

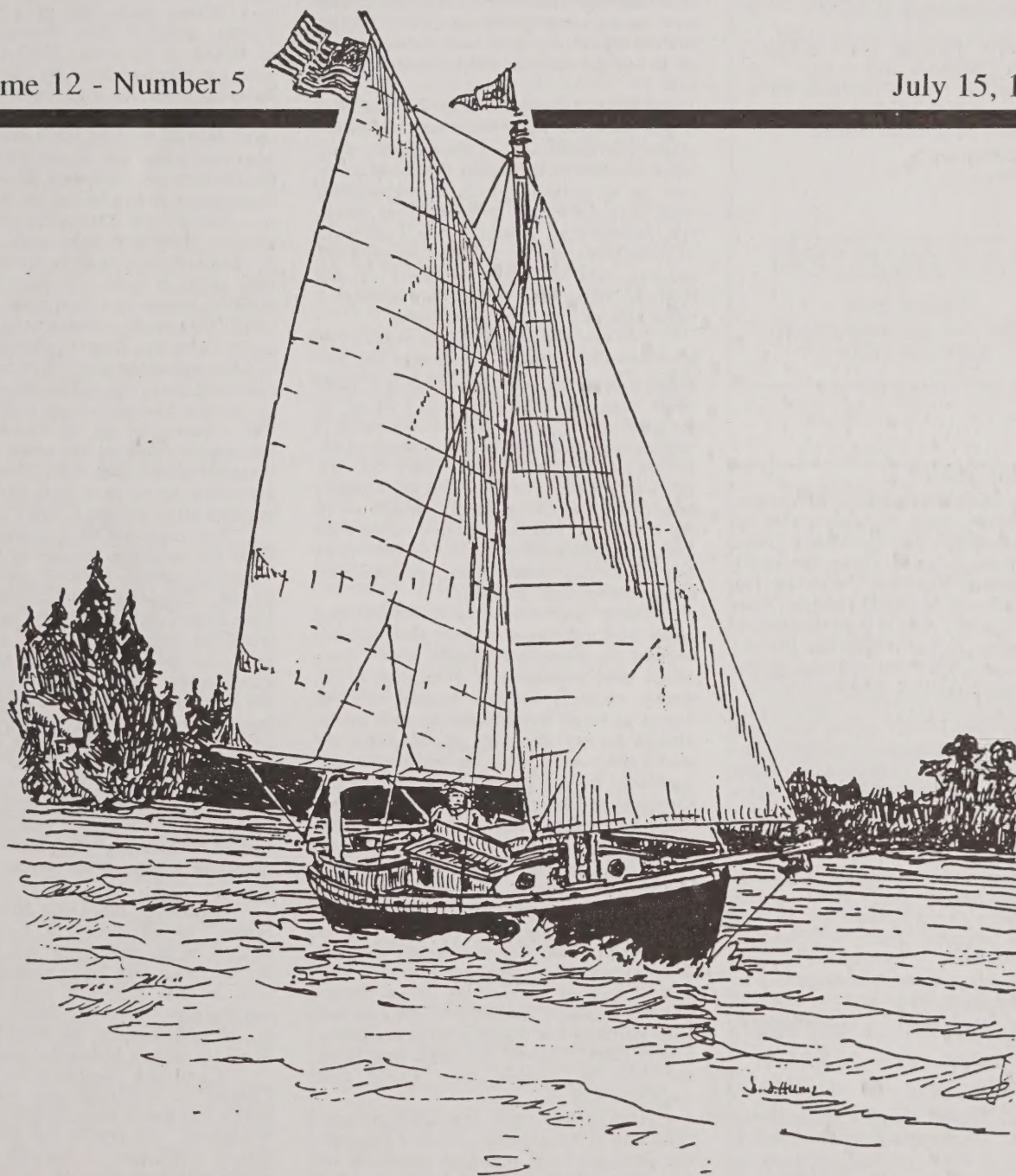


messing about in BOATS

Special Features This Issue
"Solo September Cruise"
& "After 15 Years"

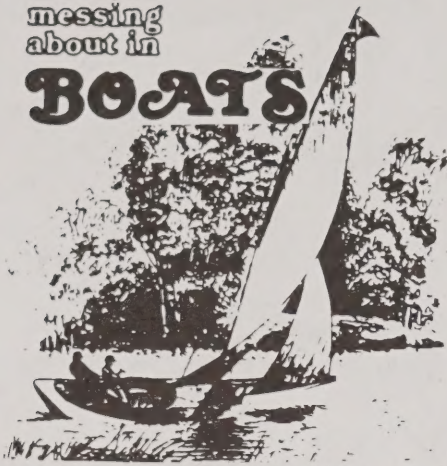
Volume 12 - Number 5

July 15, 1994



messing
about in

BOATS



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Our Next Issue...

Brings on more summer adventures afloat as Moby Nick Scheuer's tale of "Coyote Canoeing", George Fulk's "First Cruise in Frogger" and Doug McNary's "Malibu Surfing Sketches" back up the second installment of David Hume's "Solo September Cruise". And if a small window of opportunity in early July has permitted, I will tell you what it's like to sail on one of Dick Newick's transatlantic trimarans.

Several designs will appear including a number of Phil Green's ultra-light, ultra-simple paddling craft, Glen L's "Eight Ball" 8' sailing dinghy and Phil Bolger's "15' Work Skiff". And Tim Barnum will discuss how he came to design six small boats in "Designs by the Numbers".

Dave Gosse tells about "Building the Mobjack Bay Sailing Skiff" at Alexandria Seaport, Garry Cerrone describes another inexpensive boarding ladder, we'll look at Bob Lavertue's Springfield Fan Centerboard unique bronze folding fan centerboard, and Scott White starts a series of essays on "An Amateur's Techniques & Discoveries".

On the Cover...

One of David Hume's illustrations from his enchanting little book "Blueberry, a Boat of the Connecticut Shoreline" graces this issue's cover, and the first installment of an excerpt from the book is featured within.

Commentary...

By now you will have noticed that my scheme to recruit interested readers as book reviewers has resulted in regular and informative reviews of a number of books that I was just never going to get around to reading. I have been very pleased with the resulting reviews and even though one reviewer came under the guns of several readers disputing his comments about removing amine blush from epoxy coatings, in all the experiment is a success and is therefore ongoing. There are a lot of interesting new books coming out and we're getting review copies regularly and sending them on to our growing list of volunteer reviewers.

I have no objection to readers who might disagree with what any reviewers might say about any of these books over what are viewed as factual or technical errors or as personal preferences, writing with their views. I'll publish these rebuttals, corrections, whatever, but I do want to point out that this is all being done by amateur reviewers just as many of our boats are being built by amateur builders. I value this sort of grass roots input.

I do not intend to conduct exhaustive interviews of potential reviewers nor demand extensive credentials. This is a grass roots magazine and who am I to sit in judgement of people who demonstrate a willingness and reasonable writing skills to volunteer for this unpaid work? So, disagree as you feel you must, but don't undertake to demean the apparent competence of the reviewers. Just because you might hold strong convictions on some subject does not necessarily make your opinions any more correct than another's.

There are some really enchanting small books showing up here this summer written by everyday people about their small boat experiences. I happen to be drawn strongly to this human interest aspect of small boating and so such books always get my attention. In this issue we start a short series from David Hume's new hardcover book, "Blueberry, a Boat of the Connecticut Shoreline." While the excerpt, "Solo September Cruise", is about a cruise in his home designed and built 20' gaff sloop, the book also goes on through its conception, lengthy ongoing correspondence with designer Phil Bolger, and the building experience. David's writing is easy reading and engrossing and his perceptiveness of so much that makes this sort of modest adventuring afloat attractive is a welcome change from the nuts and bolts cruising and building tales that make it into print. I loved the book and think the sort of people who enjoy this magazine will too.

Also in this issue Jim Lacy reviews "The Log of the Downit", another fascinating little book of personal reporting on adventure afloat, this one a log of some four year's of a young man's life afloat in small boats in and around the mouth of the

Mystic River in Connecticut. The years were 1931 to 1935, it is one of those "as it happened" accounts by the boy who was doing the things reported. As Jim Lacey says, it "manages to convey the essential mystique of messing about in small boats". This sort of book would never find a commercial publisher, so it was the Noank Historical Society that undertook to publish the original logbook, edited and occasionally elaborated upon by a lifetime friend of the author. It is a small gem indeed.

Another such small gem we have enjoyed is entitled "The Canoeing Journals of James S. Cawley, 1915-1919." This one is a labor of love by Nancy Cawley Jerome, herself an avid canoeist, to bring to interested canoeists her father's personal logs of trips he made some 75 years ago throughout the northeastern U.S., on the Hudson and Delaware Rivers, on Lake George and on streams in the Adirondacks.

Nancy's effort supplements a professionally published new book, "Exploring the Little Rivers of New Jersey" that was originally written by her father and mother, James and Margaret Cawley, in 1942. This book, a beautifully done hardcover from the Rutgers University Press, is the result of the decision of a New Jersey canoeing club, the Little Rivers Club, to update the Cawleys' work with an exhaustive retracing of all the rivers covered in the original book to ascertain their conditions today and then bring the updated information to us in a style faithful to the original effort by the Cawleys'.

You need not be a canoeist to enjoy these books as the essence of them is still enjoying small boating under human power. "Exploring the Little Rivers of New Jersey" is a guidebook, so of more interest to those wishing to know about what can be enjoyed on these rivers in small boats. Nancy's small paperback of her father's journal presents the human interest aspect of how it once was going off on canoeing adventures in the World War I era. Again, as I mention about "The Log of the Downit", this is one of those "how it was" books written by the man doing what is reported at the time it was done. No effort at reminiscing can capture the atmosphere of a time as the person living in it can.

"Exploring the Little Rivers of New Jersey" is available in hardcover for \$29.95 or in paperback for \$13.95 and should be in any good bookstore. If you have no luck finding a copy locally contact Rutgers University Press, 109 Church St., New Brunswick, NJ 08901 for a copy or advice as to a bookseller near you.

"Canoeing Journals of James S. Cawley" is available only by mail from Nancy Cawley Jerome, RFD #1 Box 202A, Waitsfield, VT 05673 for \$10 postpaid. Nancy published a limited number of copies aimed at those she felt would really find her father's journals a fascinating look into a bygone era of canoeing.



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Contributed by Tom Shaw

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Chart One

"From my youth upwards" as the old-time writers used to say, I have been messing about in boats and for anyone who ventures forth, safe "messing about" means having up-to-date charts and knowing how to read them. Most boaters, I suspect, learned their chart reading skills from older sailors or from comparing the chart with well known waters, relating the markings to facts we already knew. If you had asked me, in those early years, "Can you read a chart?" I would have given a pretty confident affirmative.

I was introduced to "Chart One", a marvelously informative fifty plus page booklet prepared jointly by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and the Department of Defense Hydrographic/Topographic Center and, after the first reading, began to realize just how much detailed information today's nautical charts have to offer. If you are not familiar with this publication I can only borrow a commercial phrase and urge you, "Don't leave home port without one." Your neighborhood ships' chandler either stocks "Chart One" or can order you a copy. Not only is it a splendid investment and a great aid to boating safety, but, with words and pictures, it will provide some

happy hours of browsing (and learning).

There are twenty two sections to "Chart One" which starts out with the nature of the coastline, leads us through buoys, beacons and dangers, and concludes with colored diagrams of Aids to Navigation for the coast, the Intercoastal Waterway, the Western Rivers and the Uniform State Waterway Marking System. There is even a glossary of abbreviations for principal foreign terms.

One section is a good challenge for those of us who operate small boats. It is a list of 76 symbols for the quality of the bottom. Most of us are familiar with some of these, few of us know them all. The same can be said of the section on "Dangers", fifty are listed, many with illustrations.

The section on "Buildings & Structures" shows no less than 84 symbols of significant installations on shore that could help us get a fix on our position.

The list of information goes on and on. If you sail even a few miles from home port, this is a booklet to own and study. And even if all of your boating is on a quiet inland lake you will, I'm sure, both enjoy and learn from "Chart One" as you dream of more adventurous voyages.

Sternwheel Festival

By Wallace Venable

Paddlewheel boats, mostly stern-wheelers, are a feature of many river festivals in the Ohio Valley, but the Charleston, West Virginia Sternwheel Festival is both the biggest and most varied. It has been held annually on Labor Day weekend for over 25 years. It features river towboats (pushboats) as well as sternwheel yachts and a few old working sternwheel boats.

Traditional Saturday activities include line handling (mostly for professionals) and towboat "shoving." This year they are adding a steam calliope playing contest, sternwheel maneuvering, and towboat barrel races. That should keep us happy until happy hour!

On Sunday, we race. I hope to beat the "Baby Sternwheeler" fleet with my 20 foot sidewheeler, the "Ruddy Duck". We'll be followed by races for sternwheelers from 35 to 150 feet long, and then the towboats will race. A symphony concert and fireworks close the day.

The docking barge is open to the public on Saturday, and before the races on Sunday. Any readers who want to get a close look at the sternwheel boats can start with "I've been thinking about building a boat like this," or "Boy, you sure did a good job on this boat." Most of the boats are homebuilt, or at least highly modified by the current owner, and the Captains love to show them to an informed audience.

"Sternwheelin'" is family oriented messing about in steel-hulled, diesel powered, long-distance cruisers. In some respects, it's a far cry from camp-cruising and racing dories, but the people have the same sort of zaniness, individualism and democratic enthusiasm that you will find at a snow-row or other non-mainstream boating event.

Wally Venable, Rt. 13, Box 125, Morgantown WV 26505-8526, (304) 328-5128.



Ruddy Duck

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PISCATAQUA WHERRY



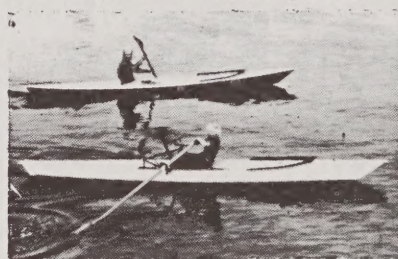
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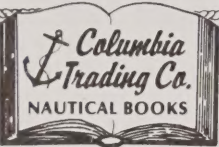
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Your Commentary

OUR POLICY ON ADS FOR PLANS?

I was very impressed with the letter from James Thomas of California on the subject of reselling plans in the June 1st issue. I fully agree with his stand on this issue, finding it to be in accord with accepted norms in engineering (from which I am now retired) which hold that the creator/designer, architect, etc.) is the "owner" of the plans, regardless of who paid to have them created.

All of this brings me to the major point of this letter. What is the policy of "Messing About in Boats" this regard? If you agree with Mr. Thomas that, "in any case, let's do what's right", perhaps you should extend that to the classified ads, and refuse those that blatantly violate this concept. I'll admit to being very, very tempted to phone andicker for plans that I would like to study (at least), if not actually build, but it really wouldn't be fair to the rightful owners of these plans. I know that it will cost me a few bucks more to go to the horse's mouth, but not that much more.

Neil Folsom, 251 Temple Ave., Old Orchard Beach, ME 04064.

Editor Comments: Presently I still accept ads from readers wishing to sell plans, new or used.

COVERING ALL KINDS OF TOPICS

Some time ago I ordered a few years of "Multihulls" and the package arrived when I was sick or injured, but not in too bad shape to read through them all. What I discovered was that "Multihulls" covered everything you could think of that concerned multihulls, construction, cruising, racing, do it yourself, high tech, lo tech but not in any one issue of the magazine.

Although I am not one of your charter subscribers, there are a couple of significant stacks of your magazine on the shelves. Every now and then I go through a lot of them looking for some article (like for instance Jim Michalak explaining something about camping) and your magazine, too, does a nice job of covering all kinds of topics, just not all in the same issue.

Eric Collins, Wilmington, DE.

SERIOUSLY CONSIDERING THE GOOD OLD WAY

Things are changing here, I've grown very wary of epoxy and other boaty chemicals and am left with many projects I dream of doing but have no gumption. I am seriously considering a little cruiser built in the good old way, maybe a Seabird.

Meanwhile I am decking over a 14' Zee canoe and hanging a sweet little lug yawl rig on her, sails from Douglas Fowler, designed by Mark Balogh. And I am setting up one of Mark's Boss rigs on an 11' Freefall whitewater fun boat for more fun.

Michael Heinrich, Crazy Wave Boatworks, 611 N. Midland Ave., Upper Nyack, NY 10960, (914) 358-9383.

REMOTE PULL START HAS PROBLEMS

Jon Bradley's suggestion in the April 1st issue on fitting a remote pull start to the outboard in "Bullywooger" (see "Instant Boat, the Third Greatest Lie", December 15th et seq) was a great idea, but it wasn't possible for "Bullywooger" as the outboard swings through an arc with movement of the steering wheel. This swing causes the pull rope to move, engaging the starter gizmo inside when the motor is already spinning. Also the old Johnson has all its twiddlers to be fiddled with while starting. I did adopt his idea for my sailboat where the outboard is firmly fixed to the transom.

Robert Hoge, Lenoir City, TN.

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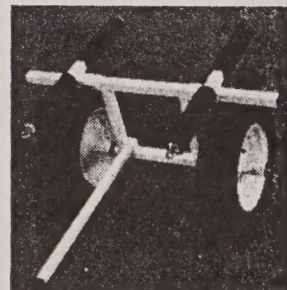
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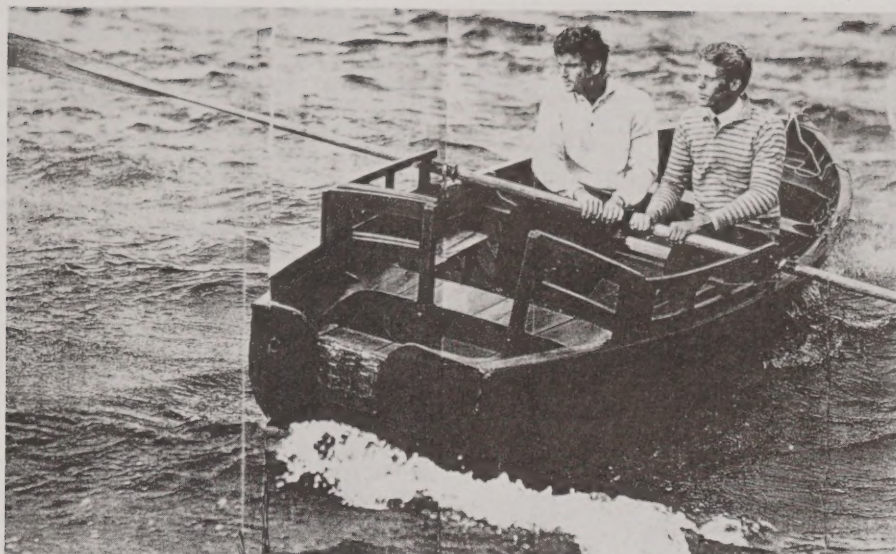
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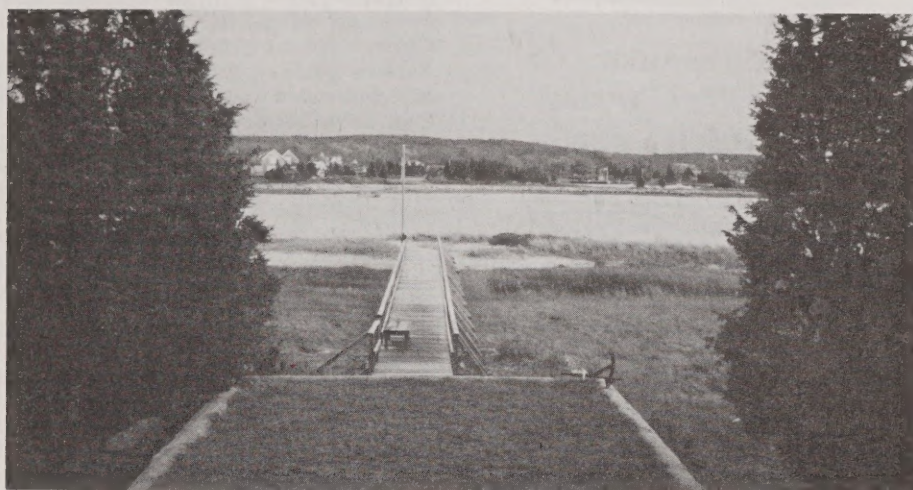




NOT LIKE THIS ANYMORE

They just don't build boats like this anymore, 14'-16', mahogany on oak. The

finest rowboat I could possibly think of.
Alfred Curran, New Britain, CT.



MY VIEW

Here's the view from my front porch facing east on West Falmouth Harbor. My four boats, all less than 12', in which I mess about are behind the trees at the left.

The old foundation in the foreground is where the house used to be before we moved it back.

Sloat Hodgson, West Falmouth, MA.



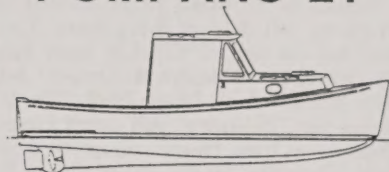
MY VIEW TOO

Here is a picture taken looking out my window on my dock and two of my boats here on Bainbridge Island, Washington,

where I have lived for 31 years.

J. Rex Peterson, Bainbridge Island, WA.

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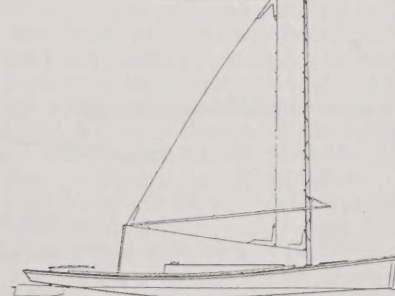
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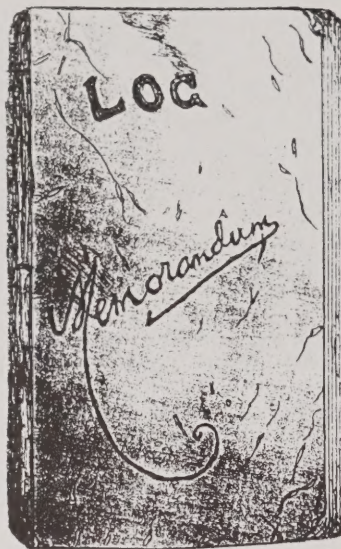
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The Noank Historical Society has recently published a delightful little book, the "Log of the Downit," which records the adventures of Adrian Kingsbury Lane aboard his cat-rigged, 12' skiff from July, 1931, when her "Master & Owner" was eleven years old, to May, 1935. The log sketches the "Downit's" sail every couple of days or so from Noank village to destinations along the Mystic River and in the vicinity of Mason Island, Ram Island, and West Cove. Adrian records wind and weather conditions, the seas, the "Downit's" performance, whether he sailed or had to use "auxiliary power", i.e. oars, and the various vessels he boarded or "spoke" to. The young skipper at times sailed solo, but he frequently took on crew, including his cousin and "First Mate", Jack Wilber, and a number of other kids, including summer people and, on one occasion, a young lady. Occasionally, he enjoys being "toed" by a working boat or his father's catboat, "Swan".

The sailor familiar with the lower Mystic River and Fishers Island Sound will enjoy following the voyages of the "Downit", and for those not at home in these waters, the editor has provided a detailed NOAA chart on the inside covers. In the early '30's considerably more waterfront locations and local islands were available for exploration, at least to a young boy, than is the case today, and there were also more derelict vessels to investigate and rummage about in and traditional boats to board.

Perhaps because young Adrian's routines and adventures are unexceptional and his account thin, meant rather to jog the memory of the author than to vividly recreate events for the reader, "The Log of the Downit" manages to convey the essen-

BOOK REVIEW



"A Boy and His Boat: The Log of the "Downit"

Adrian Kingsbury Lane
Noank Historical Society, P.O. Box 9454,
Noank, CT 06340.

\$10 Postpaid

Review by Jim Lacey

tial mystique of messing about in small boats. Lane's not completely whimsical use of salty talk and nautical terms and his droll, possibly euphemistic account of burying treasure, call attention to the true

romance of the daysailer in a small boat, young or old, then or now, the uneventful, commonplace experiences, occasionally highlighted by harmless mischief or squally weather and rough going. It is perhaps the least memorable events, the sort that allow one day to blend into another and one summer into the next, that produce a rosy nostalgia about long-ago or early adventures on the water in a boat of one's own.

The book itself is attractive. The text of the log is printed in a clear cursive font, a reasonable facsimile of the original. The editor, Richard Knowles Morris, who was a classmate of the author at Trinity College and a life-long friend, has provided introductory notes, what appear to be pencil illustrations, a brief sketch of Lane's life, and appendices explaining the nautical terms and identifying the vessels and individuals mentioned in the log.

Adrian Lane, we are reminded, was to become master of more imposing vessels than the "Downit", including the "R/V Atlantis" of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute, Mystic Seaport's schooner yacht "Brilliant" and the "R/V Endeavor" of the University of Rhode Island's Graduate School of Oceanography. Another pleasing feature is the editor's straightforward explanation of how he went about identifying references in the log and his invitation to readers to join him in the project by sending further information to the Noank Historical Society.

The "Log of the Downit" is available at the Sylvan Street Museum in Noank for \$8.50 or by mail from the Noank Historical Society, P.O. Box 9454, Noank, CT 06340, for \$10.00, including shipping and handling.

"Coming home it was ruff rounding Morgan Point," from the "Log of the Downit" by Adrian Lane. The pen and ink drawing is by Richard Knowles Morris.



Solo September Cruise

Excerpted from "Blueberry, a Boat of the Connecticut Shoreline" by David Hume.

Sometimes it seems forever before the tide turns the current in the Connecticut River. I had waited until after one pm before leaving Hamburg Cove in the expectation that I would get a rapid ride down past Essex to Saybrook light, but the buoys were still leaning upriver as I approached the Baldwin Bridge and the wind had gone fitful and fluky in the west. When I left the Cove the tide seemed full and the grassy inlet where the Eight Mile River meets the Connecticut was full to the brim. The usual resident pair of great blue heron were elsewhere, presumably poking into shallower waters, and the local swans were dabbling at the point where the Outer Cove narrows down to the eastern channel that runs from the flat half tide rock north past the older houses among the hemlocks and maples.

It is sad to see the hemlocks turning grey and dry as the blight takes them, a few more each year. Soon they will all be gone. Along this shore homeowners are planting deciduous trees and there are a few white pines coming in. I wish people would plant fewer white pines, especially the Department of Transportation which has been decorating the approaches of rebuilt bridges with them. In two year's time they make the view of the water quite invisible from the road. Soon driving through rural Connecticut will be like passing through a green tunnel as the unprofitability of small farms encourages less open land and we become a sort of replacement for the threatened Brazilian rain forest. All the views of the famed American Impressionist painters around Old Lyme are already invisible. The glimpses from the highways are disappearing fast.

The morning had started sunny and windless in the Inner Cove. I got away from the dock to the comfortable muttering of the little diesel in "Blueberry's" belly. As I motored down the length of the cove I set up the Autohelm to keep me in the channel, although almost any place in Hamburg is adequate for our 2'10" draft if the tide is full. With the little black box minding the helm I set the staysail, peaked up the main with the weight of the boom still on the topping lift, and then let it settle to take the wrinkle out of the sail. In the Outer Cove we passed Jim Raftery's lovely schooner "Golden Goose" and Bob Baumer's "Gjoa" before we made the turn out to the west.

I cut the red nun on the south side of the mouth of the Cove and tried to lay a tack to clear the green daymarker #29 at the south end of Brockway Island. No luck. Wind to south of west and the tide still hindering the tacks down river. The tower and concrete base of the daymarker supported their usual population of cormorants and a few more besides. Two were up at the light on the top, just above the big bundle of sticks that marked the osprey nest. The osprey were obviously not at home today. The cor-



morants yielded possession of the top of the tower when they were.

I powered down towards Ely's Ferry, shut down the diesel and surveyed the river. There was only one other boat underway. Tuesdays are better than weekends on the Connecticut in late summer. My companion turned out to be a battered Brockway skiff with an ancient Evinrude on his transom. He was trailing a fishing line in the swirl of the still rising tide north of the marker. There were a few high cirrus clouds in the west and a clear straight contrail pointing to the southwest towards Kennedy airport a hundred miles beyond my horizon. I could barely see his silver triangular shape leading the white pencil lines of his trail. I'm sure he couldn't see me, although even from 30,000 feet he had a great view of the river, the scrawl of Lord Cove, the north and south coves of Saybrook and Essex, the islands of the lower river: Great, Goose, Nott, Brockway, Calves and Eustasia. He had outdone the full three days of my planned voyage in the last five minutes.

I took a flat tack towards the Essex shore and rolled out the big jib with a satisfying whump as the wind filled it. It sets flying on its roller at the end of the flat fingered bowsprit that Phil Bolger had designed. "Blueberry" made a nice surge forward and

leaned off the breeze. When the depth sounder read ten feet I tacked again and headed back to the east. That side of the river is the deeper and I still had thirty-eight feet when I was almost to the rock ledges under the trees along the shore. I tacked just a few yards from them.

With jib, staysail, and main all pulling, "Blueberry" can get up to better than five knots in a middling light air, but the tide was still besting the current by a couple of knots and the wide flat tacks I was making didn't get me down past Essex until after 2:00 pm.

As I passed the old Steamboat Dock, now the Connecticut River Museum, the wind shifted into the west and I eased off the sheets of all three sails on a south-easterly heading for the lower part of the river. A private dock with the British Union Jack flying was just off to starboard of my course. I shaved by the wrong side of the nun that marks the Nott Island shoal, taking advantage of my meager draft and the full tide. As I passed the nun the meter read 5.1 feet, three feet of which was the midday flood.

The long twisting point of land that separates Lord Cove from the river is decorated by one shingled cabin, itself sentineled by a rakishly skewed flag pole flying a pale, horizontally segmented American flag. I've never seen anyone about the place and today

was no exception, but the flag has a touch of presence about it, even if it flies day and night in any weather.

The old Baldwin Bridge is being replaced by something that looks from beneath like a pair of sleek toothpaste extrusions done in concrete. They already span the river between Old Lyme and Old Saybrook so that just now there are three bridges, all with vertical clearance of better than sixty feet. Underneath there is a burgeoning forest of gigantic concrete pillars set on granite-cased bases. The tide swirls around them and the wind drops sharply as you pass among them. A boost with the diesel seemed appropriate. Beyond the highway bridges, there is a stretch of open river north of the much lower railroad bridge. Here there is room to tack and jill about waiting for the draw to open. Today was almost clear sailing, but

the bridge started slowly down while I was still a quarter of a mile short of the gap. I switched the VHF to channel 13 on a polite low power of one watt and summoned the attention of the "Old Lyme Draw," announcing that I was "Blueberry requesting the time of your next opening."

"This is Old Lyme Draw. Where are you now, Cap'n; how far are you?" I suddenly had an image of him peering alternately up and down the river from his elevated cabin among the bridge girders, trying to discern a 200-foot oil barge and pushing tug coming down from Hartford or in from Long Island Sound. Those tows have a huge momentum and would need a couple of miles to stop if the bridge was to stay closed in front of them.

"I'm the little gaff cutter about 300 yards north of you," I answered.

There was a brief silence. I began to wonder if he thought I could squeak under the closed span in spite of "Blueberry's" 20-foot mast and high peaked gaff that reached above the navigational and strobe lantern at the truck. I reflected that I really had never figured out just how high the tip of the raised gaff was from the waterline.

"It'll be about twelve minutes, Captain," spoke the metallic voice of the radio.

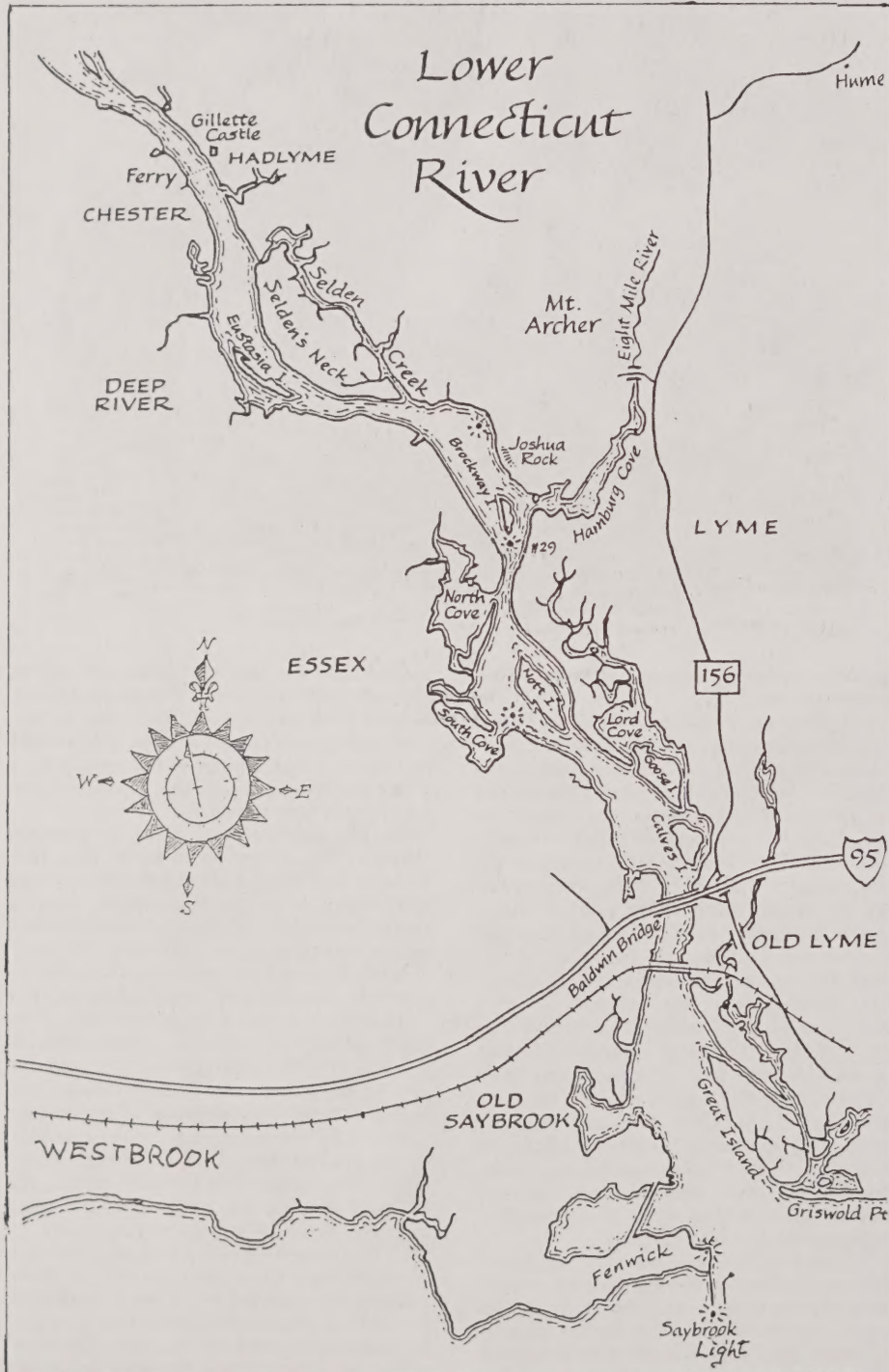
I thanked the Old Lyme Draw and switched back to the dual watch of channels Nine and Sixteen that has become the standard for VHF communication. Sixteen is now meant to be reserved for emergencies only and the usual boat traffic calling channel has become Nine. When cruising single-handed, being alone is not at all lonely, but hearing the communication in the neighborhood is a pleasant sort of company and an occasional word with a bridge keeper is a memorable event of sociability.

I was joined by a sport fisherman with a high tuna tower and a white yawl with her sail covers buttoned on. They drifted in the slack water while I circled between the banks for ten minutes until there was a husky hoot and a deep grumble from the huge ancient bridge machinery. I touched the start button and went through the gap under power. Massive timbering protecting the stone abutments of the bridge on both sides shows signs of rough contact with vessels of much larger size than mine. I wonder how many of the tugs bashed into the timbers and just rammed their barges through, tearing off a few pieces of 12 x 12 tarred fir in the process.

The southwest afternoon onshore breeze favored long tacks down the river and short ones across it to get out to the breakwaters and the two lighthouses at Saybrook Point. Progress was slow, in spite of the fact that the tide had finally turned in our favor. The charts below the bridges are in the 1 to 40,000 scale and the location of the subsurface piles and shoals are hard to estimate. A shadowy presence of something called "Sodom Rock" is somewhere to the near east side of the buoyed channel. The implied discomfort of its title is enough to keep most boats to the west of the red markers, but I saw a couple of planing motor boats, Bayliners I thought, skimming by its presumed location.

After a while I cast discretion to the wind and bore off past Griswold Point to the southeast with a nervous eye on the digits of the depth meter. It rapidly dropped to two feet and then for a moment showed a horrifying 1.8 in between a couple of 2.0s. The sounder's transducer is well over a foot below the load water line, but one and six tenths feet on the meter should be hard aground. With the tide at the full flood, going aground on the bar at Saybrook in the late afternoon is a lousy idea. I resolved not to cut the easterly channel so fine again.

But the bar at the mouth of the river, between Old Saybrook and Old Lyme, has in the long run been a friend to the yachtsman. From the time that Adrien Block sailed his Manhattan-built "Onrust" up Long Island Sound and explored the lower Connecticut valley in 1614, all have agreed with him that the lower stretch of the river was "very shallow". Until late in the Nineteenth Century, it remained too shallow for a deep water seaport and too wide to bridge. As a



result the principal cities of Connecticut grew at New London on the Thames, at Hartford, well up the valley, and in the other towns to the west that were blessed with the natural resource of a roadstead such as Norwalk and Bridgeport. Boats and even quite sizable ships were built in Essex, but they had to be floated down river without ballast, guns, or spars, hoisted over the bar with "camels" or pontoons and towed to New London or Noank to receive the rest of their equipment.

Nineteenth-century charts show a zigzag channel that could be threaded by vessels of less than ten-foot draft with local knowledge, but busy cities and seaports never developed along these banks. In recent times a dredged fairway between stone jetties leads the tugs and oil barges into this inland waterway to the very center of New England. But the shores of the lower valley are still unblemished by industrial development or even, for the most part, by railroad tracks along the river. Would that the Thames had been so spared.

Much of the valley shore line has been protected as park land in recent years, although a few dozen large palazzi of the Era of Deregulation now squat where even a few years ago there was woodland, meadow, marsh and high rocky shore. Most of these new oversized houses are decorated with identical arched but un-palladian windows of great size, suggesting that the architects all shopped out of the same Peachtree or Anderson catalogues for their fenestration. They bring a whiff of Boca Raton or Key Biscayne to the "land of steady habits." They seem not to be grounded in the local sense of place. Come to think of it, Palladio himself got his commissions from nouveaux riches mercenary captains that made a buck or a ducat out of protecting the Signori of Venice. They retired to country farms but needed an architect with the chutzpa to make them look like nobility by the elegance of his line and the orders of his columns.

Stanford White did the same thing for the railroad barons of the late nineteenth century. I guess the only difference is that Andrea and Stanford were much better architects and their clients were proportionately a hell of a lot richer than the hotshot investment bankers and leveraged buy-out operators of the 1980s.

But all those houses are back up the river from the mouth. There was very little undeveloped land for them down here. Beside me now were the little beach cottages of Old Lyme Shores, and astern I could see a few of the middle-sized, comfortable, shingle-style homes of Fenwick. I wonder at the future of some of the new homes. A couple of them are currently in the hands of the Resolution Trust since their owner's or builder's bankruptcies took several of the local lending institutions down with them. A mile to the west stands a grinning stone castle on Cornfield Point that would seem to be a pre-1929 version of the same sort of overblown architecture that afflicted the 1980s. It is used today as a Neapolitan seafood restaurant and steakhouse.

The wind had dropped to ten to twelve in the south west and the hour had gotten past four o'clock, 1600 hours in nautical time, but I was well off the Lyme shoals now and able to set a course of 100° Magnetic for the south tip of Black Point. But the wind dropped still more and by 1700 I was under

power, amusing myself by punching a new waypoint into the Loran and wondering if I should have to spend the night in the Niantic River rather than farther east.

But the tide was running a couple of knots in my favor and in spite of being deserted by the wind, 6 PM found me south of Goshen Point, making the turn to the northeast past the Harkness Park and the white sand of Ocean Beach Park with its attendant offshore rocks. The great square buildings of the Millstone atomic power plant glowed pink in the late sun over my left shoulder. I had three quarters of an hour of September daylight left to get up into New London and find an anchorage for the night.

The four Pfizer stacks and the confusion of pea green sheds and rust red lumps of the General Dynamics Electric Boat Company emphasized the differences between the Thames and Connecticut Rivers. I powered slowly through the anchorage at Green's Harbor and finally dropped the big (11 pound) Bruce anchor between two moored sailboats just under the protruding stone bulkhead of the US Navy Underwater Sound Laboratories. A great grey arch of a magnetic field producing gadget of huge proportion loomed above me.

I lighted cabin and anchor lights, put Murray Periah's tape of Mozart's 16th Piano Concerto on the boom box, broke out a package of nacho chips and made a martini on the rocks. The usual caveats about drinking alone don't seem to me to apply to singlehanded sailing when one is anchored for the night. Besides, "Blueberry" is a cheerful and communicative companion in herself.

I had started drawing a cartoon for "Blueberry" more than a dozen years earlier, hardly even believing that I would ever actually build such a boat. But the fascination of trying to fit the ideal accommodation for a singlehander into a twenty foot sloop led me on. I drew a gaff rig to avoid the need for a spinnaker to give her downwind power. The shoal draft was for the Connecticut River, as was the self-tending staysail, to make short river tacks simple. The inboard ten horsepower diesel was my reply to years of winding a rope around the flywheel of the old British Seagull while drifting backwards in the tide toward some low bridge or shoal. A pair of batteries to use in alternation for a reliable start in the morning and a locker for a removable Coleman "Oscar" as a rot and

mold-proof ice box were interior design elements garnered from experience.

The Seacock stove set my supper of tinned enchiladas bubbling in the pan. Served with sliced tomatoes, breadsticks, cottage cheese and a beer, this makes an acceptable supper if you are hungry enough. I had a ripe nectarine and a couple of oatmeal cookies for dessert.

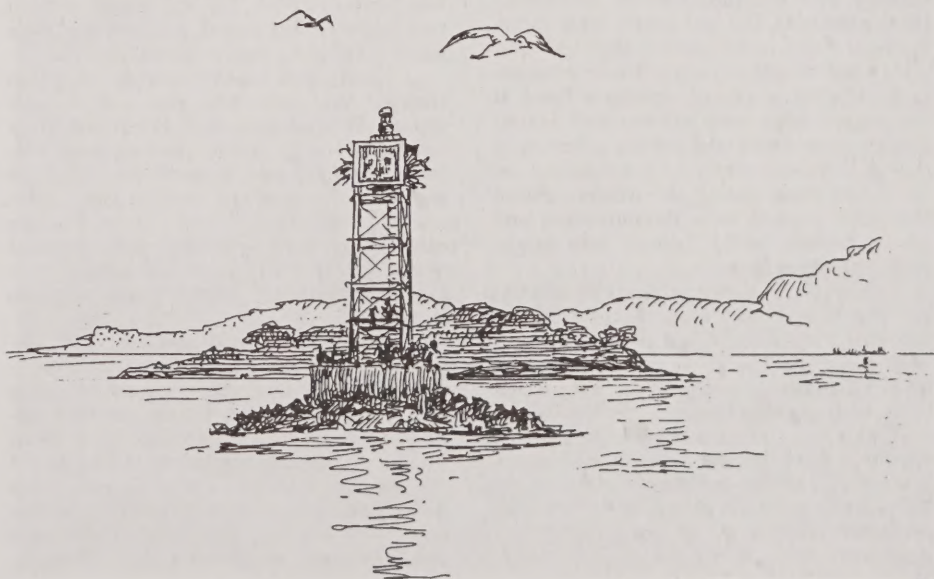
"Blueberry" carries a condensed library of some thirty or forty books, but sleep and waking on a boat are closely governed by the daylight and the dark and I was unable to stay with Prescott's "Conquest of Mexico" for very long. Rolling from the harbor traffic was minimal and I slept well enough for the first night out. Anyone on a cruise has discovered that the second night in the bunk of a small boat is more soporific than the first, but I had no trouble getting to sleep.

Morning came up pink with some mist, the surface of the harbor slick and glassy. To the south, Fisher's Island Sound was grey with an off shore fog. I had breakfast and mopped up the dew in the cockpit with the big bailing sponge. I decided to explore for a bit up the Thames before setting out for Mystic to the east. Despite some dire comments about the foul state of the bottom near my anchorage, the Bruce came up easily and clean. I powered over to the east shore, properly the city of Groton, and went up past Electric Boat. Up on the ways there was a huge rust colored shape with "USS Rhode Island" painted on its side in disproportionately small letters. I don't know if it will be a Trident or a Seawolf, but it looks enormous from the water.

I passed on and recrossed the river to the town dock by the railroad station. Union Station in New London is one of Henry Hobson Richardson's early great buildings. Its impressive bulk stands alone next to the water across the tracks, looking very modern in its shape. His library up at the other end of State Street is less successful, but for railroad stations, I'll take Richardson over White or Palladio any time.

I turned in towards the city marina and noted a good gathering of men fishing from the dock. They weren't catching anything that I could see and they looked as innocent of employment as I, but much less contented to be so.

(To Be Continued)





By Mike Fitz

Saturday morning dawned clear and crisp as those of us undaunted by weather reports of doom and gloom showed up at the mouth of the Big River in Mendocino County. Obviously the meteorologists used the wrong dart board again. Six boats and a dozen hearty souls launched around 10 a.m. at what was obviously at or near low tide. This made the trek from the parking area to the liquid highway considerably further but those of us who dared not drive on the sand stretch between the two were delighted when Russ Kantz offered to use his 4X4 pick-up as a shuttle service, an offer which this oarsman was only too happy to partake of.

Once on the water, we started upstream against a slight current. Just as we were getting underway, we noticed another of our group pulling into the parking lot. With the usual spirit of "all for one and one for all" we turned back to meet Bill and Ann Heinemann from Roseville. Better late than never, eh Bill?

Continuing on our way, we were privy to some of the most spectacular scenery that I could imagine anywhere. Huge redwoods, firs and spruce were growing right down to the water's edge and towering majestically skyward. There were occasionally large grassy meadows lined at the water's edge with alders, their leaves silvery green with the robust color only new growth can deliver. Interspersed on the forest floor among the western sword ferns and grasses were rhododendron and azalea bushes in full bloom with bright pink and white flowers.

One of the oddest sights we saw on the trip was a "redwood sinker retrieval operation." Bill Stoye had told us that this was going on the river. Apparently the price of redwood being what it is today some enterprising individuals are locating, marking, and then retrieving redwood logs that have been on the river bottom since they last logged this area intensely 75 years ago or so. They have a homemade raft constructed of two airplane fuel drop-tanks from WWII which Bill recog-

Big River Trip

nized and a couple of winches. I suspect that they simply strap a cable around the log and hoist it up to the surface and send it down stream to a beach where they pull it up on the sand. We saw about a dozen of these "sinkers" laying on the sand like so many beached whales. Sounds like a lot of work but redwood selling at a record high it must be worth it.

Along one bank by some old pilings from a long forgotten dock some of us noticed an old barge hauled part-way up the bank. It had been nestled there so long it was almost indistinguishable from the piles, many of which were askew. The only give-away that this was some sort of craft was the angle indicating the scow-like bow.

The bird-life sighted on this trip would stir the heart of the most amateur ornithologist. Egrets, herons, cranes, hawks, maybe eagles, I'm not sure. These you could see standing along the banks or soaring among the tree-lined perimeter of any large meadow. My son Derek noticed two birds of prey swoop down for their lunch. One got a snake, the other a fish.

Speaking of lunch, some in our group thought the time was ripe for a little repast. Toward that end, Russ and Tony veered off to a gentle sloping bank followed by Dick and Roberta Ratcliff. The rest of our entourage, still in the exploration mode, decided to press on. For our efforts we were rewarded with pleasant views around every bend and smooth sailing on a glass-still river for several miles to come.

Once we crossed some cables suspended across the river. I was unsure as to their function until they started snapping and whipping around. I then instantly recognized them as the sky-line in a small high-lead logging operation (I had heard the whistle signals for some time now but never suspected that they would span the river with any rigging). You should have seen the look on Derek's face when he

asked me: "Daddy, where do those cables go to?" My frank reply: "To a dead-man buried deep in the ground or a big stump." After defining the term "dead-man" and explaining the operation to my 6 year old, I believe he understood, having seen cat-logging before. He wanted to stay and watch the logs being skidded up the hill, but lunch time was fast approaching and quite honestly, if you've seen one log skidded you've seen them all!

After being elected the official scout in our contingent I was put in charge of finding a suitable spot for a noonday meal. After reconnoitering the bank I came upon a wonderful grassy spot. Perfect, if you didn't wander 20 yards through some ceanothus. If you did, you would see the edge of the timber fallers domain, and evidence of his work was everywhere. Having spent some years in the logging industry myself, I understand the need for harvesting trees, but I will admit the primary cutting is never pretty. Anyway, the spot I picked was dubbed first-rate by unanimous vote and we all fell to devouring lunch. Afterward was much lounging, small talk and general laziness.

Realizing we could not postpone our departure any longer, we loaded up the boats and shoved off. Some people switched places so the rower could enjoy the luxury of being chauffeured around for a while. Debi Rich and Dan O'Brien did this several times, as it was Dan's first row, and I must say he did remarkably well, no doubt due to Debi's fine instruction and sense of direction. With a hand as true as a compass needle, she expertly guided them for many miles.

Our return trip was much the same as the row up. The only difference being the current (still against us but more intense), the wind had a definite direction to it now and blowing much harder (the direction of course being against us, what else), and the color of the water, a gorgeous blue-green. Despite these obstacles, we arrived back at the mouth of the river more or less on time (what's time? We're on vacation).

After loading up various boats on ap-

proprate cars we said our good-byes and made tentative plans for the evening and Sunday. While some were staying at local bed and breakfast establishments, the more hardy elected to camp at Van Dam state park, which in my opinion is one of the nicest state park campsites anywhere.

Afternoon turned into evening and after dinner we had an enormous fire in the pit as we had an over-abundance of firewood due largely I suspect to the erroneous weather report previously mentioned. It was about this time that a key member in our group showed up to claim the "better-late-than-never" trophy. I speak of none other than Bert Grunwald. He joined us by the fire in time to discuss the next day's events over the last of the dinner. When the last of the firewood was consumed, transforming itself into BTUs for our enjoyment, we all wandered off to our respec-

tive tents for a well deserved rest.

The next day most of us met for a short row around the small compact harbor on the Noyo River. Derek and I elected not to launch and instead met a most remarkable man. Mr. Mekela has been building large wood boats in his shop there since 1941, mostly commercial fishing boats in the 50-60' range. We just missed his most recent launching of a 51' fishing boat which was put in the water off his ways at 3:00 a.m. that morning, the odd hour due to an unusually high tide. Although his shop was technically closed, he was all too happy to open it up for Derek and I.

Quite amiable, this old Finn was as talkative as could be, regaling us with stories of boats small and large, of fishing in the thirties, and the decline of the same. I wish we could have stayed longer but we had 234 miles to go to reach home, so we

had to go. The others had their own adventures. Rowing down to the mouth of the harbor and back, they paused to talk to the crew of a long-liner about their special style of fishing, a conversation I wish I'd had the opportunity to be part of. Tentative plans were also made to row this harbor again next year and have breakfast at a particular restaurant on the water that has plenty of dock space for our group.

Determined to get in enough time on the water to justify his trip, Bert Grunwald paddled solo up the Noyo River as far as he could. He says it took approximately 45 minutes and he had to cross several sandbars to keep going, making it unsuitable for conventional rowboats. He, however, enjoyed the solitude of this trip and I suspect it was very similar to what the most of us experienced yesterday. Way to go, Bert!



By Dean Meledones

I'm not sure what happened to spring, it came and went with summer rushing in now. As a result not much boating took place, but we did manage to get to Urbanna, Virginia, for their small craft

Urbanna Was Great Fun

meet, which was great fun. The weather cooperated, with great sailing winds on Saturday and good rowing on Sunday.

About 45 people with 20 boats showed up Saturday, with about half camping over for Sunday. There was plenty of messing about, a sailing race, cookout and bonfire. A great small boat weekend.

Enjoyable Weekend at Cedar Key

By Mac McCarthy

On April 30th I attended the small boat meet at Cedar Key, Florida and am really glad I did. Great weather for both sailors and paddlers, with the sailors heading out for the further islands while we paddlers contented ourselves with exploring closer in islands. Perhaps Hugh Horton will be sending you his usual longer report but I just wanted to let readers know that this yearly meet is great fun for anyone who can make it.

The area is hardly developed and during the week one would have it pretty much all for oneself, with a lot of birdlife and still good fishing. There is a wide variety of accommodations from camping to fancy motels and the main industry seems to be sea food restaurants. Alice is ready to go back anytime.



After fifteen landlocked years, I returned to the world of boats and sailing in the late fall of 1992 when, quite accidentally, I went on a marine science field trip aboard the 101' schooner "Adventuress". While other people dredged up starfish and peered at plankton through microscopes, I found places to be alone with the boat and, through memory and imagination, to retouch parts of my soul I'd abandoned years ago. It was a communion of sorts, a salvation, a homecoming. I hadn't known in fifteen years.

There are many excuses for my long dry spell, but the real reason lies in the realm of self-image, somewhere between the wide expanses of dreams and their limits. I dreamed of blue water cruising in a proper ocean cruising sailboat. No other activity would do; no other kind of boat. I got stuck waiting for a someday that never came. And, if not for luck and some helpful people, I might still be sitting on the dock, trapped in the same dream all over again. Instead, I'm afloat and having more fun than I've ever had in my life. I owe all this to a sixty-year-old sloop, a "Shoobox" and a place where both are valued. Perhaps my story will help liberate some others from the binds of improbable dreams.

I first entered the world of sailing over twenty years ago by standing on the shores of Lake Michigan and watching sailboats. One key image stands out: A gale blowing the tops off a steady flow of whitecapped waves while a single, small cruising boat, heeled well over, beat its way toward the safety of the harbor. The same wind that filled her sails tore through my hair and, in the gusts, caused me to lean and brace myself much as the boat's solitary sailor had to stand solid against the force of the wind, the heel of the hull and the tossing of the waves. My eyes were stung to tears, but I could see myself sailing alone on such a boat on such a day. Even now, that is my strongest, most romantic sailing dream image: Me and my boat against the gales of the sea and the gales of life.

I was inspired that late October day and did what I could through the winter. I bought all the sailing magazines, joined the Dolphin Book Club and raided the library. Though I read some basic sailing instructions and cruising stories, I preferred books about ocean sailing boats, their design, construction, and outfitting for cruising. I was boat shopping already and needed some guidelines for choosing a seaworthy craft. In Arthur Beiser's "The Proper Yacht" I found formulas for determining optimum displacement, sail area, ballast, beam, overhangs, a safety harness of numbers, and descriptions of yachts that looked beautiful even in black-and-white photos.

But Beiser has his biases. Mostly, he advocates buying the biggest boat one can. In his caption for a photo of "Wanderer III" in the first edition, Beiser had to mention that Eric Hiscock felt the 30-footer to have violent motion and that he would have preferred a larger vessel in the 40'-42' range had he been able to afford one. Somehow, I ignored the fact that "Wanderer III" had sailed twice around the world. I shook my head in dismay over the small boat and looked for a larger dream

After Fifteen Landlocked Years

boat.

I found one in that first edition of "The Proper Yacht". The Laurent Giles-designed, 42' cutter "Cardhu". Her liveable deckhouse gives her a dashing, dauntless look that says, "Toss me a gale; I can take it." "Cardhu" is still my dream ideal and, as in 1973, still unaffordable.

Nevertheless, my dreams were set: Crossing oceans and fighting gales in a 42-foot cutter. Anything less would be a compromise and though I accepted those terms, I wondered where I would draw the line.

When spring came I looked around for some practical sailing experience on the Great Lakes. I called the city boathouse about lessons and was told I'd have to pass a swimming test. Since I panic in water over my head, I looked elsewhere. My landlord happened to crew aboard big racing boats and invited me for weekends of sanding and painting his skipper's new boat, a beamy fiberglass monster that looked like a Buck Rogers spaceship. I got on the crew and picked up a lot of free instruction, especially about sailing in storms. But I didn't get the experience of command, of sailing on my own. I hated round-the-buoys racing and lived for the long races between cities on the Great Lakes, for they were like the cruises I'd read about. In these other towns, the Great Lakes equivalents of foreign ports, I roamed the docks looking at more traditional cruising sailboats.

The next season, I bought a 17-foot unballasted fiberglass daysailer. I learned how to sail on it, but always within cautious limits, for I was afraid of capsizing. Worse, I never loved it. It wasn't a compromise; it was surrender. It had no cabin, no keel; it rode on a trailer. This was not the boat of my dreams; it didn't fit my self-image as a blue water sailor. Come fall, I sold it at a loss.

The next year I crewed again on a few races. The following winter, I found a wonderful 27' plywood hull cruising sloop I could afford, one that required little work before launching. She was at a boatyard sixty miles from my home, so simple spring maintenance dragged on until late June. Once launched, I kept her there, for moorage was cheap and available. Between the distance and my need for crew, I didn't sail as much as I'd have liked, but I remember some grand times; when the boat was stood on her transom by the tall, steep waves at the end of Lake Michigan's 300 mile fetch, how she crossed the lake under sheet-to-tiller self-steering and, on my first cruise, nearly crashing her mast into a bridge I hadn't noticed! Unfortunately, I had to sell her and move to Seattle before we had a second season together.

In the midwest I had read about cruising on Puget Sound and in the San Juan Islands. When I arrived (newly married) I shopped at some boatyards and crewed on two very tough races in screaming gales. When I thought about buying a boat, I leaned toward fiberglass, for I feared both

worms and my very meager carpentry skills. I collected design reviews and brochures for ten-year old boats that might soon be within my financial reach. I took Joyce for a daysail but the bug didn't bite her. Soon came kids, a house, a career, and boats got tucked away in a mental file labelled "Someday."

I remember a few occasions during my boatless 1980's when I'd drive the freeway over Lake Union and the Ship Canal and, for just an instant, imagine taking a small motorboat past the houseboats and working shipyards. But I'd shake it off and replace it with a conscious daydream of cruising up to the San Juans or out around Vancouver Island. Once, I took my family for a daysail on Lake Washington. They loved swimming in the warm water; I resented the doused sails and going nowhere. If I couldn't cruise on saltwater, I'd rather play golf than simply mess around in little boats.

The years meandered along a trail of kids' baseball, soccer and horse shows. We moved onto horse acres in the country. Though Puget Sound is only five miles away, I was so landlocked I rarely saw it. In the early '90's, as our kids grew up and away, I took up woodworking as a hobby and started to to rediscover myself. Aboard the "Adventuress", I found the long lost sailor inside me but with a single difference: I was now a confident if not especially fine woodworker who could maintain, and perhaps build, a wooden boat.

So, with winter rushing in, I dug out my old sailing books and specifications for dozens of old fiberglass boats. By this time, I'd lost the first edition of "The Proper Yacht" and bought a secondhand second edition to replace it. "Cardhu" was no longer featured, but in her place was the hard-chine, plywood-hulled, 35' cutter/ketch "Departure", specifically included as a boat for the home builder. She looked like my old boat and seemed big enough to handle the route to Alaska and cross oceans. Instantly, she became my new ideal cruiser, a dream I could make real with my own hands.

But I'd never built any boat much less one as big as "Departure". Since I didn't want to postpone sailing for the years it would take to build her, I started to shop for a wooden "fixer-upper" boat and to study all the boat plans I could in hopes of finding a small one that would be relatively quick to build and a safe sailer within the confines of Puget Sound. The Seattle Public Library has a catalog of boat plans in old books and magazines like "Rudder" and "Motor Boating", and I photocopied lots of designs. I felt a strong historical connection to the men who subscribed to these magazines in the years B.F. (Before Fiberglass), the guys who were hoping to find their dream boat in the next issue. My favorite boats were the "H-28" by L. Francis Herreshoff and the "Porgy 26" by Chester Nedwidek. Of course, I got to know every design by Billy Atkin. I also bought current plans catalogs and read all I could about the techniques of wooden boat building. The first book I bought was "Buehler's Backyard Boatbuilding". Though his designs have a limited audience, no writer demystifies the craft and gives one "can do" confidence like George Buehler. He

delivered me from fear.

For a while, I became a bit obsessed with boat plans. I went to sleep dreaming of boats and, when awake, spent hours just looking at drawings of boats. For variety, I read about cruising. I discovered the Pardeys who, when I left off boating in the '70's, were just beginning their career. I also read the Casey/Haskell book, "Sensible Cruising: The Thoreau Approach". Between them, I started to understand the "go small, go now" approach to cruising as more than just financial economy but as a way to develop a more intimate relationship to the sea and shoreline. Slowly, I "lowered" my standards to include boats of 20-23 feet, but still with solid, full keels, bite-sized proper yachts. This only increased the number of possible project boats and my confusion over which to build.

At least three times, I saw something on the periphery of my consciousness that, had I but looked, might have saved me a few months of brain fever. In an old "WoodenBoat" magazine I read a story about a little sharpie called "Lazy Jack". It had a keel but was lightweight and unfit for open ocean sailing. She was good around Chesapeake Bay. Her cabin had two berths but no specific areas for galley (a campstove), water jugs or head (cedar bucket). Because she was a funky sort of boat, her owner didn't take her too seriously. She was for messing about, not for circumnavigation.

I also saw, in a "WoodenBoat", a nice design for a small, gaff rigged, plywood-hull sloop called "Mist". Though too light for my cruising purpose, she would make an excellent daysailer and funky knock-about like "Lazy Jack". Since I was still uncertain how small my first building project should be, I copied the article, the half about "Mist", anyway. I had no use for the other boat it featured, a sprit-boomed, cat-boat-looking thing by Phil Bolger, who, as far as I could tell, designed rowboats, kayaks and strange craft fit to be sailed by males who wore L.L. Bean outfits and got a thrill paddling on a duckpond.

My third such experience was a literal "no see 'um." I'd taken Richard Henderson's "53 Boats you Can build" out of the library early in my reading career. It includes "Departure", Herreshoff's "Prudence" (which would make a wonderful compromise down from his "H-28"), Atkin's "Eric", Brewer's "Jason" and other big boats. While I seriously considered which of these boats to build, I totally ignored the designer with the most boats in the book: Phil Bolger. I didn't even see his "Black Skimmer", probably because it had a flat bottom and was hidden behind leeboards, not a proper yacht at all, or maybe it was just lost amid the rowboats.

For the same reason, I ignored the books by Harold Payson. How could an "instant boat" be proper? True boatbuilding yielded proper yachts with moderately heavy displacement and full keels; they had to be lofted and last for fifty years or more. An instant boat was for the slipshod; craftsmen built proper yachts.

Around this time, in late winter of 1993, I had to build or burst. I had to pick a design and go with it. Be decisive. So, I picked two designs by Billy Atkin, both 20-footers, and went to consult with a lo-

cal builder about which one to build. "Sharpshooter" was loosely based on a Bahamian smack. Though cramped in the cabin, I thought she'd be quick and cheap to build. "Economy Jane" looked like a mini-"Eric" and I could imagine myself single-handing her around the Sound in gales.

Well, I got burst, right in the bubble. The builder thought "Sharpshooter" was ugly and knew "Economy Jane" was so tender that a step on deck would tip her over. After chuckling at my innocence, the builder disappeared into his back room and returned with a book of designs by Phil Bolger! He recommended that I build the little yawl "Quickstep". I fell instantly in love with her looks, her lines and even with her leeboards. But she was far too tough to build, and too light. I calculated her displacement/waterline length ratio at 188, and I wanted a proper cruiser in the 300's.

I was cast into the spiritual doldrums. To relieve the blues, I started building an 8-foot plywood pram from a design in one of John Gardner's books. And, with the weather breaking and spring-like, I decided to start sailing at Seattle's Center for Wooden Boats. Ten years before, I'd dismissed CWB as a place for the L.L.Bean guys and their rowboats. Now there was a much larger building, more floats and some bigger boats. They even taught cruising classes.

I took some refresher lessons on a Blanchard "Senior Knockabout", a fractional sloop-rigged old racer with minimum cabin, fin keel and long overhangs, and its smaller cousin, the Blanchard "Junior", on which I learned how to hold sheets in my hands and play them with every puff of wind. I also went on a weekend cruise aboard a Blanchard 33 and, on the return trip to Seattle, a 25' Friendship sloop.

Soon after my lessons, I ran across "Tardis", one of the earlier Blanchard Seniors, for sale so cheap I couldn't let her pass. She is not a proper cruising yacht, tipping in at lighter displacement ratio than "Quickstep" at 145! But she was all I could afford and it seemed better to be sailing in a boat instead of a daydream.

It took a few weeks to commission "Tardis". She needed a new bumpkin and main halyard, a motor to get her down the ship canal and through the locks and a couple shakedown cruises to tune her rig. In early June, I set out to bring her the 30 miles from Seattle north to her new home near Everett.

For the first leg of the passage, the 18 miles up to Edmonds, I had along a friend from the Center for Wooden Boats. Once we cleared the ship canal and skirted a fleet of racing dinghies, we raised full sail for the beam reach northward. After a while we noticed that though well-heeled and flying, we were getting nowhere very fast, fighting a strong tidal current. We started the motor and made it to Edmonds by dinner time.

A series of weather systems flew over Puget Sound the next four days, throwing 40 knot winds from the southwest and building up 6 to 8-foot seas. I'd taken Wednesday off from work in an "Everett or Bust!" mood that was seriously shaken by winds of 25 knots and dark, forbidding

clouds racing inland. I saw some young men head out in a speedy, 20-foot cabin cruiser and thought that God must take care of fools. I was about to give up and pay yet another daily parking bill, the sky parted and the sun shone brightly. Cheered, I jumped in "Tardis" and powered her out of the Edmonds marina, hoping God could look after one more fool.

On shore and looking out to sea, I had seen a lot of whitecaps but couldn't see how tall the waves were. Once among them, however, I was scared as hell. I had no idea whether a long, narrow, light, low-freeboard boat like a Blanchard Senior could handle such seas and wind.

I'd rigged "Tardis" for singlehanding; tiller control lines, jackline for my safety harness, a jib downhaul leading aft, sweeps to back up the outboard motor, etc.; just like I'd read about in books. Much as I tried, though, I couldn't keep her head to windward in order to raise her sails. Every wave and gust threw her off to one side or another. Luckily, I was headed downwind. I fell off and motored my way north, propelled, I think, as much by wave force and the wind on the mast as by the small outboard. I flew north, slowed only by the crossing of two ferries. To keep the propeller immersed, I had to sit in the aft end of the cockpit. I darted forward only for quick trips to the cooler and bucket, to glance at chart and pull out binoculars to look for landmarks. Above the whining outboard I could hear the following seas hiss just like those that chased the Pardeys, Roths and Hiscocks.

At Mukilteo, I turned a corner of sorts into Port Gardner Bay. The seas lessened and the wind abated. Never having sailed into Everett (or anywhere else I'd been that day), I worked from one buoy to another until I entered the narrow channel by the marina.

It was then that my motor died suddenly, without warning. I pulled its cord twice, then dashed below to get my homemade sweeps, for I was heading toward the sand bar island on the west side of the channel. In my panic, I stepped on one oar and broke it. With the other, I dashed to the bow and paddled for all bejezus. "Tardis" swung eastward and floated toward a large cruise boat. I fended her off and around to the dock, where I reached out with my oar to a man who only stared at me and let me glide past him. Luckily, I got near enough to the dock to jump off with my bow line and take a quick turn on a cleat. I was safe and close enough to home to feel very secure.

That was the first time I was ever out in a boat alone, single-handing, though not actually sailing. Still, it was an adventure, going places I'd never been with no one along for help and support, just me and my boat against the gale. I was very lucky the outing didn't turn as nasty as it could have. When I think about that day, I remember being very grateful that "Tardis" and I came through unscathed and safe.

Soon, "Tardis" was ensconced in her slip at a funky marina in Marysville and Joyce and I sailed her around Port Susan, Saratoga Passage and Possession Sound. Though I'd dreamed of cruising the San Juan Islands in lieu of the South Pacific, we found time for only one overnight stay at Langley on Whidbey Island, just eight

miles from our marina. But we sailed one day of every weekend last summer. Mostly, we learned how to sail together and got used to the vagaries of tides and currents and sand bars around Everett and our marina. We sailed in a few times, gliding quietly past the cormorants and ospreys perched on the old pilings that line the channel to open water. Slowly, I learned how to enjoy the time sailing around and not going anywhere in particular, just messing around in our boat.

It was after our overnight cruise that I remembered the dinghy I'd started to build the previous winter and left off in frustration at the many different bevels I'd have to figure out and cut into the frames at the chines and stringers. We needed a dinghy but I didn't want to work for weeks to build one.

At that time, I saw a Shoebox dinghy designed by Phil Bolger. Looking down, it was a rectangle. From the water, it had rectangular ends. The plumb sides were mostly rectangular with a curve along the bottom to give it rocker. I didn't bother buying plans. Instead, I guessed at the curve, drew it to scale on paper and laid it out on the 1/4" marine plywood I'd reserved for the V-bottom dinghy. Given time waiting for epoxy to cure, paint to dry and me to do other things, it took me four (4) hours of actual work to build the Shoebox.

We call her "Tardy" (late) after "Tardis" (slow). We launched her at our marina, tossing her from the dock into the water. She is incredibly stable: We can both stand up in her. She can spin around on her center of buoyancy and rows easily despite a tendency to plunge into a chop, which spits water straight up in the air and down into the pants of whoever is rowing in the bow position. She's not directionally stable, yawing to the slightest discrepancy in the arm strength of the rower. Packed with styrofoam, she will not sink.

We haven't yet towed "Tardy". I'm a little gunshy, fearful she'll yaw about like a madboat. But we've rowed her in the Snohomish River and its sloughs. Once, when I was alone, a curious harbor seal followed me, surfacing at "Tardy's" stern, watching us row off for fifty yards and diving to reappear just off our stern. Once, it



surfaced too close and got bopped on the head by my oar on its return stroke. It just stared at me and continued our game. With Joyce aboard, we've had three seals follow us, and though none so close as my first companion, they seem very curious about us and "Tardy".

This is the first rowboat I've ever owned and practically the first rowing experiences of my life. A year ago, when I was still boatless and dreaming of oceans, I had glanced at the sloughs near my house and thought there was a potential adventure just rowing in them and seeing where they go. Through this past winter, we rowed "Tardy" while "Tardis" is in mid-repair. Every row is fun. There is no stress, no great effort of sail hoisting, no smelly outboard, no fear of grounding, no tense docking, it's all pure fun and peace and a closeness with nature.

I am now building another Bolger boat, his Pirogue, a 16-foot "skakanoe" (skiff+kayak +canoe) from Common Sense Designs and am looking at more instant boats to build. I'd like to have a proper daysailer to sail over the thin flats of the Snohomish River Delta and a shoal-draft cruiser like Bolger's Martha Jane to trailer around the northwest and for getting in and

out of our marina without a motor.

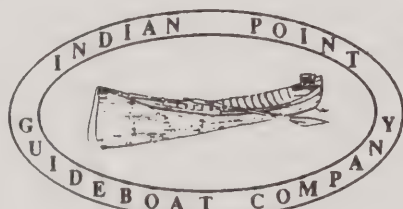
Though I still dream and scheme, I am also afloat and having more fun in boats than I ever imagined. I don't take it all so seriously anymore. Once I accepted smaller, more affordable boats, I was free of the serious purpose of ocean cruising, free to explore sloughs and bays and just daysail without any destination except our home port in time to ride a favorable tide and to dock by the last light of day.

I also dropped what were the pretenses of ego. Somehow, when I started sailing, I saw myself as a blue water cruiser in an ocean-going sailboat. I got locked into that self-image and, as a result, couldn't accept any boats or activities short of my ultimate dreams. I had to have a boat that either could, or looked like it could, cross an ocean. It was that dream, that self-image, that kept me landlocked for fifteen years.

As you can tell from the photo, "Tardy" is not an ego-booster, not a boat with serious purpose. She is simply for messing about and becoming once again a kid out having fun.

I also escaped from the whirling confusion of boat plans and the hardest decision, deciding which boat to build. I used to agonize over the plusses and minuses of designs and the often contradictory advice of different boat designers and sailors. I worried that my skills might not be up to building a big boat, but feared building a small boat that would conflict with my blue-water ego. Once I built "Tardy" and knew she'd float, I was ready to move up a notch on the boat-building ladder by building a boat specifically suited for rowing in the sloughs of the Snohomish River. In fact, I've found a number of small boats I'd like to build for simply messing about along shore.

And, liking my funky marina, I know I need to replace "Tardis" with a shoal-draft cruiser. Someday.



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Writing letters to editors doesn't often have much effect, but one I wrote in 1985 changed my life.

In January, 1985, "Small Boat Journal" published a letter from a reader asking if Simmons Sea Skiff plans were available. The magazine's editor, who knew the boat, answered he would query the Beaufort Maritime Museum to see if someone would "take off the lines" (measure and document the boat) before the Sea Skiffs vanished from the scene. I wrote the editor and advised him New Hanover County was the place to look for the boat. He agreed, and then proposed I write a feature article for "Small Boat Journal" and take off the lines for the boat.

My research began with a trip down Myrtle Grove Sound Road to meet Mr. T. N. Simmons, creator of the boat, at his shop. He had no blueprints for his craft, but just pointed to his head saying the plans were "up here."

Fortunately, about the same time, an 18' second hand Sea Skiff became available for sale. I bought it and, thinking any engineer worth his salt could draw plans with a good instruction manual, started making plans. The article for "Small Boat Journal" began to take shape and was published in the November, 1986 issue, just a few weeks before Mr. Simmons' death.

Two years later, the Corps of Engineers listed a 20' Simmons Sea Skiff as surplus property for auction. I hotfooted to the museum and asked them to call the Corps colonel about making a donation of the boat to the museum. She was successful; the Corps donated the boat, and soon I found myself drawing plans for a 20' Sea Skiff. Suddenly boats seemed to pop up everywhere. Currently I'm drawing plans

How I Got Hooked on Sea Skiffs

By Dave Carnell, Guest Curator
Cape Fear Museum, Wilmington, NC



The author checking out another Simmons Sea Skiff acquisition.

for a 22' high-sided and lowsided 20' Sea Skiffs.

This "wonderful boat," as it is called by "North Carolina Wildlife", is unique to New Hanover County, but in worldwide demand. Simmons sold his boats mainly on the east coast, personally delivering them as far as New Jersey and Florida. Some boats went as far as California, and a Ford executive in Detroit had his Sea Skiff delivered by a car transport that had just unloaded at Cape Fear Ford. Plans are easier to ship and have been sold in all but a couple of really landlocked states, as well as abroad in New Zealand, Canada, Thailand, Belgium, England, Nigeria, Martinique and Surinam.

The Sea Skiff's grandfather certainly

must be the New England dory. Features akin to the dory include lapstrake planking, shell construction that shapes the boat with interior framing added later, flare of the sides and an upswept bow. Simmons modified his boat by squaring off the stern, giving the bottom a small vee, and adding a well for the motor to create his masterpiece, an outboard boat as seaworthy as its dory ancestor.

Sea Skiffs are light and achieve high performance with relatively small motors. Their light weight also makes them easy to handle. How many 22 foot boats can be launched singlehandedly through the surf? The boat can take you fishing in the Gulf Stream, into the backwaters of shallow streams or pull water-skiers down the waterway.

T. N. Simmons told me he "was not a boat builder." Maybe not in the traditional sense, but it allowed his imagination to work. His boats evolved through the years, demonstrating continual simplification of the building process, first-class engineering that kept the cost down and the quality up. A Sea Skiff usually cost about the same as the motor to power it.

Mr. Simmons probably built between 700 and 800 Sea Skiffs from 1950 to 1972. North Carolina boat registration still lists about 200; there are a good number in South Carolina; no doubt others survive elsewhere. Although he wrote "last boat built in the Simmons shop" on a 1972 invoice, his ideas, and his boats, remain alive today.

(Plans for 18' and 20' Simmons Sea Skiffs are available from Cape Fear Museum Associates, 814 Market St., Wilmington, NC 28410. See ad in classified section).

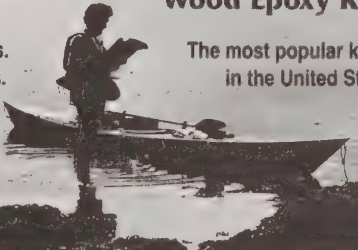


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Restoration and operation of Nobska is important. She represents the last vibrant, working example of a primary means of transportation widely used by travelers and commerce for over a century. Millions of people from all walks of life trod her decks including celebrities such as James Cagney, Katharine Cornell and John F. Kennedy.

Fully restored, under steam S/S Nobska will enable present and future generations to again experience the comfort, manner and style of the unhurried and gracious steamship travel of a long-past era.

Members of the Friends of Nobska have during the past two decades accomplished the primary and essential task of preserving the ship. The task at hand now is to complete restoration and once more bring her "alive."

This task is demanding. Your help is needed. Join the Friends of Nobska and participate in the accomplishment of the task in whatever way, as much or as little, as you wish. You will be part of a dedicated, dynamic organization assuring the preservation of a segment of our maritime history that has been nearly forgotten. A quarterly newsletter will keep you informed of progress of the restoration, activities of the Friends of Nobska and news and developments pertinent to the ship.



William H. Ewen, Jr. Collection

The S/S Nobska was built by the Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine in 1925 for the New England Steamship Company and named for the point of land on the southeastern tip of Woods Hole. She was designed with seaworthiness in mind to withstand severe weather con-

ditions and was powered by an engine that represents marine reciprocating steam power at its zenith. In style, accoutrements and performance she is a classic and only remaining example of a pure 19th- and early 20th-century American coastal steamboat.

Length overall: 210'	Draft (loaded): 9'3"	Staterooms: 14
Breadth over guards: 50'	Depth of hold: 14'6"	Service speed: 14 knots
Gross tonnage (original): 1085	Passenger capacity: 1,200	Propeller diameter: 8'6"
Engine: Triple expansion 4-cylinder reciprocating steam rated 1,200 HP at 200 RPM.		
Cylinder diameters: 16", 26", 30" and 30". Length of stroke: 24"		
Boilers (original): 2 Babcock and Wilcox watertube, coal fired, working pressure: 200 lbs.		

HISTORICAL SYNOPSIS

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>1925 Launched March 24 ♦ Maiden voyage April 29, New Bedford to Nantucket, beginning of a long career of passenger and freight service.</p> <p>1928 Richard Connell born aboard ship while en-route to Nantucket on January 1. ♦ Name changed to Nantucket.</p> <p>1931 Grounding on Sturgeon Flats ♦ Worst storm crossing to Nantucket, waves breaking over hurricane deck.</p> <p>1932 Collided with sistership S/S Martha's Vineyard resulting in addition of wireless communication.</p> <p>1940 Boilers converted from coal to oil burning.</p> <p>1947 Scheduled run made on which there were no passengers, vehicles or freight.</p> <p>1950 Major overhaul and reconfiguration to improve facilities and extend service career. ♦ Radar installed.</p> <p>1956 Name changed back to Nobska.</p> <p>1961 Made crossing on January 3 to Nantucket with badly needed emergency supplies for the ice-bound island. Cut through 14" ice making the normally two hour passage in twelve hours. Feature story in Life magazine. ♦ Last run of scheduled steamship service from New Bedford to islands.</p> <p>1964 Grounding just south of Woods Hole.</p> <p>1972 Sewage tanks and smoke detection system installed.</p> <p>1973 Last trip from Nantucket to Martha's Vineyard and Vineyard Haven, September 18.</p> <p>1974 Towed to Nantucket for lay-up. ♦ Listed on National Register of Historic Places.</p> | <p>1975 Sold to Alfred Johnston for \$61,750 for use as a restaurant ship in Baltimore. Towed to Fall River for conversion and refurbishing. ♦ Friends of Nobska, Inc. organized and incorporated for the purpose of acquiring, restoring and operating S/S Nobska. ♦ Members of Friends of Nobska make first trip to Baltimore to perform preservation work on engines.</p> <p>1976 "Nobska Restaurant" opened.</p> <p>1977 Second trip to Baltimore by Friends of Nobska for preservation work.</p> <p>1978 "Nobska Restaurant" closes. ♦ Third trip to Baltimore by Friends of Nobska for preservation work.</p> <p>1979 Ship purchased by developers. Boilers, staterooms etc. removed. Several plans for use of ship fail to materialize. Ship lay abandoned.</p> <p>1980 Friends of Nobska receives tax-exempt status from the Internal Revenue Service.</p> <p>1986 Negotiations initiated toward acquisition of ship by Friends of Nobska.</p> <p>1988 Friends of Nobska signs agreement for acquisition on January 8. Raises \$30,000 to fund return of ship to New England. Under tow, S/S Nobska arrives in Fall River May 18.</p> <p>1989 Marine specialists make two-year study to ascertain possibility and feasibility of restoration. Restoration plans are begun.</p> <p>1991 Ship moved to Providence, RI.</p> <p>1992 Video "To Save a Grand Lady" produced, narrated by Walter Cronkite.</p> <p>To 7,000 hours of preservation/stabilization work
date by volunteers completed and over \$300,000 worth of steam equipment acquired.</p> |
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Building a Folding Kayak

By Marion McClure



The writer in a folding German kayak, builder unknown.

In recent years a lot has been written about kayaks both rigid and folding and the trips taken in them. But it is very hard to find in print very much about building the folding kayak. Perhaps the earliest is by Dan Beard in his 1911 book "Boat Building and Boating" telling how to build O. Dodge's umbrella canoe. In France during WWII a paperback could be found by F. Sergeant titled "Construction de Canoes et Kayaks" containing a chapter on a Kayak Pliant de 4 m. 25. Recently while restoring a European folding kayak. Ralph Freese, who runs the Chicagoland Canoe Base, found for me in his files a how-to-build article by George Bauwens called "Build a Fold Boat" published by General Printing Co. in their 1947 "Popular Homecraft Boat Building Annual".

Perhaps few how-to-build folding kayak articles can be found because such excellent ready-made commercial ones are available. The folding kayak is considered a European idea, giving the kayaker a craft when knocked down that is very easily transported by any means of transportation and easily stored in a closet or under the bed! Johann Klepper of Rosenheim, Germany is credited with building in 1907 a collapsible boat that combined an Eskimo kayak with a take-apart frame levered into a sewn envelope.

Great numbers of wood frame canvas rigids have been built by do-it-yourselfers. Here is a list of details and accompanying photos of the way most wooden framed kayaks can be built to take apart.

1. Longitudinal backbone or keel-ladder jackknifing in the middle permitting

the framework to be levered into each end of the hull envelope.

2. Frames either built-up or sawn from plywood that are detachable from the longitudinal keel. Some builders bolt these on with winged nuts, others attach a wooden tongue extending beyond reinforcing strip on the bottom of the frame going under the crosspiece of the ladder.

3. Longerons that take apart to give 4 foot lengths. If wooden longerons are used brass sleeves are fitted to each end with a sliding length of tubing to couple them together. Aluminum tubes sometimes used for longerons have a sliding inset of aluminum tube to join.

4. The deck covering must be attachable to the cockpit coamings. One way is for the deck to have a corded edge that slides into a routed groove in the bottom edge of the coaming. Another way is to

have a sleeve sewn in the edge of the deck fabric in which an inner strip slides, bolting together brackets on the ends of frames in the cockpit area with the outer coaming strip.

If one has read this far it is apparent that these are not going to be directions to the exact fraction of an inch on how to build a folding kayak, but rather, as Dan Beard would have written, to give ideas a builder needs to know to do the project. If a person can build a rigid fabric covered craft with design modifications it can be made folding.

Here is a suggestion, purchase an available kit kayak which includes line drawings and band sawn plywood frames and bow and stern. To build from scratch a builder will need lines whatever he is building. Included with this article is a line drawing with offsets (metric). If a two-place is wanted the design can be stretched.

A few other details have not been mentioned such as the attachment of longerons to bow and stern pieces (into sockets attached or pinned). The hull envelope material can be ordered by the yard from commercial folding boat builders, canvas coated with flexible paint is another choice, or vinyl upholstery cloth. Whichever material is chosen it takes a strong sewing machine to stitch the cover. A friend with such a machine did a hull with me, but the next will be done by a commercial automobile upholstery shop, where vinyl cloth can also be purchased. It was found the deck should be sewn for attachment to cockpit coamings before stitching together the deck to hull. A professional upholster is worth having for all this.

Perhaps this kayak builder's experience should be included? During high school and college three canvas covered rigids were built. Next during WWII in Europe at Ulm, Germany on the Danube River a folding kayak was first seen and "borrowed" and that summer another was used on an Austrian lake. Which led to the purchase in 1946 of one of Jack Kistner's Folbots (a copyrighted name) and 15 years later another from Kistner as a gift for a son. Next a German design was found at an Illinois River town that needed rebuilding. And likely my final, now in my shop is a single folding for a granddaughter from a rigid kit. Anyone with questions who sends a SASE will get a reply.

Marion McClure, 908 N. Prairie St., Bloomington, IL 61701. I dedicate this article to all double-blade paddlers.

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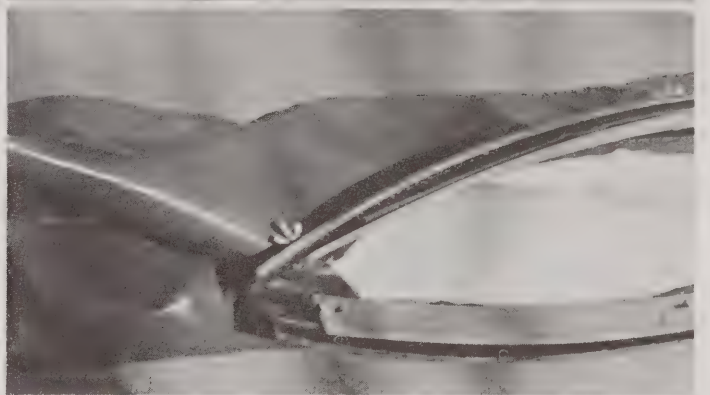
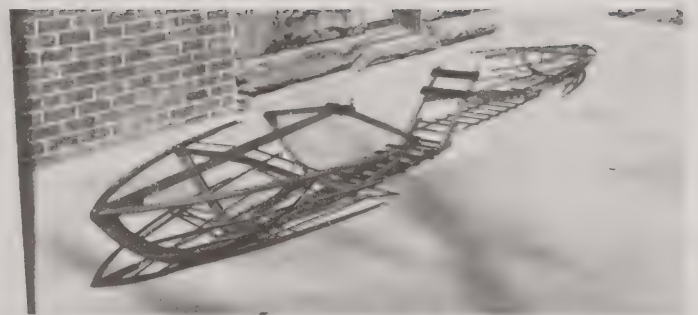
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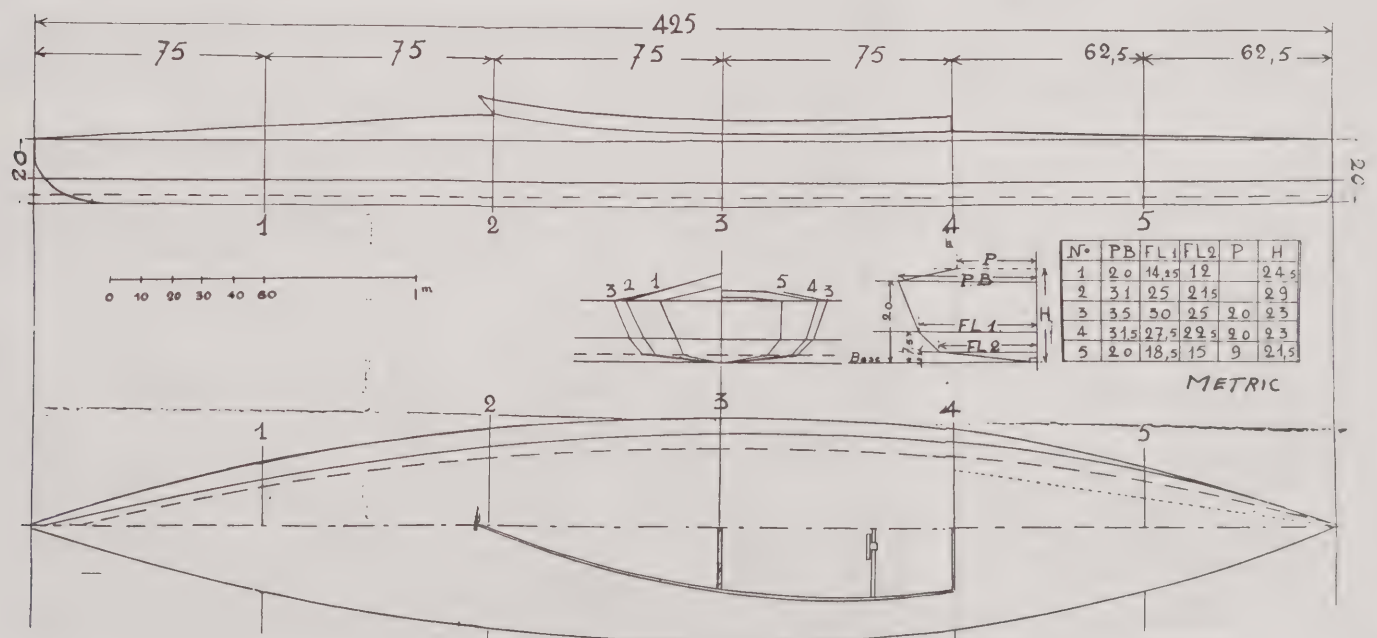
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Across the top: Longitudinal backbone keel ladder shown jackknifed. Bow and stern framework erected on keel ladder.
 Across the middle: Built-up frame showing wooden tongue. Longeron attachment to bow piece with cotter pins.
 Across the bottom: Longeron joining tubes showing sliding tube connector with wooden plug, aluminum longerons and wooden longerons with metal sleeves for joining.



Although my boat only weighs 114 pounds its length and breadth make it a real wrestle to load on my truck's roof rack. I finally developed a loading rig a lot like Jim Thayer's (see April 15th issue). I'll describe some of the differences.

Instead of a ladder frame I used a stressed skin panel for the tilt bed. This is made up of three 16' 2x2's with a cross piece at each end and a plywood deck nailed and glued grain parallel with the stringers. I used plenty of Titebond 2 Glue and 4d common nails to fasten the ply to the stringers. My goal was to achieve the perfect glue bond. I found it best to predrill tight holes for all the nails and pre-position them in the plywood skin like pins in a pincushion before spreading the glue.

The joints in the plywood panel required a structurally sound scarf, or as I chose, 12" long splice plates. I predrilled the panel in the area of the splice to accept sheetrock screws spaced 2" both ways. The bit had a countersink which I engaged lightly to prevent splitting when the screw heads were driven into the wood. I then spread glue on the undrilled splice plates and fastened the panels down through them into a temporary 2x4 backer. When the glue dried I removed the screws and rely on the glue joint alone, which has worked perfectly.

The plywood panel serves the function of the ladder rungs in supporting the boat, but also provides a substantial bending member and prevents sideways racking. The panel pivots on three heavy tee-hinges which are throughbolted to a 2x4 crosspiece with 1/4" bolts and fastened to the stringers with 1/4" flathead machine screws. These are counterunk into the face of the panel so the boat won't be gored by bolt heads. I didn't count on woodscrews driven into the softwood stringers at this critical connection. I also wanted to be able to remove the crosspiece to make storing the panel easier.

There's not much clearance inside the hinges when the panel rests flat on the roof so I was forced to saw off the machine screws flush with their nuts. There's something called a lock flange nut which sports a big attached lockwasher that seems best for this situation. A nut driver is now part of the bag of boat gear.

I built my prototype during an attack of boat fever in mid-January. It's pieced together from two scraps of 3/8" plyscore

Another Truck Top Boat Lift

By Bill Perkins

and one scrap of 1/4" AC. The 2x2 stringers are a finish grade of fir, straight, dense and clear.

I rigged a three-part tackle to the upper crosspiece with a bridle and two eye bolts. A fiddle block here runs clear even when pressed tight against the deck. Snap hooks at each end make the tackle easy to remove for storage. This keeps the panel light and unencumbered for storage and I gain the use of the powerful general purpose tackle. On the road I detach the tackle and run a line from the bridle to the bumper so the rack is secure no matter what happens to the boat lashings. The bow line of the boat also goes to the front bumper.

The 16' length of the panel allows it to bear on the step bumper when fully raised so no safety line is required. Without that tether I find I also don't need a roller on the panel end. As I haul up, the lower single block, and then the stem of the boat, come to bear on the panel end. I just push down on the panel (there's a 5' lever arm) and the boat slides up on top. A routed quarter round on the panel end is currently my only concession to friction.

I've found it best to let the panel bear lightly against the lowered tailgate at this juncture. I placed an eye bolt near the right rear corner of the panel, facing aft. A large spring gate carabiner is snapped to this serving as a snatch block. When the forefoot of the boat reaches the level of the hinges I snap in the fall of the tackle. This allows me to dig in my heels and get a good pull (making sure of the connections). The turning block also forces the panel end up and parallel to the boat as it is raised, minimizing the stress on both the panel and the operator.

I've found I have to be careful not to hook into the turning block too soon because my stock aluminum ladder rack can't handle the high horizontal loads produced by hauling back. I think I'll replace its mounting screws with bolts. It seems like some sort of slip-on extension to lift the panel, long enough to bear on the ground, might work for heavier boats or on passenger car roofs. Maybe Jim Thayer's is the way to go in those situations.

When lowering the boat, I think a tackle is handier than a winch. I pull on a stern line attached to a gudgeon to start the boat. The fall of the tackle pays out through my hand as I back away from the truck and my 15' boat slides off under complete control. Three strand nylon of 3/8" diameter is about the smallest line I want to handle with a load so that's what I use, but I still need to remember to include a work glove in my gear. I am getting some rope burns.

When I am launching directly into the water at a ramp, the tackle leaves one hand free for the boat to keep it off the concrete, and allows the operator a freedom of

movement that is a real help. I use quite a long line, as you can imagine, but since there's no reason to adjust the tackle between launching and retrieval, this really causes no inconvenience.

In the city there's no place to set anything down, let alone park a trailer. Towing one in rush hour traffic would mean near-certain death in any case. A rooftop lift solves these problems for me and the dismounted panel makes a handy ramp for sliding my boat over a low garden wall and into my basement. I took the liberty of walking along the plywood in this position and my 190 pounds proved too much. As I approached mid-span the center stringer sheared through with a sharp crack (not at a nearby splice). My next model is going to be painted and have "No Step" stenciled at midpoint.

I went sailing despite this accident. Far from being crippled as I'd feared, the panel functioned about as before. Clearly the plywood skins are doing a lot of the work and I'd slightly overbuilt the lift for my little boat.

If you're interested in the full technical details, the American Plywood Association's pamphlet, "Design and Fabrication of Stressed Plywood Skin Panels" is the authoritative source. This was my source for information on the nail size and spacing. They've done a lot of testing to determine how far apart the stringers can be for various thicknesses of plywood and still have the ply fully effective as a bending member. Performance drops off sharply if construction exceeds these "b" distances. Here are the allowable clear spans between stringers they give for some common three layered sanded panels:

1/4" - 9"

3/8" - 19"

1/2" - 20"

5 layer 1/2" - 24"

(1/2" ply needs a minimum 14" splice plate).

These spacings are for stringers parallel to the ply grain.

I'm satisfied with what I have for the moment but my next generation lift is going to be 16'x2'x3/8" panel. I'm going to respect the 19" spacing limit so the ply will project past the stringers about 7/8" on each side. I expect to be able to rout these off later but I don't want to throw away any of the substructure until I try the thing out.

I'm going to rip a pair of stringers out of a straight 2x6 spruce plank, planing them down to 2-5/8" and I'm going to face them up so they can act as side rails for the narrower panels. I'll still have the cross-pieces at the top and bottom but they'll be fastened below the ply.

If I didn't have access to a table saw and planer I'd probably use a pair of 2x2's again. If so, I'd still use the stronger, more expensive finish fir for these thin highly stressed pieces. Adding depth to the stringers is the cheapest, lightest way to strengthen the panel for a heavier boat.

This is a work in progress as you can tell but I wanted to send this information along while it is still topical. The setup has been a success for me as I find I use my boat far more than before.

Bill Perkins, 1015 Washita Ave., Atlanta, GA 30307.

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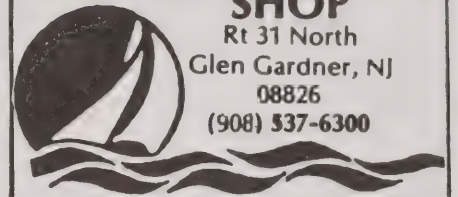


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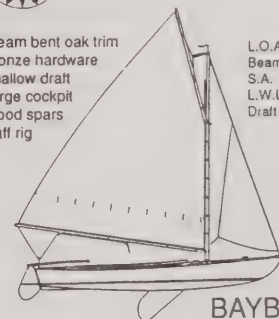
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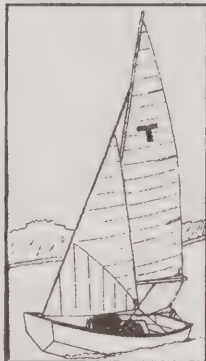
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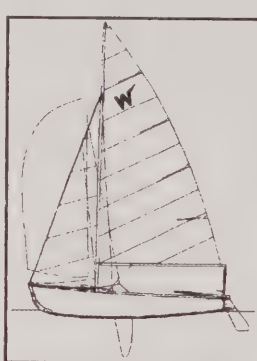
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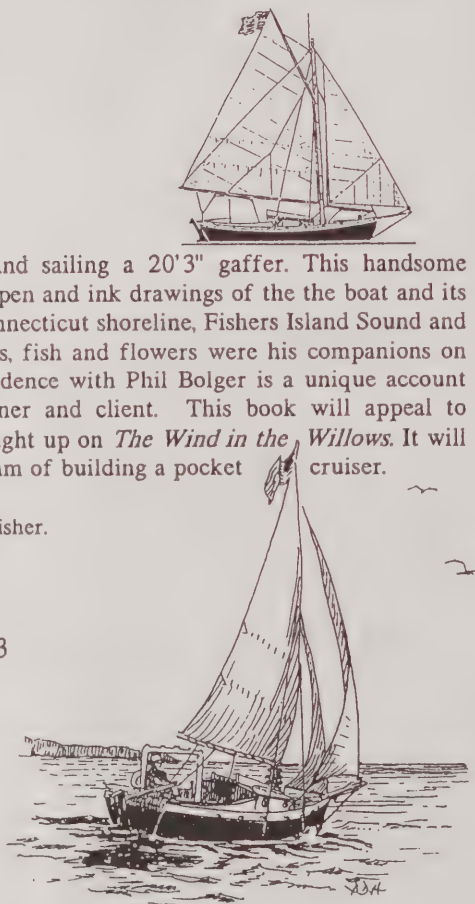
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How Many Does It Sleep?

Many of you are, I suspect, new to sailing, or at least to the small boat aspect of it. Most new sailors these days shoot for something around thirty feet to start. It would seem to make sense to have a head, and a galley, and a motor, and well, you know, a nice little floating home.

I doubt very much whether anyone starting with a motor will ever become a real sailor (trans-oceanic guys excepted). Oh they might make sail once in a while just for show, but why make your house tip if you don't have to?

Bear in mind that I am not unbiased, but I like to think that I have sloshed around enough to have formed some considered opinions. My advice would be to start with something really small, a boat that you can overpower with your own weight, and one with loads of flotation, so that you feel comfortable hanging on when the wind pipes up.

Safety is crucial, but still she's got to sail well or it's not much fun. I can wholeheartedly (no bias here) recommend the "Wee Punkin".

There is, of course, the Jones, BMW, Volvo thing. It's obvious to the most guache that the "Punkin" doesn't cost as much as a forty-footer, and getting two bikini-clads draped on it while daysailing is a problem.

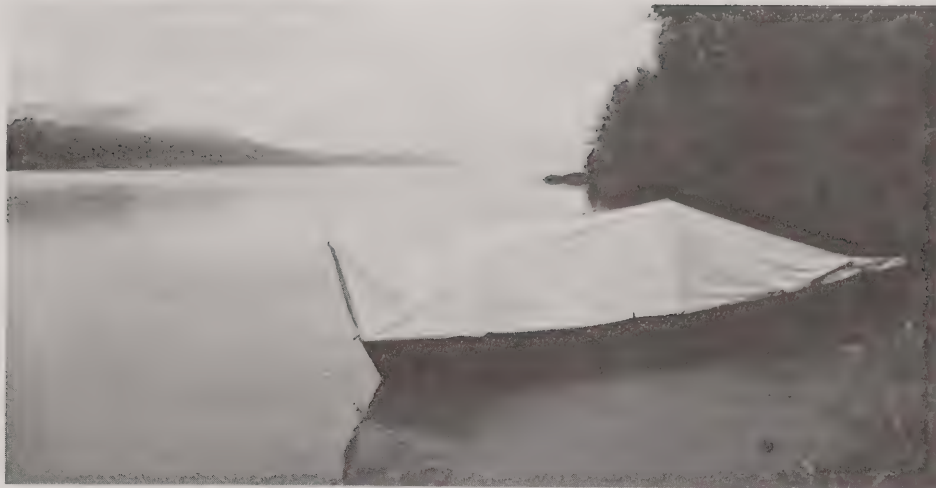
Yet, there are a number of successful ways to play it. With blue blazer ("Punkin" patch), red pants, "in" shoes and silver champagne bucket, you can lounge in your "Punkin" with all the aplomb of the fellow in his forty-footer. You can drink the priciest potables and be money ahead at the end of the month. Have a liveried attendant hand the goodies down to you if you like.

All this is not too subtle, however. My preference is to just be plain Joe and cartop her on a Mercedes. Have the chauffeur load it while you regale them at the bar if it makes you more comfortable.

Admittedly the foregoing is tongue-in-cheek, though certainly not without some basis. We are not really catering to people who have those hangups. There are those people, whole families often, who just seem to know how to have a good time. No doubt most sports have this type but it does seem to me that the small boat nuts count more than their share.

So, build a "Wee Punkin". You'll be right up there with those guys who have built real boats, looking down on the stitch-and-glue crowd. You'll get plaudits from all and sundry (admit it, we all really like this). You'll be gathered into a group that really has a fun time.

Best of all, you'll become a real sailor. She'll give you confidence, make you comfortable and make you look good from the start. Rest assured, you won't tire of her. You'll just keep adding to the year's ahead list of places you want to take her. I'm about ten years out myself.



A Pretty Good Tent

By Dave Evans

Reader Paul Boufford is on the right track with his new design for a skiff tent (March 15th issue). The hoop-tent I added to "Mud Puppy" before floating to Cincinnati a few years ago was of rip-stop nylon with mosquito netting at the door and bow. I chose snaps to attach the tent to the gunwale and this worked pretty well. I beached a few times, but spent the best nights anchored.

A few guiding principals and many clothes-pins allowed making the tent without patterns:

Laying the fabric across the boat (athwartships) gave short, steep seams instead of long ridge seams. The seams in the tent are steep enough that water runs off before much comes through; I didn't seal the seams with any goo.

Sewing the three pieces together with wide lapped seams made tunnels for the hoops. Tunnels keep the hoops upright and add strength to the tent.

A low bow vent and high stern vent encouraged ventilation from either convection or breeze. "Mud Puppy's" high vent is actually the door, but it worked in

most weather. The tent did collect condensation when the door was closed in downpours.

I erected hoops about two inches closer together than the width of the fabric. A light line held the hoops upright while I draped the fabric athwartships over the hoops to mark the gunwale lines (leaving an inch or two at each gunwale to hem later). I then cut the center panel and clothespinned the remaining fabric to the front hoop to mock-up the front panel and mark and cut it. I repeated the process for the back panel. It is easiest to clip clothespins at key points when mocking up the tent, then lay the fabric flat to mark between clothespins with chalk. I set up the tent again to check the fit before cutting.

After sewing the two main seams, I erected the tent again and folded up the bottom hem. I used some straight pins here since the fabric needn't be waterproof below the gunwale. I sewed the hem and marked the gunwale for snap spacing. I screwed male snaps into the gunwale before erecting the tent and setting the female snaps to match the male snaps.

The front of the tent is held taught by a cord under a bow cleat. A half-square-foot hole over the small bow deck is screened by about a square foot of mosquito netting. The mosquito netting at the stern is also draped generously; I included no zipper, I just lift it to enter or exit or unsnap a corner of the tent to step down into little "Mud Puppy" from houseboat-height piers.

Messing about on the water I cracked a section of the mail order tent poles and lost a couple of intact sections overboard. The next day I bought half-inch PVC water pipe and two 45-degree elbows. These made much better hoops than the original tent poles, and proved the usefulness of carrying a small saw and four-in-hand file.

Another problem was the unforgiving nature of the snaps. I stopped early one day and set up the tent before hiking off for groceries. Rip-stop nylon shrinks in heat, and one snap ripped out. I sewed it back in place easily enough, but learned to leave the tent partially un-snapped when it's in direct sun.

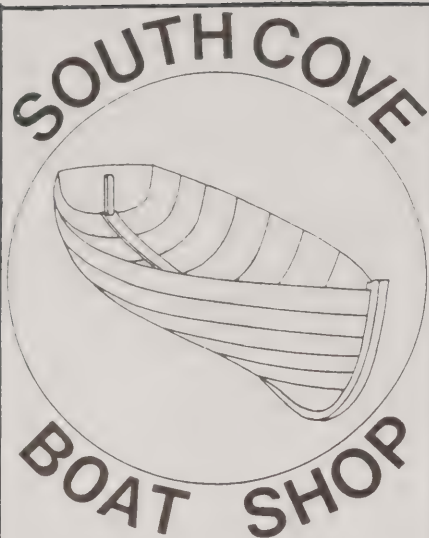
"Mud Puppy's" successor will have a similar tent with three hoops instead of two. Slanting the rear hoop should create an overhang that will allow the vent to stay open in rain. I will again use snaps at the gunwale.

Dave Evans, 368 E. Kelso Rd., Columbus, OH 43202.



Top of page: Cosy cover at water's edge. Below and at right: Tent under construction, and builder enjoying fruits of his labors.





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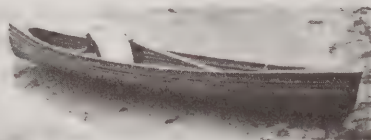
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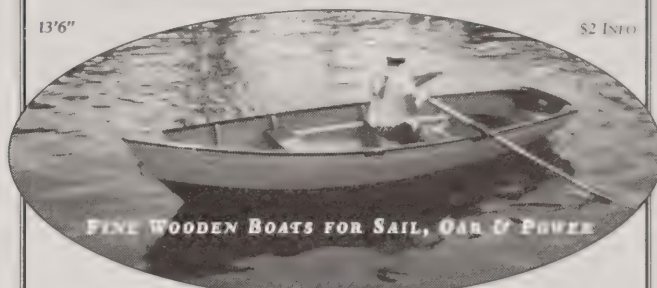
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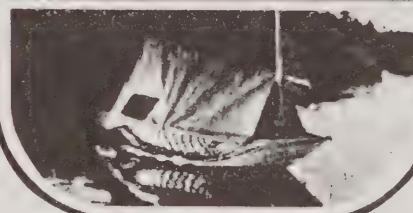
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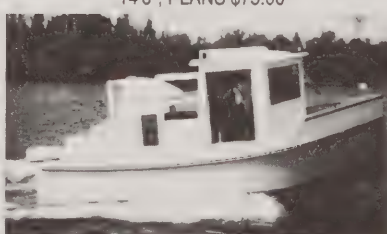
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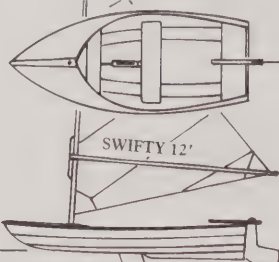


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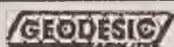
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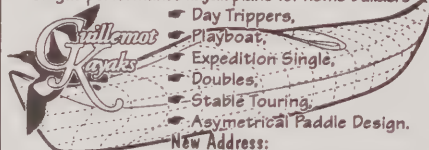
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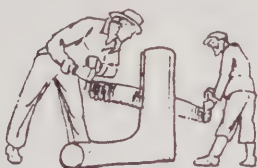
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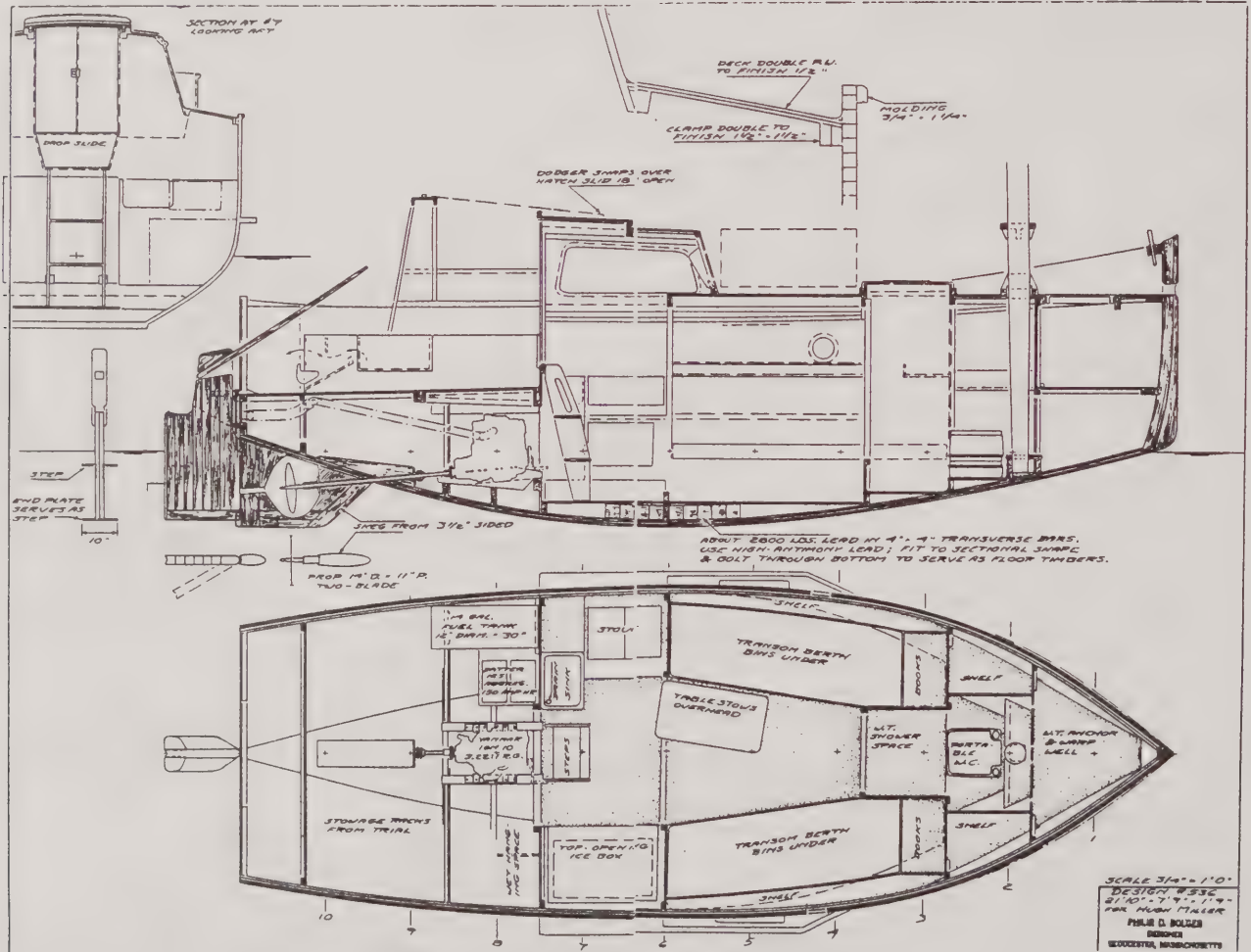
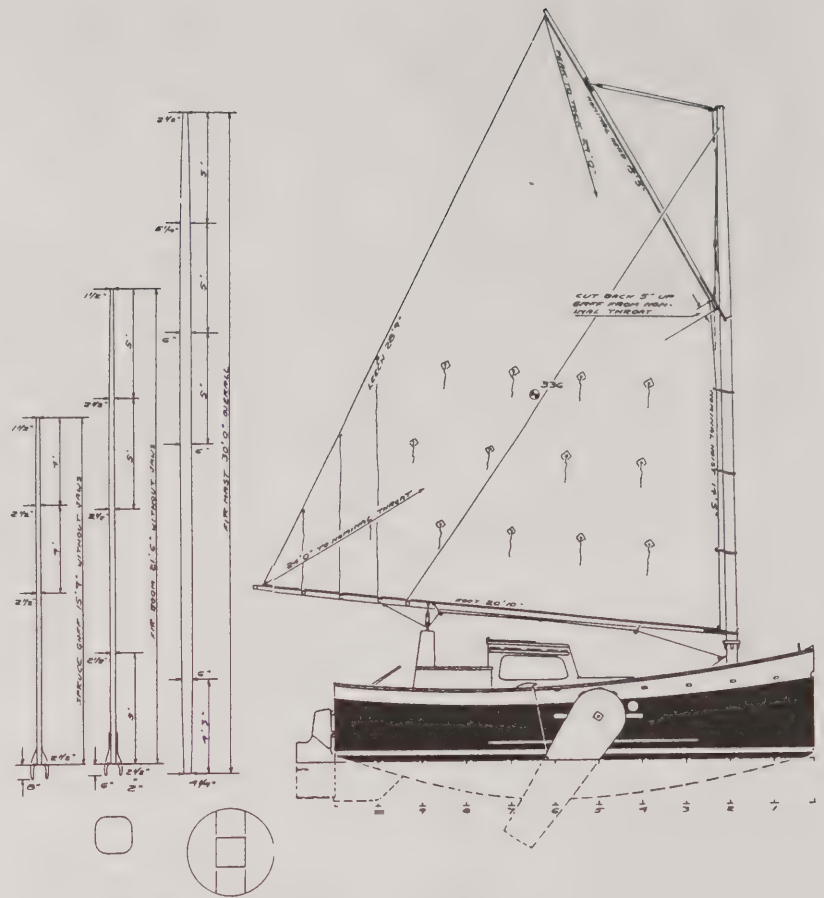
Hugh Miller is a New Zealand boat-builder who commissioned this design for his own use. He aimed at a 20-footer but allowed me to stretch her two feet. She is a very heavy boat, with 2800 pounds of inside lead ballast. With 336 square feet of sail she should be a powerful windward sailer.

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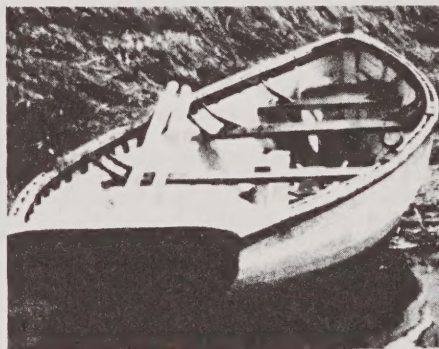
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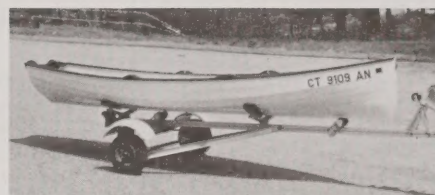
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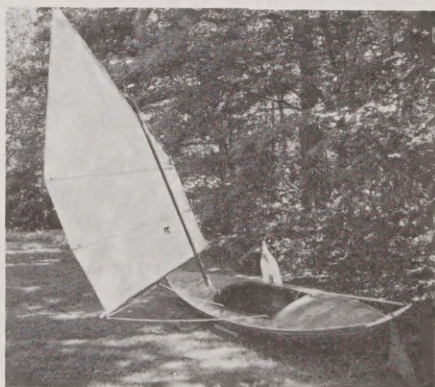
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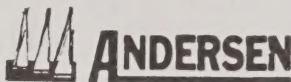
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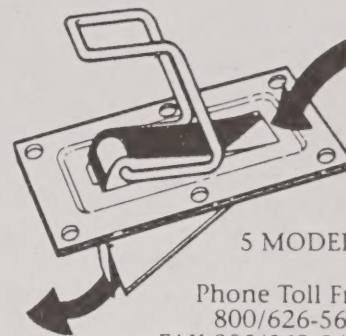
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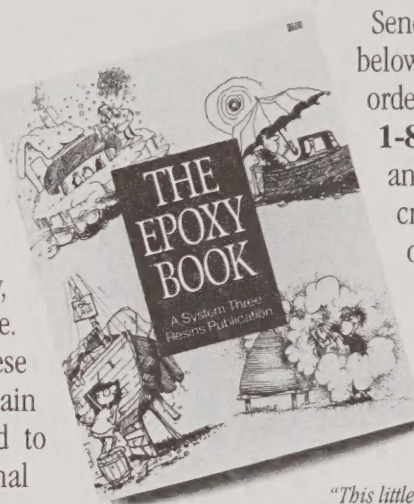
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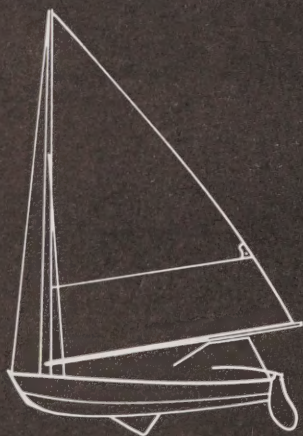
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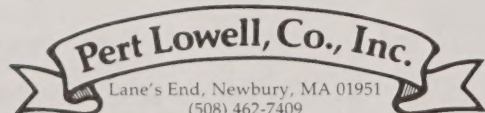
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