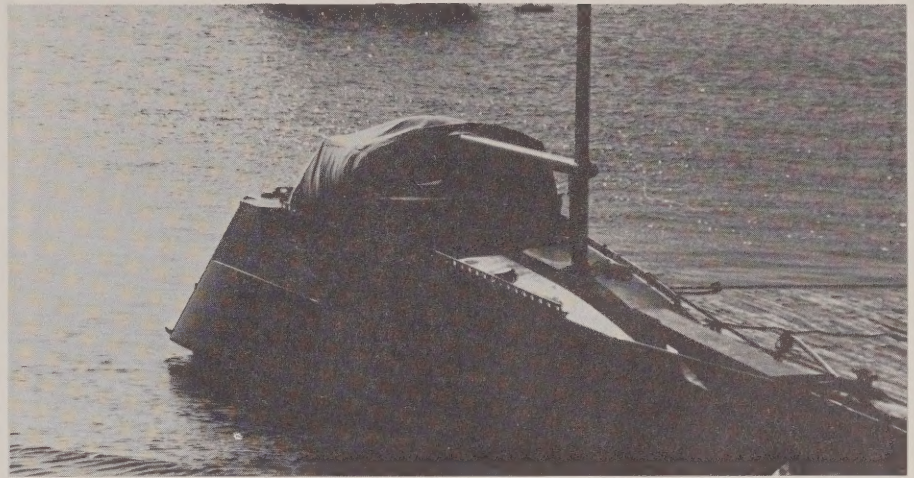
Walter Harmer of the Ipswich River Watershed Association will provide instruction on how to pack your canoe for camping trips. The meeting is at Walter's on Willowdale Rd. in Topsfield, MA. at 7:30 p.m. Please call him beforehand if you plan to come at (617) 887-8671. Please bring something for the refreshment table if possible..

JANUARY 17 & 19: STEAM BENDING WORKSHOP, MAINE MARITIME MUSEUM, BATH, ME.

The Maine Maritime Museum is sponsoring a winter series of workshops on subjects of interest to traditional small craft enthusiasts. Each workshop consists of two three hour sessions, on Tuesday and Thursday evenings. The fee for each is \$35 for non-members, \$25 for members of the Museum. Each workshop is limited to eight participants, so early registration is advised. To register, call Dennis Thoit at (207) 443-6311 during business hours.

The January program in this series will feature instructors Will Ansell and Greg Rossel on construction of a steam box, making forms, selecting bending stock for frames, coamings, etc.

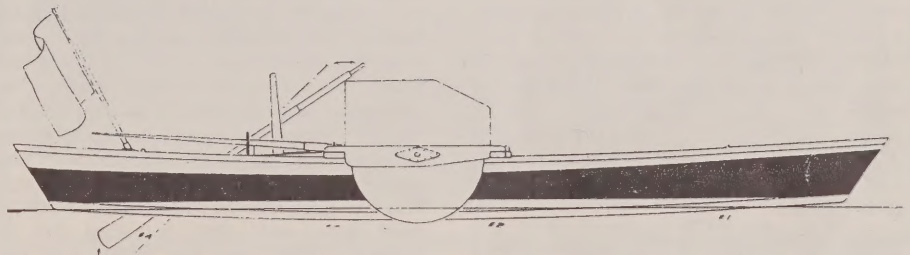
DENNIS MATT'S DREAMBOAT IS AFLOAT!



Our story in Issue #13 about the radical boat built by Dennis Matt promised further word on progress after the craft was launched. Well, as of press time for this issue (mid-November) the unique craft is afloat in Marblehead

harbor. Dennis has obtained a used outboard motor for power, and by the time you are reading this, he will have been able to conduct sea trials of his creation. More as things develop.

MADELINE THE PEDAL BOAT



In issue #12 we had a short item on a pedal operated sidewheel paddle boat designed by Phil Bolger and built by Dynamite Payson for a New Hampshire

buyer. Payson sent along this drawing for the unusual craft, and we're taking a bit of space here to bring you a reduced copy for casual study.

WHALING PAINTINGS & DRAWINGS PORTFOLIO OFFERED

AMERICAN WHALERS

in the

WESTERN ARCTIC

THE FINAL EPOCH OF THE GREAT AMERICAN SAILING WHALING FLEET

A Portfolio of
Watercolors & Drawings
by
WILLIAM GILKERSON

Introduced and
Released in text
by
JOHN R. ROCKSTOCKE



Published by Edward J. Lefkowitz, Inc.
Fairhaven, Massachusetts, United States of America

William Gilkerson of Rochester, MA is a marine artist of considerable skill, working in watercolors. Twelve of his watercolor paintings have been

reproduced in full along with a supporting text in a costly offering by the Edward J. Lefkowitz Co. of Fairhaven MA. Costly, at either \$1250 or \$200 per set. Out of our league but maybe someone out there is interested. The paintings are of the final epoch of the great American sailing whaling fleet. Page size is big at 15-1/4" x 19". Everything is done first class by leading firms in paper, printing and binding. There are 400 published, 348 for sale, each numbered and signed. Depending on the leather binding and inclusion of original sketches by the artist, the price is either the \$1250 or \$2000 mentioned. Well, if this is indeed something you can afford and would want, contact Edward J. Lefkowitz, Inc. P.O. Box 630, Fairhaven, MA 02719, phone (617) 997-6839.

Jim Forrest, Jeanette Denby & the



When my eyes began to water I was wishing for a Lindy helmet and a pair of those old glass aviator's goggles. Jim Forrest had opened up the ACE on a broad stretch of the Merrimack River on this lovely autumn day so I could experience the speed and handling of his (and Jeanette Denby's) creation. The low mahogany foredeck in front of us was cocked upwards, but its reared edge, a slight upward tilting surface, without any windshield, was directing the 40 mph airstream right into the eyeballs. So what, this was exciting. And, when Jim laid the boat into a hard turn and she just banked right over like an aircraft, I was thinking, "Wow, this is really great stuff!"

Well, the ACE is great stuff. It's a modern version of a vintage Gold Cup racer, patterned after a '20's era Hacker. But, Jim and Jeanette built their version in modern cold molded technique and powered it with a big stock block Chevy V-8 engine. No substitute for cubic inches. The ACE is the sole product to date of their Ace Speedboat Company. You could say that this is another dream of being in the specialty boat building business that has yet to achieve realization.

Jim and Jeanette live right on the shore of the Merrimack River in Amesbury, Massachusetts. From their front lawn they can look out over the recently built up rip rap of a seawall straight downstream towards Newburyport and just see the recently built high bridge that carries old U.S. Rt. 1 over the river in that historic town. And just upstream to the right the span for Interstate 95 sweeps high overhead. Yet in between these two major artifacts of modern high speed life the river is rather rural in appearance, a few shoreside homes but mostly just woods and fields and marshland stretching away either way.

Next door to their house is one of those funky old weatherbeaten buildings that you like to think old timey boatbuilders worked out of. When I spotted it, the nearly paintless clapboards, the narrow side porch leading to a side door, the obvious ramp that led to the water, albeit now overgrown a bit, I said to Jim, "And that's your boatshop?"

"Don't I wish it," Jim ruefully replied. It belongs to his next door neighbor, a man with several boats and several sons with several boats. "No way will he part with it," Jim continued. "He did let us use it free to finish off the ACE when we first moved here, but it's unlikely we'll ever get to own it." What a pity, for it is perfectly situated next door, with that potential for the railway right into the river, and that look of the '20's that would so suit the manufacturing facility of the Ace Speedboat Co.

Right now, though, that firm is still a dream. Jim earns a living as a professional scuba diver doing underwater construction. "It's a good living," he explains. "I get a lot of time off, but earn enough an hour (around \$18 to \$20 when diving) to support that free time. And when I'm working I'm with boat people, out on, as well as under, the water, and in lots of different places." Jeanette is a math expert with a university degree and she runs her own computer software firm developing special financial programs for Wall Street firms. So these two addicted boat nuts living in this old time house on this pleasant and historical New England river are carrying on modern day careers as they try to bring their dream to realization.

"We built the ACE as a show piece to show what we could do," Jim explains. "There aren't too many potential buyers for \$45,000 speedboats of yesteryear, but those there are want

top quality stuff." Well, the top quality is there. Now three years old, the ACE is a beauty in every detail. This despite the fact that it spends the boating season on a mooring in the river out front of Jim and Jeanette's home. "The seagulls sit on her and crack shells and all the rest," Jim tells you, "so we have to keep cleaning her up every time we go out." They keep the removable leather seat cushions ashore and rely on the varnished epoxy coated finish to withstand these ravages. "We'll revarnish this winter probably," Jim goes on. "That's all she's needed since we finished her, a revarnish job."

This beautiful boat is a first boat for both of them. Jim had background in woodworking, cabinetry skills. Jeanette was a novice. Yet, in two years, they built this immaculate craft. Jim did much of the basic construction work, Jeanette specialized in laying out and fitting the exterior layer of veneers which run fore and aft to appear as conventional planking. Fitting these planking pieces was an exercise in complicated figuring what with that rounded over sheer and the complex compound curves particularly in the bow. They figure that they pretty well equally shared the hours put in, though they didn't punch a clock to keep exact track. So, here is another case of "it can be done," a boat can be built by inexperienced persons who want to badly enough and do have some woodworking skills.

They take the ACE to various of the antique and classic boat meets, and head for the St. Lawrence every summer and for the Thousand Islands get-together at Clayton, NY where Jim comes from. This past summer the Clayton gathering also included the Vintage Gold Cup Regatta so they were right in their glory along with the other restored and replica Gold Cuppers of yesteryear.

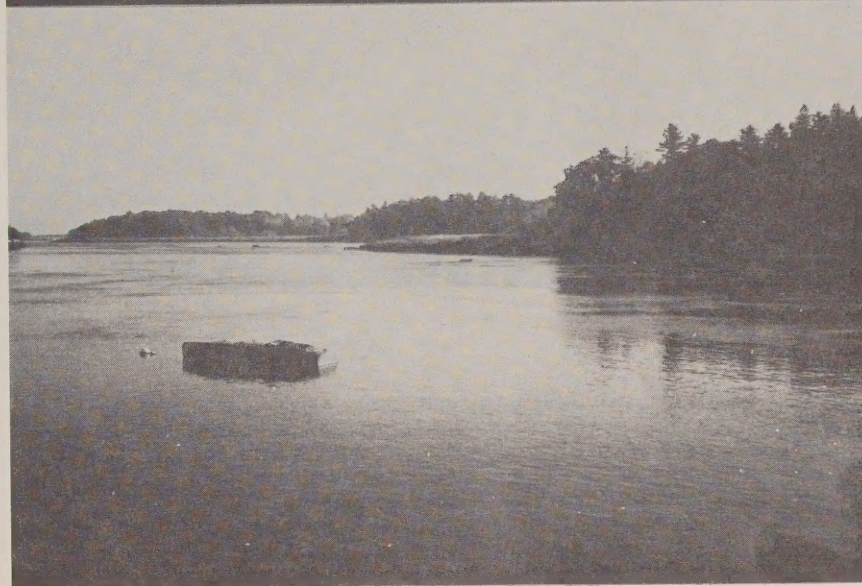
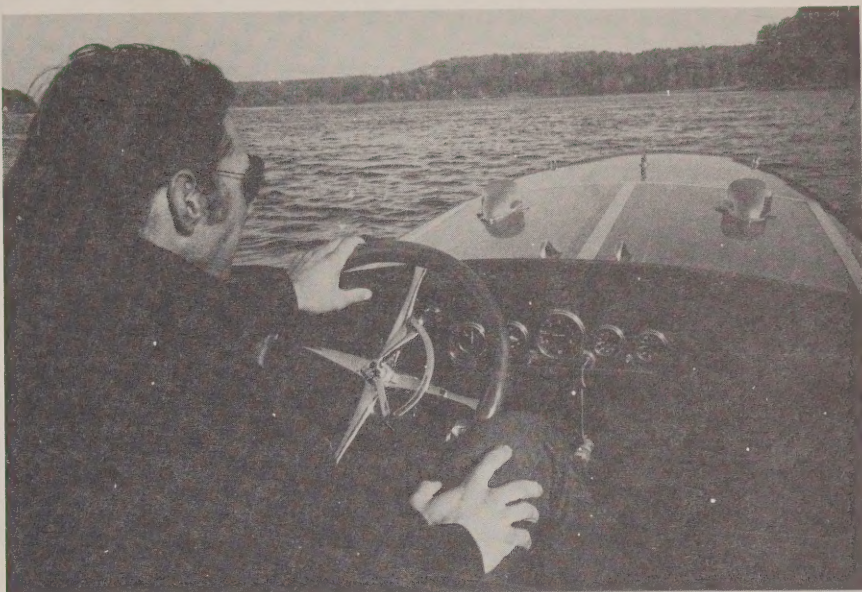
"Mostly we just ride around here on the river or go down along the shore. We do some water skiing with friends too." Yes, a \$45,000 ski boat!

Well, why hasn't the Ace Speedboat Company gotten into serious business? It's that matter of so limited a field of prospective owners of the very nice but very expensive sort of vintage boats that Jim and Jeanette wish to build. How do you attract that first customer for a one off custom craft of such cost? The answer to that one has yet to be found by this couple. Since they support themselves with work they also enjoy, they don't have desperate economic necessity pressing them into any rash commitments, and their showing the ACE at all the meets, including the Wooden Boat Show in 1982, has yet to attract the person they seek. "We had a chance to bid on one job because of the Gougeon Brothers' help," Jim says. "But it wasn't a boat, it was a cold molded wooden sculpture 60 feet high. Jeanette did all the math constructs to develop the 'lines' for the twisted converging coiled shape, but we lost out." The Gougeon's have taken their WEST System technology into other fields, giant propellers for windmills, things like that. They seem to view the ACE project as one of the more successful applications of their epoxy saturation system.

As we cruised back down the river again at a more sedate pace, so we could talk, Jim pointed out the attractions of living along what has been regarded by many environmentalists as a sewer for upstream industrial cities. The shore is rural, much of it on one stretch now in state hands, most of the rest held by farmers and other landed types. As we came back into Amesbury, Jim detoured alongshore to show me another funky old boatshop. On the ramp beside the weatherbeaten old building was a catboat and several other traditional craft. "Myron's in his 80's, still goes to work every day," Jim told me. "He still charges \$3.50 an hour, and works on what he likes. The shop is an old dance hall." Well, I thought, there's maybe another story for a future issue.

Amesbury is a small industrial town on the river, and Jim says you can still get things done right there that are hard to find elsewhere. The custom brass throttle pedal on the ACE, a big foot-print shaped affair into which one puts his foot, was done in a small foundry in town. "Lots of people bring in their patterns and this place will cast their stuff real reasonable," Jim explains. Hardware stores still stock, or will get, the special stuff a boat nut might need. It's all a close small town affair not yet succumbed to the influx of the upwardly mobile city professionals looking for a "place in the country."

Interested? You can learn more about the Ace Speedboat Company by contacting them at 9 Merrill St. in Amesbury, MA 01913. Ventures may be contacted at P.O. Box 3306, Simi Valley, CA 93063.



Top: Jim at the wheel of the ACE on his stretch of the Merrimack River. Bottom: ACE on the mooring, pretty rural riverbank for crowded Massachusetts!

...but now for something completely different!

Jim and Jeanette have moved on to another project, a sliding seat rowing shell. It's different. Like, the oars are those articulated ones which permit you to face forward. And the rather deep 21 foot craft looks, with its dull black finish, like maybe it's made of hi tech carbon fiber or such. "No, it's cold molded wood," Jim responded to this speculation. "We had some people object to us entering our 'plastic' boat in last May's Great Merrimack River Dory Race," Jim smiles. "It's wood."

Jim designed the hull himself in that sort of empirical fashion of taking what he had seen others had built and drawing away until he had something he liked. "I think I'd go with less freeboard on the next one," is his only major

fault to find with the number one effort. The seat is just that, a small wooden platform that slides along aluminum angle rails on small grooved pulley wheels. The outriggers are 1 inch stainless tubing solidly braced to hold the plates with the thrust reversing mechanism on them.

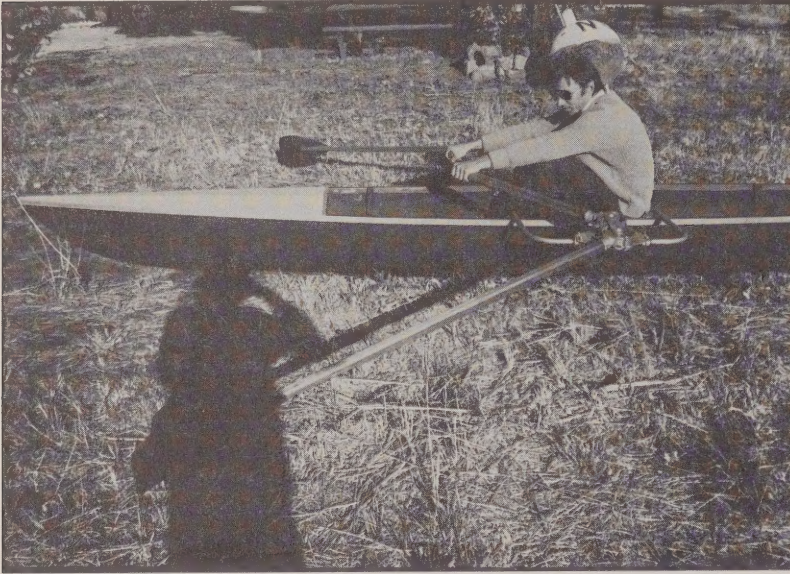
The mechanism was purchased by Jim and Jeanette from a California firm, Ventures. The unit as it was received, intended for use in conventional small boats, just couldn't take the strain of the sliding seat, long sweeps. The connection between the two swivelling castings was that flat spring steel stock like used for banding crates. It flexed into a fracture too soon. So Jim hooked up the unit with small diameter aircraft

steel flex cables and these seem to be holding up okay. Jeanette is particularly fond of rowing the boat. "I'd like to be able to become good enough to qualify for the Head of the Charles," she explained with maybe a bit of faraway look in her eyes. In the meantime they plan further refinements to the boat and the rowing system. IF they can get this to a degree of performance and ease of fabrication, maybe they'll have a product that they can market to those less well

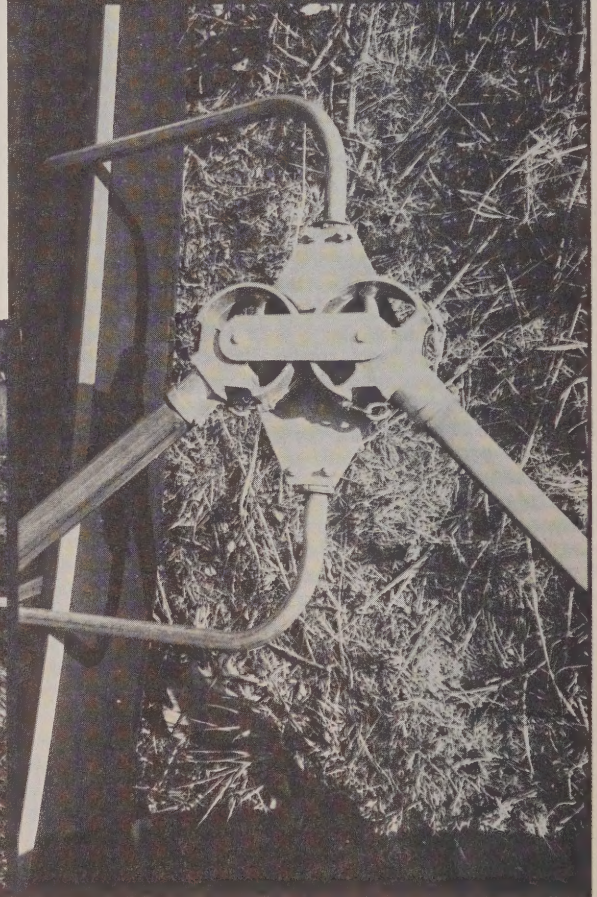
heeled than is required to order up an ACE replica.

Contemplating this yet to be realized dream of becoming specialty boat-builders, I offered up, "Well, at least you both have interesting jobs to support your hobby." Mistake. Jeanette responded with, "Support our LIFE!" What I had been looking at and talking about is a whole lot more than a hobby for this couple.

Report & Photos by Bob Hicks



The forward facing oar setup takes getting used to for anyone who has done much rowing. Above and below show the normal physical motions for a stroke with the oars but the oars are heading the opposite way. At the right is an end view of the recreational shell Jim has built, below is a closeup of the modified thrust reversing mechanism from Ventures of California. The two drums are connected by steel flexible cables.





Report & Photos by Bob Hicks

The Concord "Icebreaker" Race

The ice didn't have to be broken on November 6th for the Concord Icebreaker race in that town on the Sudbury River. But it was a raw cloudy day, that sort of steel gray day November brings. Over 200 boats turned out for the event despite the imminent threat of a cold rain. Most were canoes, headed up by eight of the big war canoes. Many were kayaks. A few were oar powered, one sliding seat rig in a Folbot, others ranging up to 20 foot Banks dories from the Carroll School in nearby Lincoln.

Getting into the water was a bit of a trick in itself. Boats had to be carried from roadside parking over steel barrier fencing at roadside and down the steep embankment to the river, where tiny landing areas permitted no more than a dozen or so boats at a time to be pulled up. So, most were on the river by the 10 a.m. start.

The Sudbury meanders through the wooded countryside of several suburban Boston towns, by the time it gets to Concord it ranges up to 100 feet wide, though in spots it still narrows to twenty feet or so. Much of the course for this event passed by riverside backyards of quite affluent homes. The finish at the Lowell Road bridge in Concord was on flat land, much easier here to retrieve the boats. Of course, it was crowded as post race refreshments and verbal replays of various contests went on awaiting results.

Two classes are catered to, the "racing" class and the "recreational" class. Within each are various subdivisions for canoes, kayaks, pulling boats, etc. exist. It's all a bit informal, the starts get off in groups, according to the subgroups specified. The "racing" class covers about 6 miles, they head upstream from the start at the Sudbury Road bridge in Concord to a sort of midriver pond known as Fairhaven Bay where they hang a U-turn, come on back down past the start and on to the finish three miles further downstream at the Lowell Road bridge. The "recreational" classes just head downstream over that three mile stretch.

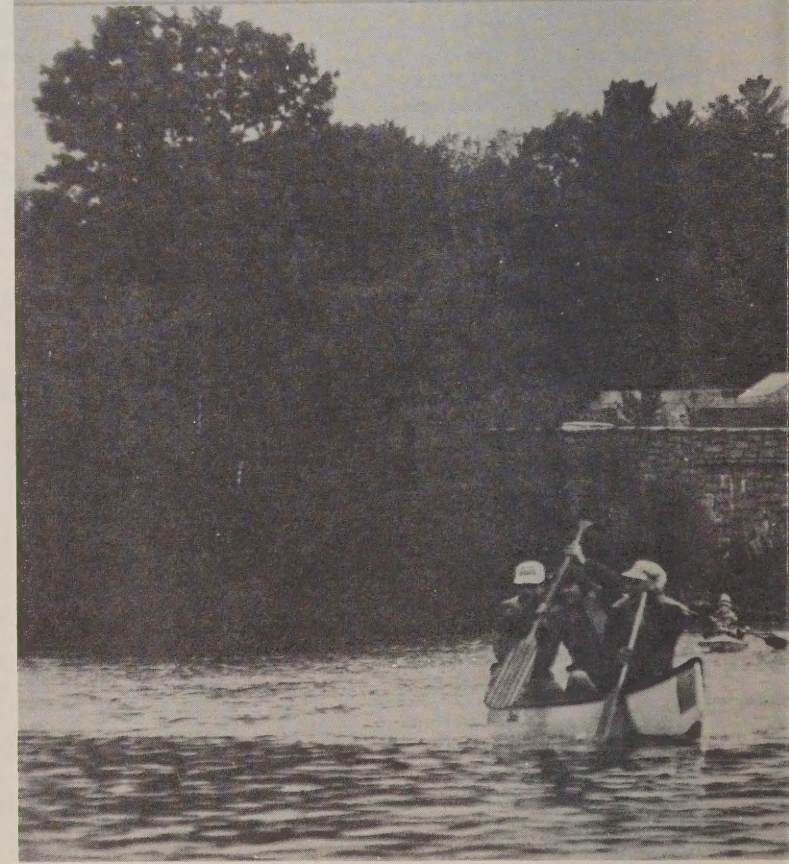
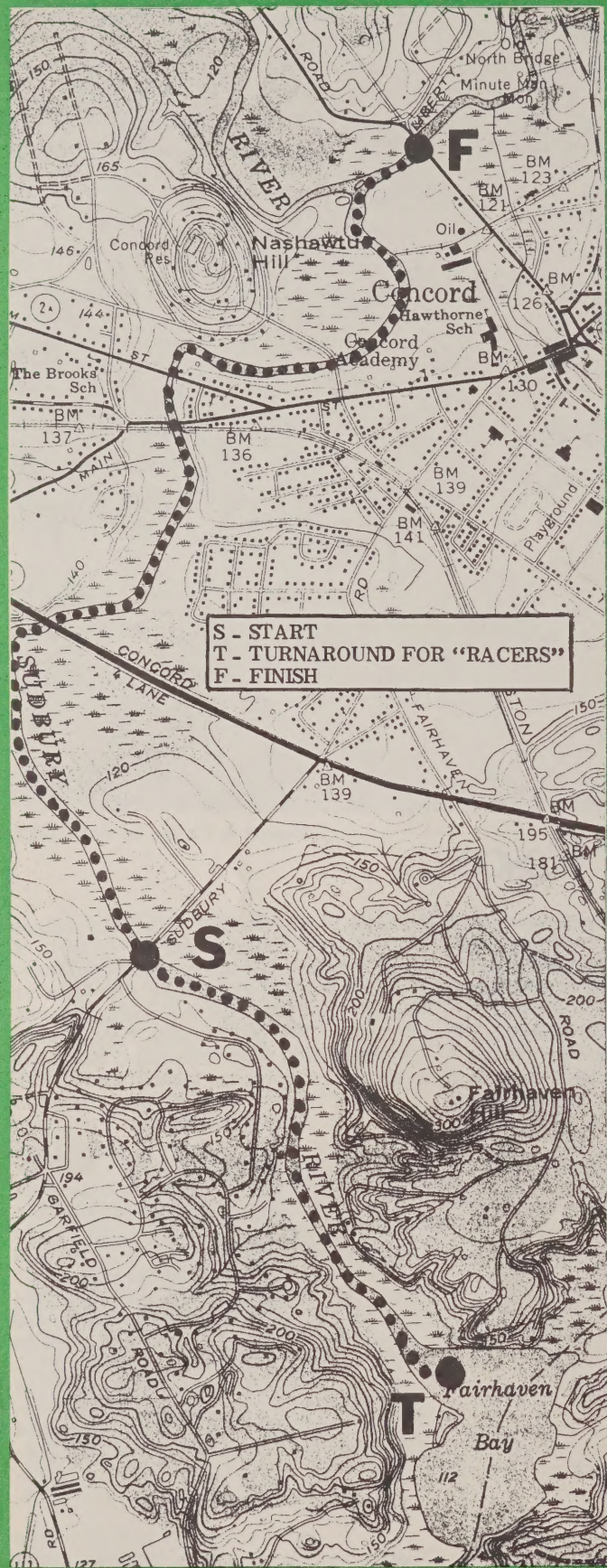
Typical of this sort of "open" racing, the full gamut exists from grim lipped serious athletes determinedly paddling kayak or canoe intent on victory and a course record, through others out having a blast, especially those large congregations in the war canoes. Each held eight to ten paddlers, and the gap between the leader and those back beyond third place was enormous as they came back by the start enroute downstream. The serious racers far ahead, the boisterous party types far behind. All enjoying their race.

Certainly the canoes bring an enormous variety to the fleet. While they greatly outnumber all other sorts of boats present, within their own type there are many variations. There are the solo racers, skinny plastic things of see-

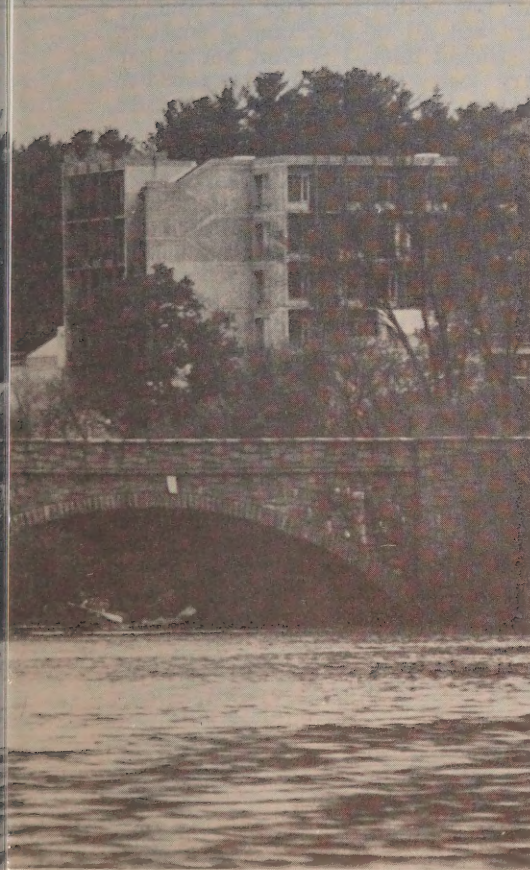
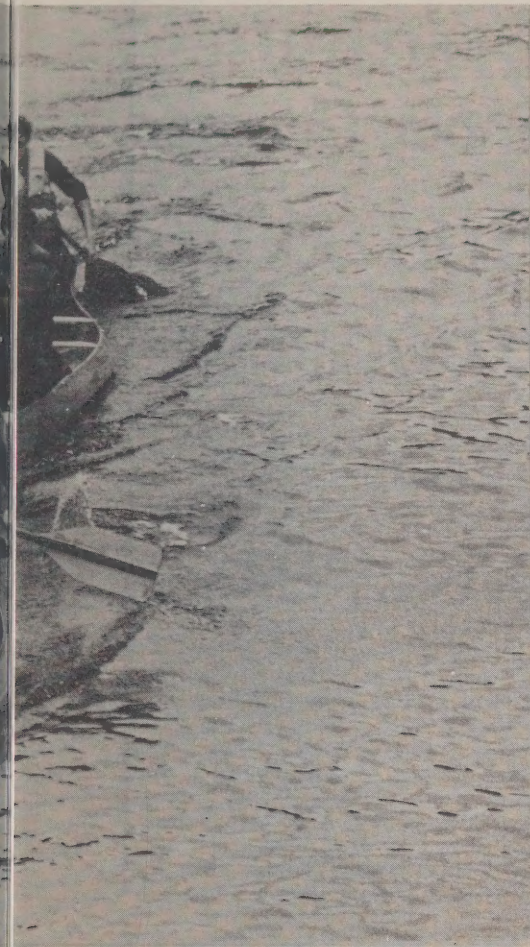
through construction with funny bulges amidships. The solo and double sorts of more traditional design, plastic and canvas covered wood. A few with three or four paddlers. And the overloaded war canoes, like giant water bugs coming downstream, paddles flashing, heads and shoulders bobbing, insults traded with bridgeviewers as they pass beneath.

This event has been run for the past half dozen years by a small group of war canoe folks comprising the Concord War Canoe Club. We asked one of the organizers, Jim Soberg, why they did it, it is quite a hassle to run off so many boats on the narrow river. "Well, we go to other meets all year and want to run our own for others," Jim replied. But, the bloom is off, it seems. There's a good chance they will not hold this event in 1984 as the pressures of the work involved, falling as usual on a handful of volunteer workers, and the growing concern overshadowing all such events of liability for the well being of so disparate and unknown a group of participants, are bearing heavily on the fires of enthusiasm.

It would be a shame to see this one go by the board, it attracts a great crowd of participants, is held on a lovely stretch of river, and comes late in the season when not much else of an organized nature is happening. We'll be watching for word next year, and perhaps somewhere there are those who might choose to pitch in and help it continue.



Upper left: Close competition in two man racing canoes.
Upper right: The leading one man kayak in action.
Lower left: The Sudbury is scenic for recreational paddlers.
Lower right: War canoe in action.





In Search of a Camper/Cruiser And so we come to *Mouser* (aka Garfield)

Report & Photos by Richard Zapf.

Finally, we come to Phil Bolger's MOUSER from his book, SMALL BOATS. And herein lies a story in itself. She is 16' LOA, 16' LWL, and 6-1/2' in beam and carries 182 square feet of sail in her high peaked gaff rig. Bolger designed her as a V-bottomed catboat planked with 12" cedar over oak frames. Bolger's own comments indicate that he thinks that she is less than beautiful, fast, and can be reefed down to nothing. MOUSER also has a huge cockpit that will hold four members of the two hundred pound club complete with beer cooler, in comfort for several hours. Her cuddy holds more than enough gear and will sleep two worn out children while underway. MOUSER, GARFIELD to us, however, does not exactly leap onto a trailer but will condescend to being winched aboard providing she is floated halfway aboard the trailer.

When I called Mr. Bolger about the plans for MOUSER, I learned that the only plans that were available were those in SMALL BOATS. I do in fact have proof of one catboat to indicate that a boat can be built from these plans. However, it does require some creative problem solving on the smaller details. A very large magnifying glass is also needed. (ED. NOTE: We find that running this sort of tiny plan through a copy machine that has enlargement capability several times will bring them up to much more easily read size). Bolger also indicated that MOUSER was not an easy boat to build and he was absolutely right about

that. Her lofting is rather straightforward and all of her framing consists of straight lines. However, her hollow entry below the chine creates planking problems that only a masochist could love.

For her size, MOUSER has construction details, including her 4-1/2" x 4-1/2" keel and massive framing that contribute to a feeling of stability not usually found in a 16' boat. Her 6-1/2' beam is a real advantage if you sail all day, as I do. She is a boat in which one can actually walk around. In fact, some of the best fun is to stand on her stem post and watch the bone in her teeth as you sail along.

I did vary the construction considerably in the planking. Below the chine she is planked with double diagonal quarter inch white pine with 1/4" plywood sub planking, which is all set in Arcon E152 epoxy resin and fastened at the chine and keel with hot dipped galvy screws. The whole bottom was then covered with Versamid 140 epoxy resin and that "white cloth."

I could not abide the flat sides above the chine, so I used lapstrake construction of half inch white pine with three laps per side. The laps were glued with Arcon E152 and clenched nailed with galvy nails from the Tremont Nail Co. This has proved to be a very rigid construction and in two years of sailing I have seen no sign of cracking, splitting or separating. This is probably due to the fact that I attempted to stabilize

In Issue #12 we introduced you to Richard Zapf's GARFIELD, a Bolger designed catboat that was his final choice as a family camper cruiser. In Issues #13 and #14 we featured Richard's review of several alternative designs that he considered, including the Great Pelican, the Westlawn Mite and Sam Rabl's Picaroon. In this issue we conclude Richard's discussion with a return to GARFIELD and his reasons for this final choice.

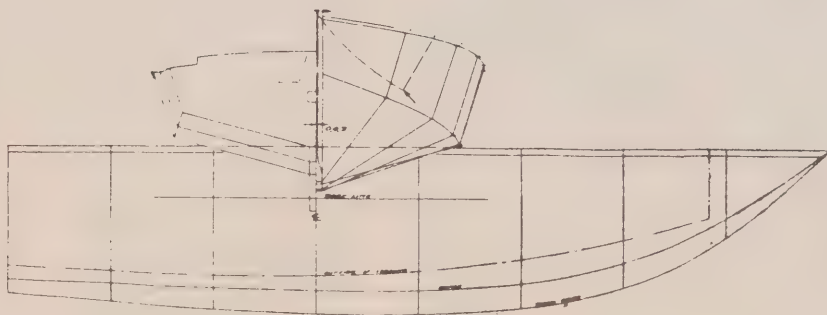
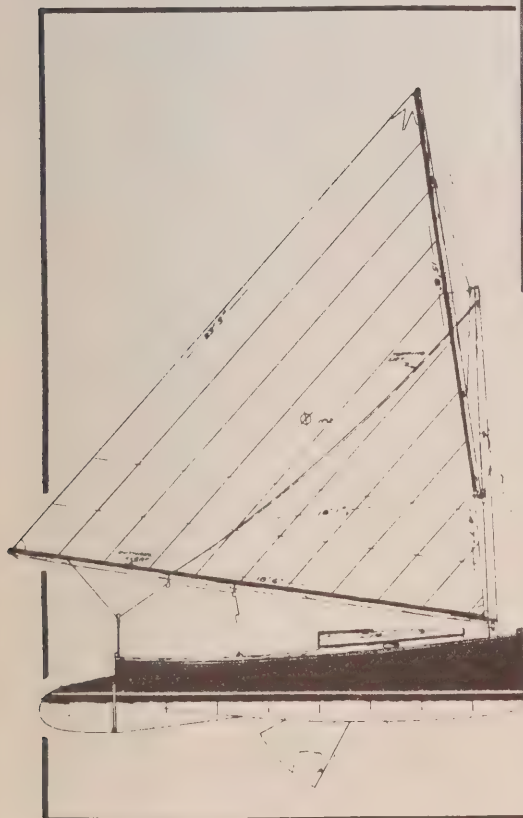
all the wood by coating it inside and out with epoxy resin. In my opinion, the lapstraking dramatically improved the appearance of MOUSER from rather stodgy slab sides to quite graceful lapstrakes.

Anybody who is contemplating lapstraking a hull should read Pete Culler's SKIFFS & SCHOONERS. It is great to be able to set battens and walk around a hull making minor adjustments as he suggests. The problem becomes more complicated when the boat is built in a small garage and one can only see twenty-five percent of the boat at any time. Attempting to sight the battens by looking through the back window of the garage while standing in three feet of snow is a joy I do not intend to repeat in the near future. Culler had it right when he stated that experience starts with the doing. He neglected to mention that it is easier said than done. All in all, I think GARFIELD looks quite graceful with its white lapstrakes and tanbark sail which was masterfully made for me by Dave Howard of Sea Dog Canvas in Salem, MA. On the water I have found GARFIELD to be a reasonably upright sailer, which is an important consideration for anyone taking small children aboard. At anchor GARFIELD is more than comfortable for a day of flounder fishing. There is something to be said about putting some of those 16'-20' sloops made exclusively of that "white cloth" to shame when everybody is running for home at the end of the day, also!

A sixteen foot boat can be built in the garage that houses the car that can tow it. Yes, GARFIELD came out of that garage!



Photo by Jeremy Barnard





ANORAK



ASSOCIATION OF NORTH ATLANTIC KAYAKERS

Reflections on Winter Paddling

No cabin cruisers. No twin-Mercury killer (a roll won't help) racing boats. No sailboats ("Are you OK in that thing?"). In fact, in February and March when the duck hunters have shelved their decoys and returned to the hearth, NOBODY! On a good day there is sunshine, blue sky, a friendly breeze (not more) and ice in the bays and along the shore. For this short spell, the coastal waters return to a state as close to pristine as modern man will, by default, allow. For two months, the ducks and geese own the territory. We paddlers, in our versions of native boats, are uniquely equipped to paddle back in time and see the show. It should not be missed!

Many times I've gone to the shore, checked the weather and turned back for an impromptu day of hiking. Most of my winter trips have been alone. I don't

really care to risk someone else's life off shore because I am uncertain of his level of paddling skill. There is no room for error at this time of year. For my own planning purposes, correct or not, I assume I will not come up if my head goes into the water. You can be sure this inspires great caution (in warmer seasons, I never miss a roll). In the past I've either used my old, oft repaired slalom boat which, by now, has a center of gravity close to the floor or my lighter, more buoyant (tippy) slalom boat with a 32 pound jug of water placed on the floor behind the seat. I've mounted a rudder on this boat. The water jug is wide enough to lay flat without shifting about.

This is neither heroic nor hair paddling. I'm not interested in that in winter. My own personal standard has been 38 to 40 degrees, light breeze or

less, and sunny. We had many such days last winter and they weren't all on Wednesdays. The best time to go out is from around noon to 4 pm. I head for the sheltered bays around islands that are not too far distant from one another. I make note of the weather forecast for the day and don't set off across the open sea lest the wind suddenly freshen and get me into a hell of a jam. I am never in a rush to get anywhere and never try to challenge my endurance or strength. When one is alone and it is clear that nobody is going to tow one in, unless they find you later, it stimulates caution. My intent is to explore at a leisurely pace, shoot a few pictures, look at the ducks, investigate an island and enjoy the fresh air. This objective is to explore the winter sea. Challenges are for warmer days.

Mr. Bradley's Island

On Saturday morning, January 22, 1983, I set off from Compo Beach in Westport, CT (water 32 degrees, air 35 degrees, overcast, light breeze) in my kayak and paddled eastward Sherwood Island. I had intended to enter Sherwood Millpond and have a look at the canvas-backs, buffleheads, geese and gulls that normally crowd that marsh pond. Along my route I saw a hunter huddled among the rocks on the shore. A short distance beyond him three goldeneyes took flight. From the bay outside the millpond I wasn't able to spot the narrow entry into the pond. At low tide it looked like mudflats and a beach lined with cottages. A flock of Canada geese flew over and a hunter on the beach brought down one of them. It was probably a good thing that I didn't reach the millpond.

One of the more pleasing sounds on the winter sea is the ow-owalet, ow-owalet calls of the oldsquaw given continually with enthusiasm whether the

ducks are in flight or on the water. While paddling among the islands off Norwalk later in the day, which had become sunny, I had several chances to sit back, watch and listen to small flocks of these sleek brown and white birds. Red breasted mergansers flew by from time to time. On a gravel bar just east of the power station, eighteen red backed sandpipers (dunlins) were poking about among the rocks. When not moving, they were hard to see because they were the same color as the rocks, giving the momentary impression when they did move of rocks come to life. I'll take my camera along next time.

Back at the Calf Pasture Park beach, while watching some hunters put out a string of goose decoys, I saw a clapper rail leave a small patch of grass, walk across the broken ice and disappear into some reeds. I slid my boat into the ice strewn spartana grass now being flooded by the tide and waited. In a few

minutes the rail reappeared on the ice, walked a few steps and then flew 50 yards down the beach to disappear in a large stand of phragmites.

One small island near the eastern lighthouse has a stretch of sand beach thanks to someone having moved a lot of rocks to one side. On the island stands a one room stone shelter. Just west of this shelter is a four foot high stone cairn with a granite plaque. The inscription reads, "Goose Island, Dedicated to Leonard J. Bradley, 1900-1971, Naturalist." Mr. Bradley lived in Wilton, CT 24 years ago, as did I. I visited him one spring day after school. He said he had seen a grey cheeked thrush in his yard that morning. I've thought about Mr. Bradley sometimes. I didn't know that he had died. On this particular winter day a flock of about 50 noisy brant settled in just offshore from his island. A red backed sand piper flew by as I walked back over the rocks to the beach.



ANorAK... the Newsletter

The newsletter ANorAK is written by sea kayakers, for sea kayakers, at our own expense. It is the principal medium for exchange of information about the sport on the east coast. We intend ANorAK to be useful to both the hard core experienced sea kayaker and to those who are new to the sport. We publish material submitted by subscribers and will solicit contributions from others on subjects potentially interesting to our readers.

We are not a club but a network of individuals with a wide range of skills and expertise united by a love for explor-

ing the coast in our unobtrusive craft. For the \$7 subscription price we invite you to join us in these coastal adventures. There is strength and safety in numbers and skills improve more rapidly when coaching and encouragement is readily available. We will provide you with a list of paddlers in your region and encourage you to contact one another, thereby strengthening this network. When possible we will identify kayaking clubs that offer winter pool sessions. We are designing a training course for new paddlers and will discuss that course in the newsletter as it takes shape. Safety through skill and understanding is a top priority aspect of this sport. Anyone in my (CAS) area is welcome to paddle with me anytime I go out providing your skills match those required for the scheduled outing.

ANorAK needs your subscriptions

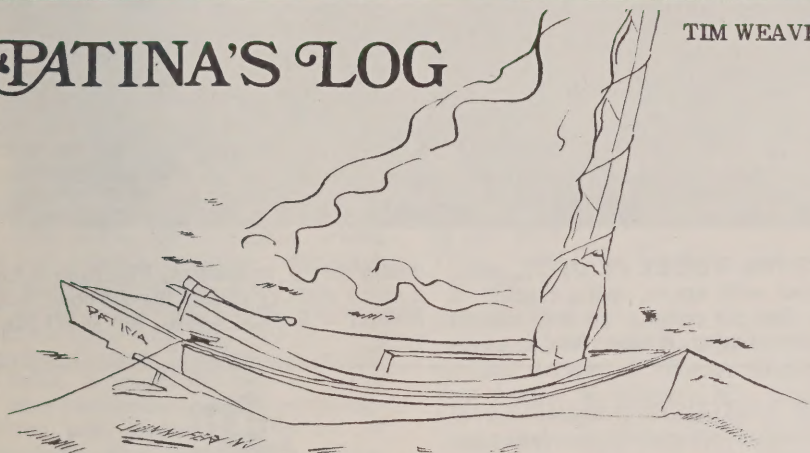
to finance quality printing work. ANorAK needs you to ask questions, write trip reports about places you discover (launch sites, lunch sites, etc), write book reviews, discuss equipment or write about anything interesting that relates to the sea kayaking experience.

All commercial suppliers will receive one free listing at no cost as a service to our readers. Suppliers contributing towards the cost of publication will receive a half page space in which to list equipment they carry that meets our needs as coastal kayakers.

As Editor, I will make every effort to make ANorAK an entertaining and informative publication. I invite your comments, suggestions, etc. and look forward to hearing from you. My phone is (914) 769-1651, my mail address is Box 444, Tuckahoe, NY 10707. My name is Chuck Sutherland.

PATINA'S LOG

TIM WEAVER



Fall, like a reluctant campfire, kept refusing its time. It was an October of misty rains and gray, windless days, little frost, green leaves and, except for the blued crimson of the sumac, little color. It was an October that clung to a warm and wet September until the very end, until a week of stormy, windy weather broke the spell. Then, finally, sunshine and cool air moved in and the trees began to glow. The sugar maples, as always, led. The occasional copper beech took on its metallic shine, and the oaks, the ash, the shagbark hickory, the poplars and the willows began their fall dance. And by the last Saturday in October, fall was here, the trees a blaze of colors.

And it was time. Time to oil the long shoes, time to get out the long johns, warm trousers, flannel shirt, go find a vest and the cap and the sweater. And time for the first fall sail.

The ride to the cove was too short. The tree lined streets were a whirl of yellows, bronzes, red-orange, silver, rose and violet straining in the breeze, a breeze that was gusting well over thirty miles an hour. And the cove was alive. The large willow near the ramp was streaming. On the far shore the gulls were a white swatch on a mud bank in the lee of the marsh grass. And PATINA was tugging at her mooring, bow line taut, mooring buoy under water.

It was a day to sail all right. Already in her winter rig, she was almost ready, and that was a problem. The fore-mast sail, which is generally rigged as her main when she is one-masted, was too large and had no reef points. It would have to be changed, come down, the main laced and raised. I wondered if it could be done in such windy weather. And, if so, how would the lacing behave? PATINA is simply rigged. Could the rig be tightened up in such a wind? I didn't know, but nothing would be lost in trying, and a fine little experiment would be tried. Just how well was PATINA thought out? What did those fellows know in 1890?

The row out was not quite a piece of cake. Sometimes the dinghy and I just treaded water and then we'd make a little progress, but we made it at last. Dinghy tied off aft, sail bag and thermos aboard, the task was at hand. Working easily from the cockpit, I quickly removed and stored the foresail. The main was laid out, laced and raised. With a tug here, a push there, the lacing was tightened up and the luff set taught. The sail rushed and snapped and white light bounced about. Almost ready. Next came the sprit boom, and having done the sprit boom dance in far less breeze, I was cautious. Taking a hint from Chapelle, I first rigged the fore end of the sprit with its mast harness, but loosely, securing the take-up line with a slip knot.

Then I picked up the outboard end of the sprit and, biding my time, waited for the swirl in the breeze that would bring the peak of the sail my way. It came and I grabbed. Set the sprit's shoulder in the grommet, gave the take up line at the mast a yank, and snugged the sprit. And, PATINA was quiet. The rush of the wind on the water, the scudding little white-caps, the tug of the hull, the color of the swamp maples and the brilliant afternoon light all resumed their places. PATINA was ready. Shipshape, and it had taken about a half hour.

So, off the mooring. Windage on the hull handled that, just backed her off, faced the stern and steered her as if she were a scooter. And she responded ever so nicely. Just set her up for a broad reach, took in the sheet and along she went. Like a lamb and decently balanced. It was hard to believe. As in easier weather, she could stay on the wind a bit, reach and run. The cove was hers. She just had her way. Never put the lee rail under and only had to let out the sheet in the very heaviest of the gusts. And if caught in a gust when coming about, she had a pleasant way. She would stop, in irons, the wind would drop her back and, again, steering her like a scooter, I could get her back on the new tack. What a pleasant afternoon!

Later that day, PATINA put away, dinner cooked, dishes done, just sitting around, I was still enjoying the afternoon on PATINA, aware that she had revealed to me a bit more about herself. In her place, the protected waters along a coast, she was an able little lady. To know this in flesh and bone with hand and eye, to take it past the pages of Chapelle's AMERICAN SMALL SAILING CRAFT, that was the pleasure.

But, onward toward a word of caution, not for the experienced sailor but for the new, perhaps young, sailor. It is one thing to play about in a small cove on a windy day in a flat bottomed skiff. It is not a bay, not even a small river, not a large creek. There was neither tide nor wave to speak of. People were about. It was, in short, a fairly safe place to play. And that was important.

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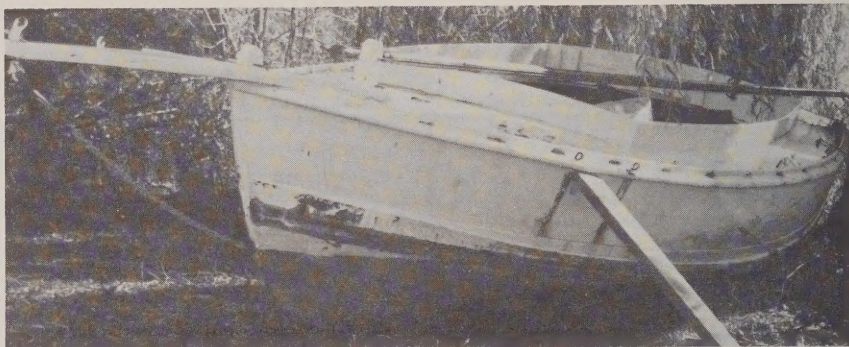
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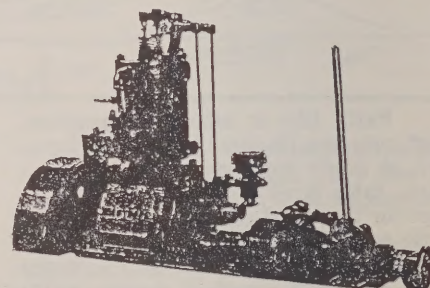


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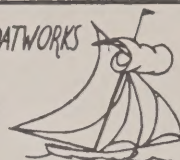
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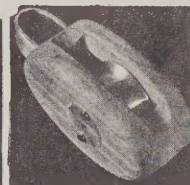
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