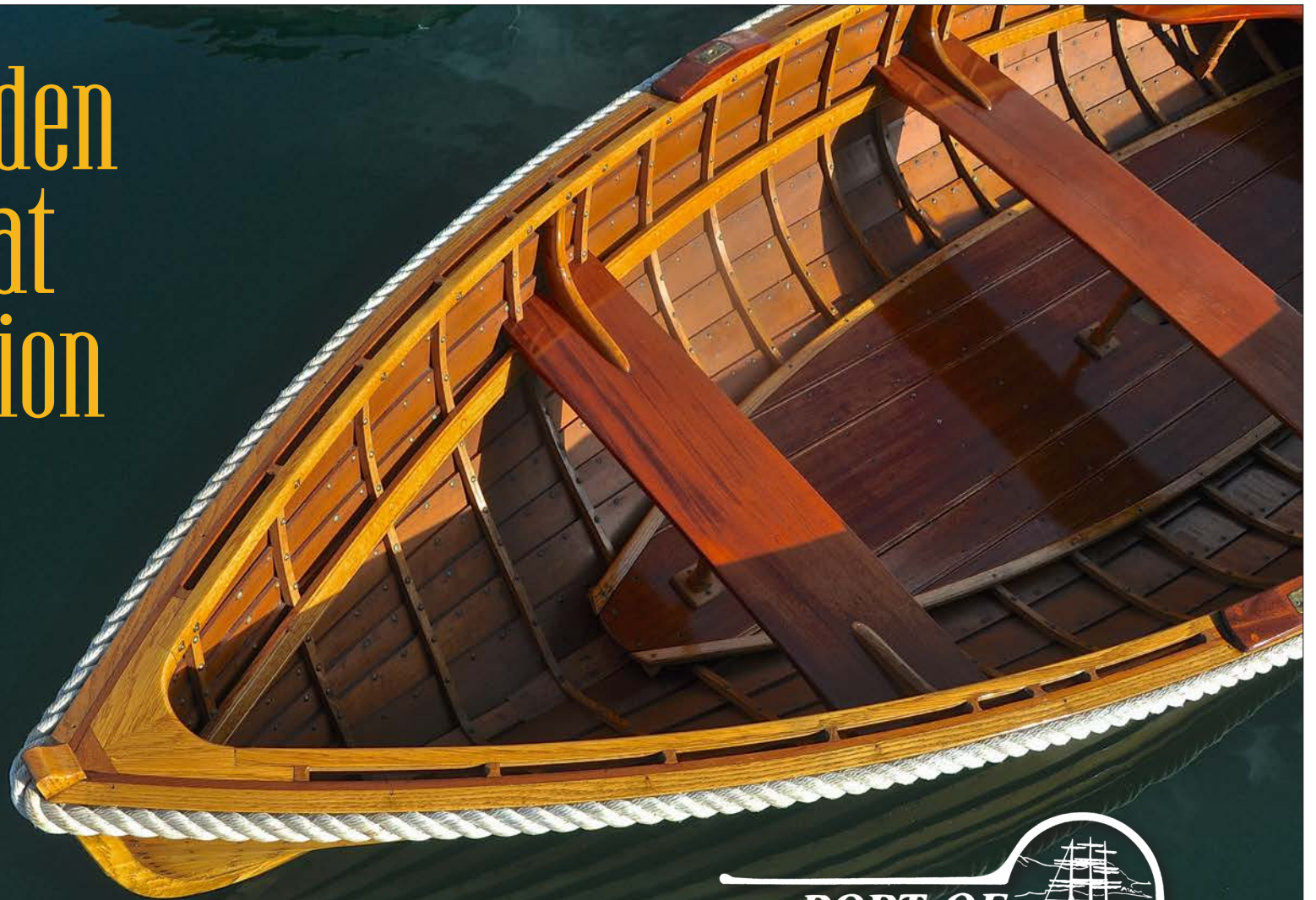


# PORT REPORT

ECONOMIC VITALITY | COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS  
OPENNESS & ACCOUNTABILITY | STEWARDSHIP

SUMMER-FALL 2021 NEWSLETTER *from the* PORT OF PORT TOWNSEND

Wooden  
Boat  
Edition



  
**PORT OF  
PORT TOWNSEND**  
SERVING ALL OF JEFFERSON COUNTY

The beauty and versatility of wood has inspired generations of builders and boaters. This 10-foot Lawton dinghy was built by resident Jack Becker as tender for the Beckers' 42-foot 1928 Lake Union Dreamboat Emmeline. Becker, a graduate of the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding, worked for Townsend Bay Marine for nine years. The lapstrake construction features red cedar planks over oak frames, with copper rivets and bronze screws. The seats and transom are mahogany. *Photo by Elizabeth Becker*



## Commissioner's Corner

# Builders to wooden boats: From one living thing to another

In a child's mind, wood is elemental. Every stick or block has the shape of something buried deep inside it, if we only had the skill to get it out.

Before humans learned to make metal into usable shapes, spin glass into fabric or change the chemistry of oil into plastics, there was wood. Since humans discovered they could build something that would let them travel on water, wood on wood, and animal skins or natural fiber cloth on wood was the answer to "...what do you build a boat with?"

In every generation and in every region, the way people used wood to build boats is one of the most lasting characteristics of a civilization. Not written on paper but written in the structure of a boat that may have been found hundreds or thousands of years later, you can track the trading routes of ancient peoples.

Modern metals, glass and plastics dominate boat building today. But the building and maintaining of wooden vessels is still alive today on a 20-acre plot of ground in one county in the Pacific Northwest. Wood is cut, shaped and bent into beams, stringers, planks,



By Bill Putney III  
Commissioner,  
District 2

pegs and spars by craftsmen drawing on thousands of years of accumulated craftsmanship, discovery and innovation.

As if by alchemy, a boat emerges or is restored to a new useful life from the elemental forest. Rigging, forged fittings and sails are added by artisans whose shops are all within a few miles of the saltwater. The boat takes shape and finds motive force in the wind.

Electrical, mechanical and hydraulic systems are added to make this thing with ancient roots perform all the tasks asked of any modern vessel.

I think there is a kinship between people and wooden boats: The kinship that any living thing feels towards another. We share about half of our DNA with trees. Put your hand on a wooden boat. Do you feel it? Look at how the boat is constructed. The bones and skin and sinew placed skillfully, lovingly by craftsmen who understand the material intimately.

With the intrinsic beauty of the material, a wooden boat doesn't merely transport. It inspires.



Bertram Levy's Able captures the wind as it sails before the Jefferson County Courthouse during the Shipwright's Regatta in 2015. Both wooden boats and the local people who build and maintain them are iconic parts of local culture. In their honor and in recognition of the upcoming Wooden Boat Festival, this edition of Port Report is dedicated to local wooden boats. *Photo by Elizabeth Becker*

## From the Executive Director

# PT's wooden boat culture

My first meeting with the Port's Moorage Tenants' Association was on Zoom, of course, but what is notable were the members' introductions.

Each person held up a photo of their boat for me to see and in each case, the boats were made of wood. This was my first introduction to the wooden boat culture in Port Townsend.

Wooden boat owners aren't just crazy, they are keepers of an ancient tradition and stewards of particular vessels, each with its own unique history



By Eron Berg  
Port Executive  
Director

and story. The Port's marinas have about 100 wooden boats as permanent tenants and the boat yard sees dozens of wooden boats annually for maintenance work.

These boats span the centuries, range in size and are used for maritime work, fishing, pleasure and blue water adventuring. Wooden boats are trusted technology and remain resilient through time.

In the coming months, a group of volunteers from the Moorage Tenants' Association, along

with the Port, are working on an inventory of wooden boats and a platform to share the stories of those boats. This issue of the Port Report is focused on Port Townsend's wooden boat culture, stories about the boats, their owners and the tradespeople who keep them floating season after season.

I hope you enjoy this celebration of one of the threads in the fabric that makes this place so remarkable.

(Thanks to the leadership of the Moorage Tenants' Association for their help with the conception and implementation of this celebration of wooden boats.)



# From sailing kids to charter skippers

## Brown & Flanagan's day sailor is new Port business

If you think wooden boats are all about crusty old folks using hand tools from the dawn of civilization, you haven't met Erik Brown or Alyce Flanagan.

This couple, each 30 years old and each lifelong sailors, has launched a new business on the local waterfront via the restored catboat Katie M, which serves as a classic and comfortable day sailor for charter trips in Port Townsend Bay through their company, Left Coast Charters.

Erik hails from Connecticut, where even as a child he was shaping and cutting wood, and obtained his first wooden boat at the age of 14.

"I've worked in wood since I was old enough to convince my mom it was a good idea to get me a router," he said. He was 10 years old. He soon became a sailor and, in part thanks to a four-year maritime trade high school in New Haven, Conn., a skilled boatbuilder.

Erik made his way West to attend The Evergreen State College in Olympia in 2009, where he also taught and coached sailing for the Olympia Yacht Club. One day on the docks in Olympia, he learned of a planned sailing voyage to Mexico, met Alyce, and before long was aboard her grandfather's yawl in the Sea of Cortez.



Katie M's wide cockpit and shallow draft make her the perfect sailing charter for Port Townsend Bay. Erik and Alyce's new company is called Left Coast Charters.

In the Northwest, Erik also had jobs at the Center for Wooden Boats in Seattle and as a fabricator in Pete and Kathy Langley's Port Townsend Foundry.

Alyce is the daughter of Jefferson County's storied Flanagan-McNish family, growing up on the 82-foot schooner Alcyone in an upbringing that included



Erik Brown and Alyce Flanagan sailing aboard the Katie M.

trans-ocean crossings from the time she and her sister were toddlers. Alyce has taught sailing since she learned to talk, and has crewed on many tall ships and sail training vessels. Besides helping with the Katie M, she coaches the Port Townsend High School sail team and works at a local marine canvas shop.

Erik and Alyce married in 2019. Both are licensed skippers. During colder months, they form the crew of a 70-foot cutter named Geronimo, homeported in Rhode Island, that takes handfuls of high school students on six-week trips between New England and the Bahamas.

But their summertime love is sailing the Katie M, with locals or visitors looking for a day sail in a comfortable, restored catboat. (Catboat refers to the design of

[»» Continued on page 5](#)

## Doing Business with the Port

### How do I:

- **Become a tenant?** Talk to Sue Nelson (snelson@portofpt.com).

- **Sign up for permanent boat moorage?** Call the Boat Haven Moorage Office at 360-385-6211.

- **Sign up for transient boat moorage?** Call the Boat Haven Moorage Office at 360-385-6211, the Point Hudson Marina at 360-385-2828, or the Herb Beck Marina (Quilcene) office at 360-765-3131.

- **Get a vessel hauled out?** Call the Boat Haven Yard Office at 360-385-6211 to schedule.

- **Pay a bill?** Call the Boat Haven Moorage Office at 360-385-6211.

- **Comment on or participate in a discussion of the Port Commission?** Call Karen at 360-385-2323, or email [info@portofpt.com](mailto:info@portofpt.com).

- **Attend a meeting of the Port of Port Townsend Commission?** All meetings are open to the public. Regular meetings are the second Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. and the fourth Wednesday of each month at 5:30 p.m. Meeting agendas and supporting documents are accessed via the website, [portofpt.com](http://portofpt.com). Click on "Commission Meetings" and find the meeting you want. Each agenda includes links and information on how to attend a live meeting via Zoom. The Port also maintains full recordings and documents of all previous meetings.



District 1  
Commissioner

*Pam  
Petranek*

Skipper, commercial fisherman.  
Email: [pam@portofpt.com](mailto:pam@portofpt.com)  
360-385-0656, ext. 6



District 2  
Commissioner

*Bill  
Putney III*

Technology engineer, pilot.  
Email: [bill@portofpt.com](mailto:bill@portofpt.com)  
360-385-0656, ext. 6



District 3  
Commissioner Chair

*Pete  
Hanke*

Owns PS Express, pilot.  
Email: [phanke@portofpt.com](mailto:phanke@portofpt.com)  
360-385-0656, ext. 6



Executive  
Director

*Eron  
Berg*

Email: [eron@portofpt.com](mailto:eron@portofpt.com)  
360-385-0656





Levy sailing the Able, a 24-foot cutter he built and has sailed for thousands of miles. *Photo by Elizabeth Becker*

# The wooden boats of Port Townsend

**By Bertram Levy**

Port Townsend has become the wooden boat capital of the West Coast.

The emergence of the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding, the prominence of the marine trades industry, the growth of the Northwest Maritime Center and the Wooden Boat Festival have been cited as the basis of this new reputation.

However, the unrecognized jewel of its crown is the large collection of year-round wooden boats in our marinas. In a world where wooden boats have largely disappeared from most marinas, over 20 percent of the boats in local marinas are still made of wood.

Until now the wooden boats in this community have been defined by the large sailing vessels such as Alcyone,

Martha, and Adventuress. However there are well over 100 wooden boats of all sizes and styles moored here that navigate our local waters and are maintained by residents. Each of these boats has a story, and those stories include the commitment of the individuals who own them.

Except for the Thunderbird One design racing class, no two wooden boats in our marina are alike. This

diverse collection of vessels is literally a visual history of 20th century boat design. These include sloops, cutters, ketches, cabin cruisers, trawlers, multihulls and rowboats. Construction techniques vary: plank on frame, lapstrake, plywood and cold molding. The ages of the boats range from 120 years to brand new. Boats from the 1930s, 1940s and the 1950s are common.

## **Why wood?**

Ask the owners why they own a wooden boat and you will get a variety of answers. Generally most owners are drawn to the unique beauty of the older designs, the warmth of wood and aesthetic qualities of traditional workmanship. For woodworkers it is their comfort level with the construction material.



Still others are drawn to a vessel's history and embrace the sense of privilege as a steward of maritime history.

For me, it's the sound of the wooden hull charging through the water, a sensation that no other material possesses.

For everyone, there is the overwhelming belief that a boat made of wood is a living creature whose organic soul comes from the life of the tree and the hands of her craftsmen.

The owners who take care of these boats are regular folks in this community who have either grown up with or acquired the knowledge necessary to repair, restore and maintain these vessels.

A number of boats have undergone major restorations, underscoring a great advantage of wooden boats - every part is replaceable. Many wooden boat owners are woodworkers comfortable with their own repairs. Others rely on the excellent workmanship of our vibrant marine trades and are supporters of a major sector of our local economy.

### **A unique community**

Wooden boats suffer from neglect. Ownership requires attentiveness which by its very nature requires spending lots of time on the docks. As a result, the docks have become a unique Port Townsend micro-community. This in turn has created a

vibrant marina culture. Ultimately the survival of the wood boats and the culture they encompass are inextricably bound together.

Port of Port Townsend Executive Director Eron Berg recognizes the importance of this culture and sees the large collection of wood boats as a unique local asset. Together with the Moorage Tenants Association, a project has begun to document the wooden boats of Port Townsend and create a catalogue of them to be hosted on the Port's website. It will serve as a guide for the general community. Documentation provides a basis for monitoring the health of this asset.

It also provides an opportunity to introduce the community at large about local wooden boats and the in-water maritime community.

In this country where gentrification threatens every cool place, Port Townsend's wooden boat culture stands as a bulwark against this trend. Ours is real and it's all there! Central casting cannot put pieces of wood together that can withstand the forces of nature, resist the rays of the sun, hold back the sea water from the bilge and the freshwater from the decks. That kind of craftsmanship is centuries in the making and takes years of training, apprenticeships, exchange of ideas and the opportunity to study over 100 examples in our marinas.

When I came into town 46 years ago I was greeted by the sign: "Welcome to Port Townsend, Victorian Seaport." Over the years that historical reputation has been replaced by a living one: "Port Townsend: Wooden Boat Capital of the West Coast." As the years go on, this reputation will increase as a magnet not just for tourists but for young people drawn to a desire for identity through craftsmanship.

The implications for the local economy are obvious. Our harbor full of wooden vessels and the people that care for them are an essential part of this vision. My hope is that the community will recognize this asset and celebrate it.

# Skippers

**>> Continued from page 3**

a working sailboat, common in the Northeast, that features a wide beam and shallow draft with its single unstayed mast stepped all the way forward in the bow.)

She was originally built by the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding, now located in Port Hadlock, in 2009. Its original owner, from Bainbridge Island, didn't use it much, and in fact, it was never entirely finished by the time Erik found it. He had first seen it while restoring his previous wooden boat, Kirin, a two and a half-year project.

When Kirin sold, Erik bought the Katie M in early March 2021 and hauled it to their house in Jefferson County. There, he and Alyce spent the next several weeks bringing her up to snuff. They replaced rub rails, some planking, built a new rudder and did a lot of sanding and cosmetic work. Moored just off the A Dock ramp at the Port of Port Townsend's Boat Haven, the Katie M glows today, in perfect condition.

One of her special features is a silent electronic propulsion system, installed by Erik with guidance from local marine electrician Chris Brignoli of Revision Marine.

At every step of the way, Erik said, he not only acquired experience as a skipper and boatbuilder, but became ingrained in Port Townsend's unique wooden boat community.

"I've met a lot of great people in this wooden boat community," he said, "gaining skills, and digging myself deeper into the world of wooden boats."

(Contact Left Coast Charters at [www.left-coast-charters.com](http://www.left-coast-charters.com), email [leftcoastcharters@gmail.com](mailto:leftcoastcharters@gmail.com), or call 360-215-5381.)

## Bertram Levy

Bertram Levy settled in Port Townsend 46 years ago to build a boat and sail these waters. He has since built 10 boats, notably the 5 ½-ton cutter Able and the 1 ½-ton Spitzgatter sloop Murrelet. Both vessels have been featured in the wooden boat magazine calendar.

He and his wife Bobbie have sailed their 24-foot Able to Hawaii, the Queen Charlotte Islands (Haida Gwaii) and circumnavigated Vancouver Island five times, including a trip with their daughter Madeline when she was one. He can be seen sailing on Port Townsend Bay most sunny afternoons in his varnished 19-footer Murrelet. He has also been a voice for the marina community and founded the Moorage Tenants Union.



# Two journeys cross paths in Port Townsend

By Carl Berger

Like so many of our neighbors, I was drawn to Port Townsend by saltwater and sawdust, and by the amazing wooden boats that blend those unforgettable smells into the regional culture we now call home.

My journey goes back more than 30 years when, after traveling through Port Townsend on a vacation to Olympic National Park, I discovered the Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding. I was already working with wood as a carpenter, building concrete formwork for the foundations in industrial plants. I dreamt of building something more beautiful, something other than those square, plain forms, only to be discarded after the concrete set.

So, I wrote to the school, inquiring about enrolling in their program.

In September of 1988, I received a letter from Sean Lappetito, the school's director back then, encouraging me to visit. Included with the letter was the 1989-1990 catalog, describing the school and its six-month program. At that time, tuition was \$2,880 and you could enroll at the beginning of every month. Hmm.

It didn't work out. Instead, I spent the next three decades continuing my work with concrete and steel, helping build high-tech industrial plants all over the country: Alabama, Texas, Nevada, Pennsylvania... But not Port Townsend.

## Meanwhile, in Ballard...

Meanwhile, there was another journey underway, one that started in 1944.



The fully renovated Sockeye, for almost 60 years a fishing troller, is now one of the prides of Port Townsend's wooden boat fleet, converted into a yacht. *Photo by Ron Moller*

Jacobson Brothers, boatbuilders in Ballard, Wash., were completing the construction of a new Ed Monk-designed 46-foot fishing troller. With a plumb bow, horseshoe stern and fir planking over oak frames, Hike II was launched in late March that year to start her fishing career in Alaska. Her original owners were Eric and Ellen Johnson.

Fifteen years later in 1959, Lloyd Erlandsen took possession of the boat, renaming her Lori Lu and brought her south to fish for tuna off the coast of Oregon and Washington.

The troller was rechristened again with a new name, Nestor, in 1983, when Jim and Linda Carson became the new owners. Nestor journeyed back to the salmon grounds in Alaska.

In the 1990s it was time for more than the usual year-to-year maintenance. During this time, according to survey records, the original wood bulwarks were replaced with aluminum and the planks were refastened with galvanized screws. Now 50, Nestor was ready to lower the trolling poles and continue working.

Fast forward to 2002.

Nestor was berthed in Port Townsend, awaiting the next journey when Les and Libby Schnick came looking for their next project.

The long-working troller officially retired from commercial fishing when the Schnicks took over stewardship and chose another new name, Sockeye.

This capable couple spent the next 13 years transforming Sockeye from





Les and Libby Schnick bought Nestor in 2002 and poured themselves into her complete rebuild and conversion into to pleasure boat. Here, Les is in the middle of rebuilding the pilot house.

a World War II-era fishing boat into a stately yacht. The work was never-ending. Electrical and mechanical systems were upgraded. The fish hold was removed, replaced by an aft cabin with a galley and salon. The house was rebuilt and expanded, a full pilot berth added.

### Meanwhile, on Craigslist...

Six years ago, as my wife Sarah and I were contemplating retirement, moving away from the desert southwest and someday relocating to Port Townsend, I spotted a Craigslist ad for a 46-foot wooden troller called Sockeye, moored at the Boat Haven in, of all places, Port Townsend. We made a trip up, met Les and Libby and saw Sockeye in person.

The paths cross.

It was love at first sight.

I had learned to sail on small sailboats on Lake Mead, Nev. I had never seen a boat like Sockeye, 35 tons with

a classic sheer line rising to her seaworthy bow, traditional pilot house and heavy stabilizer poles lashed to the mast, all powered by a Detroit 6-71 diesel, the engine that helped win World War II. I was amazed how Les, despite making so many changes to the troller, had maintained her traditional Pacific Northwest look and workboat feel.

Could we handle a boat like this? Would I be able to maintain it as well as everyone before me? Les and Libby spent untold hours patiently answering all our questions. After months trying to convince ourselves not to, with Sarah's blessing we bought Sockeye. We spent our first night onboard on New Year's Eve 2016.

A year later, we finally left the desert and made the move to Washington.

It's been five years now and thanks to lots of help, we're continuing to learn the lessons of wooden boat stewardship. With help from Les and a throng



Libby and Les spent 13 years loving what they renamed the Sockeye back to beauty and full function. In 2016, they presented her to the new owners, Carl Berger and Sarah Heiner.



As the Sockeye's owners, Sarah Heiner and Carl Berger continue to work on this iconic vessel, now 77 years old.

of marine trades folks at Boat Haven, Sockeye has seen three successful haul outs, navigation equipment upgrades and several plank and house wood repairs. After spending an entire career worried about plumb and level, I am now learning about sheer and camber.

I could have opted for a big, white, fiberglass boat loaded with chrome, the kind you see moored side-by-side in marinas from Seattle to Santa Monica

and South Florida.

But Sockeye was a package deal. When we bought this boat, she came with new friends, a town, a home port, and a subculture unlike any other. It was no contest. We've never looked back.

And I still have that school catalog and the letter from Sean Lappetito. I wonder....



# Thunderbird: Legacy of a family & a wooden boat

Tell Joe Daubenberger about Port Townsend's unbroken historic legacy of wooden boats and he can only laugh.

It's true that boomtown Port Townsend in the late 1800s was thick with tall-masted ships. It's also true that in the early 1900s, the Madison Street Marine Ways, owned by William McCurdy, built wooden commercial vessels near what is now the Northwest Maritime Center. But the schooners disappeared and McCurdy's boat business closed after his death in 1911.

When Joe was growing up in Port Townsend in the early 1960s, he recalled, there were exactly three sailboats moored here. Three.

This was before the likes of Dave Thompson started repairing wooden fish boats and 15 years before the renaissance of wooden boats was launched at Point Hudson in the mid-1970s.

In 1962, Joe's dad Jim Daubenberger ("Daubie"), owner of a downtown clothing store, got together with two friends – lawyer Glen Abraham and Dr. Bill Scheyer – and decided that sleek wooden sailboats called Thunderbirds would be perfect for summer family cruising in these waters. Built of marine plywood, with fin keels, flat bottoms and hard chines, the 26-foot Thunderbirds were quick yet could sleep four aboard for cruising.

"They were fast and fun to sail," said Joe.

The Thunderbird design was the result of a contest held by a plywood association won by



Joe Daubenberger stands before Dorado, the 26-foot Thunderbird that was built for his father, Jim Daubenberger, in 1962-63. It's the boat on which Joe, as a 7-year-old, first sailed. Now it's back in the family.

designer Ben Seaborn in 1958. While the three vessels for the Port Townsend families were built by a professional boat-builder in Seattle for \$2,650 each, many Thunderbirds were built by hand by competent amateurs.

Joe, 7 years old when the Thunderbird named Dorado arrived in 1963, said Wednesday evening sailing races among the Thunderbirds started almost immediately.

Glen Abraham's Thunderbird was named Caveat and Dr. Scheyer named his Zaca. Daubie and Abraham also started a sailing school, and over many years taught hundreds to sail.

Joe, now a real estate broker in Port Townsend with Miller & Ashmore Realty, recalled the start of his lifelong passion for sailing and boats from those earliest days. That included overnight family camping trips with six or seven companions spread out in tents along the shore.

Those original three Thunderbirds went their separate ways in the years that followed, as the families moved toward other boats. Today, many Thunderbirds have fiberglass hulls and metal masts. Very few if any new Thunderbirds are built from wood.

In 2007, Reto Filli, also an avid boater and married to

Joe's sister Jana, told Joe about a planned gathering in Gig Harbor to mark the 50th anniversary of the first Thunderbirds. At that event, and then at subsequent sporting events, Joe encountered a boat owner who was certain he now owned the 1962 vessel that once belonged to Daubenberger's family, the Dorado. In time, Joe was convinced this was the same boat and around 2007 he bought it, fixed it up and brought it back to Port Townsend.

Abraham's boat, Caveat, had apparently remained in Port Townsend, bought by a Port Townsend school teacher and later donated to the Northwest Maritime Center. Marge Abraham meticulously copied all of

Caveat's logbooks and turned all of that over to the NWMC.

The Zaca, once owned by Dr. Scheyer, had made its way to Eagle Harbor on Bainbridge Island, when Joe's brother spotted it for sale on Craigslist. Before long, Glen and Marge Abraham's daughter Ann, with her partner Doug Bolling, bought it and brought it home. Doug, an accomplished shipwright, went to work on a complete rebuild.

Now all three of the original Port Townsend Thunderbirds were back home. The complete homecoming, however, wouldn't come until Joe, Doug Bolling and board members of the Northwest Maritime Center



engineered a swap in 2014 that gave Zaca to the NWMC and delivered Caveat back to the Abraham family. The transfer was kept secret from Marge and Ann until an announcement was made at a Wooden Boat Festival.

Now two of the three vessels were back in the hands of their original owners.

As a result, the Thunderbird fleet in Port Townsend is thriving. In the last decade, Thunderbird-only racing has taken root, with races conducted exclusively for the Thunderbird fleet, (instead of a mixed, handicapped fleet).

On one of the finger piers of A Dock at the Port of Port Townsend's Boat Haven, more

than a dozen Thunderbirds are lined up in slips one after the other. Port Townsend's Thunderbird fleet, called Fleet 33, is the largest and fastest-growing Thunderbird fleet in the world, said Joe.

Daubenberger saluted the Port Townsend Sailing Association and Fleet 33 as responsible for the strong and thriving fleet of T-Birds in Jefferson County.

Racing Thunderbirds, Joe noted, is not about winning. It's about building a community of sailors who like to gather up together before and after races, and about welcoming younger people to the fold.

"That's what you need to do to build the fleet," said Joe.



Joe Daubenberger's Dorado, on the left, sails neck and neck with two other vessels of the Port Townsend Thunderbird fleet - Thatuna and Coco Solo - during the Classic Mariners Regatta of 2016. *Photo by Elizabeth Becker*

## An oldie but a goodie

At the center of Mark Stout's boatbuilding shop - Scow Bay Boats - in the Port of Port Townsend's Boat Haven is a huge band saw that has rattled around the Port for many, many years. It may be the largest and may be the oldest of these giant but essential wooden boatbuilding tools in Port Townsend, one of only a handful here.

The band saw stands nine feet tall from its base, sunk beneath the floor boards of Stout's busy shop. It is 40 1/2 inches from one band of the saw to the other.

Patent dates for the saw, built by Crescent Machine Co. and operated by a GE motor of the same vintage, start in 1905. It carries a stamp of the Alaska Packers Association, indicating it lived part of its life with an Alaska cannery. Stout himself spent some 20 years in Alaska.

The shipwright is not sure when this

saw was built or when it arrived in Port Townsend. But by odd coincidence, he recalls using it at the Port when it belonged to another shop some 30 years ago.

It was six years ago that Stout bought the shop that he now calls Scow Bay Boats from shipwright Arren Day, who was moving over to the Shipwrights Coop. The saw was bought separately but came with the building. When Stout fired it up, he recognized he'd used it in the late 1980s.

Among the saw's unique features are how it cuts bevels or angles. Rather than the table tilting, the saw itself tilts. The table stays flat.

It's still a fine cutter and, like other band saws, is the tool of choice for cutting large beams from any type of wood. Today, many decades after it was built, it still helps Stout build and repair wooden boats in Port Townsend.



Mark Stout uses his decades-old band saw to help repair a wooden boat.

## Did you know?

- The Wooden Boat Festival is expected to occur in person from Sept. 10-12 at the Point Hudson Marina in Port Townsend, barring a major surge in coronavirus cases. Big boats, small boats, demonstrations, presentations, stuff for sale, kids building toy boats - it should all be returning this year, according to Jake Beattie, executive director of the festival and the Northwest Maritime Center.

- The Northwest School of Wooden Boatbuilding, whose main campus is on the waterfront in Port Hadlock, has also leased part of the Nomura Building (once home to the Skookum Jump Rope company) at the Port of Port Townsend Boat Haven. Some systems classes are expected to be offered there.

- The Molo reservation system is live for Point Hudson RV and moorage slips. Guests can jump online to make their own reservations by visiting [PointHudsonMarina.com](http://PointHudsonMarina.com).





# Wooden boats are a Kelety family affair

By Jeff Kelety

Our family's 25-year love affair with wooden boats began in secret. (Well, in secret from my wife, Deborah, at any rate. The kids were all in on the game.)

Deb had left Myles, Josh and Emma with me for a little mom's holiday to help wean our daughter. "Remember," she said on her way out the door, "no junk food!" So on our first evening alone, the kids and I sat around the kitchen table eating hot dogs and jelly donuts while I read an advertisement in the Leader aloud:

"For sale: Wooden sailing dinghy. Complete with sail, motor and oars."

"Wow! What do you think, gang? The ad says 'complete'. I'm sure your mother would approve... if she were here." Such was the upshot of my reasoning as the last of the jelly donuts disappeared.

Not long thereafter the four of us ambled home with an 11-foot, home-built, Phil Bolger Car-Topper, complete with sail, motor and oars. The dinghy protruded precariously from the back of the family van as we drove back to town. There wasn't even room for the back seats to be upright. So Josh and Myles curled up in the Car-Topper pretending to be on their first voyage.

Deb arrived back in Port Townsend a few days later - surprised but not unhappy to find that she was now the owner of a wooden sailing dinghy. She came home to find the sleek Bolger design ensconced in the garage. The boat had already been sanded and made ready



The lap-strake sloop Nais caught the Kelety's eye when they walked past her on the dock in Port Townsend.

for a coat of white paint with a sea-green sheer strake.

She was immediately and gleefully christened KidStuff. But the white and green motif would never grace her winsome hull, as it turned out.

## Enter Nais

It started with one of the routine dock walks through Port Townsend's Boat Haven that Deb and I took whenever we could. On this occasion, two weeks after acquiring KidStuff, Deb and I came upon a sexy, jet-black, little lap-strake sloop elegantly set off with a rich, off-white sheer-strake. She was fitted with muted bright but potentially radiant iroko cabin sides that faired sleekly all the way to the forward hatch. The

cockpit was finished bright iroko as well with an undulating ash tiller and a lean, spruce mast sporting a fractional rig. She also sported a for-sale sign. I memorized the number.

Soon we had purchased Nais, a sturdy, elegant, 1950 Danish-built Folkboat. The very next day KidStuff's white and green paint was exchanged for cans of black and Hatteras off-white. We were now a two-wooden-boat family.

From that point on the kids grew up around sawdust, varnish, pine tar and sail cloth. They earned money scraping bottom paint and sanding bright-work. Family sails always included exceptionally good food. And then there were the marvelous Port Townsend

Wooden Boat Festivals. These were magical, mystical events concocting a spirited brew of wooden boats, lantern lights, sea chanties and kids swinging from the yard arms.

As our kids grew into adulthood their interests naturally expanded beyond the confines of Port Townsend and its wooden boats. But I am forever grateful that their young bones, sinews and minds were impacted by the sights, sounds, smells and romance of wooden boats.

## Care and feeding boats

The Bolger Car-Topper that began it all is a grand, little sailing dinghy. The boat is constructed primarily of thin, marine plywood using the stitch-and-glue method that involves piecing

the hull sections together with thin wire, epoxying the seams then layering the entire hull, inside and out with fiberglass cloth and epoxy.

KidStuff was well-used and took a bit of a beating each year. Regular off-season maintenance typically required a new coat of paint inside and out along with a few coats of varnish. Each coat of paint or varnish is preceded with a light sanding. Then any gouges are filled with epoxy and micro balloons. Rolling out the paint followed by brushing it out makes quick work.

Nais is an altogether different creature. She's an honest lap-strake boat built before the popularity of fiberglass. Each pine plank, or strake, overlaps the preceding strake. Strakes are attached to one another and to oak frames using copper rivets. There is no bedding, glue or caulking between planks; it's just the swelling of the wet wood that keeps the water - or at least most of it - out of the bilge.

Nais has all of its rich iroko cabin sides, main aft bulkhead and cockpit finished bright, which means the wood is only treated with traditional varnish.

Each year I would have Nais hauled out in the Boat Haven to refresh her black paint and miles of varnished iroko, as well as her mahogany toe and rub rails.

The Folkboat also has a canvas-covered deck that has to be meticulously maintained with yearly milky-thin coats of paint. Don't let the paint wear away exposing the raw canvas to water or you'll soon be recovering the entire deck, a very big job.



Because Nais is also a sailboat she has a mast, standing rigging and running rigging. All of these components need to be maintained. Every other year I would don my rock-climbing gear to sand and varnish the mast in place.

Sanding is done wet with towels to wipe the debris down the mast as I lowered myself like a climber descending Halfdome in Yosemite. Then I'd go back up the mast to varnish her top to bottom, repeating at least twice.

Finally there is last year's loose bottom paint to scrape off and reapply. People say to me, "That sounds like a lot of work." I gently correct, "It is a lot of time, but it's not work; it's more like art."

They furrow their brows not sure if I'm joking.

I'm not.

### From sail to power

Our current boat, Emma Rose, is a 1971 Grand Banks 32. Emma Rose is a seaworthy and comfortable trawler with a stout mahogany hull and perhaps equally important, a blessedly warm and reliable diesel heater.

You see, on the way back from BC's North Coast two years ago, Deb and I were sailing our previous boat, a 1938 Atkin Eric cutter, in the rain and the fog and the cold of Canada's Alert Bay. It was then that Deb, drenched from sitting for hours out in the exposed cockpit of our Atkin asked, "Don't you think it's time to reef?" By that she meant get a warmer boat or get a new first mate.

We purchased Emma Rose on the way back home from Alert Bay.

Emma Rose is our first power boat and a whole new world for me. While there are no longer sails, boom, mast and



Jeff Keley with Deborah and their children who have grown up around wooden boats.

halyards with which to contend, there is now a 150-horsepower turbo-charged diesel engine to learn about, as well as networked marine electronics, the diesel heater, a refrigerator, solar panels, an inflatable tender and, oh yes, miles and miles of varnished teak trim and a varnished teak deck.

All of this is in addition to its 17,000-pound displacement mahogany hull, plywood house and fly-bridge.

It sounds like a lot, but in reality it's just a number of discreet systems and components that you attend to one piece at a time. Of course there was a significant learning curve over our simple cutter, but I found all of it a unique challenge.

The care and feeding of Emma Rose naturally includes all the varnish, top-sides paint work

and bottom maintenance of any wooden boat. And like any car, its engine requires regular maintenance including changing the oil, coolant, filters and the like.

### It's not work

Does all this sound like a lot of work? Well, as with any significant endeavor, it certainly requires a commanding amount of time. But to me it doesn't seem at all like work.

It feels to me as an enormously gratifying learning experience, one that results in the soul-enriching enjoyment of a classic wooden boat. And a classic boat, I should add, that even as I write this has taken us all the way to Southeast Alaska to cruise through a mystical world of glaciers, whales, enchanting fishing towns and marvelous people.

What could be better?



Jeff Keley took the teak floor of Emma Rose to his shop to varnish them.



Put back in the main cabin, the newly varnished floor pieces gleam in the Emma Rose.



## What the Port manages



### *Point Hudson Marina*

An intimate marina surrounded by historic buildings, with 50 slips and 800 feet of linear dock. Also an RV park with 48 spots. Home of the annual Wooden Boat Festival, a haul out, marine trades, biologists, several restaurants, and a foot-passenger ferry to the San Juans.

### *Boat Haven*

Center of the marine trades in Port Townsend and the region's largest marina, home to 475 vessels. Fuel, showers, restroom, pumpout. Over 400 skilled marine trades workers employed by 60 businesses. Acres of upland storage used both by the pros and do-it-yourselfers. Three lifts carry boats up to 300 tons. Dual boat ramps.

### *Port Administration*

Port staff can help with billing questions, and with public engagement in the public decision-making by the elected Port of Port Townsend Commission.  
[www.portofpt.com](http://www.portofpt.com)

### *Jefferson Co. International Airport*

The new 3,000-foot runway is open, together with on-call Customs, full aircraft services, fuel, the renowned PT Aero Museum, and the Spruce Goose Cafe. Some 80 aircraft are home-based here.

### *Boat Launches*

The Port operates four rural boat launches. They are at Discovery Bay (Gardiner Beach Road), Port Hadlock (Lower Hadlock Road), Mats Mats Bay near Port Ludlow (Verner Avenue) and Quilcene (Linger Longer Road). There are also dual launches at the Port Townsend Boat Haven.

### *Quilcene Marina*

The Herb Beck Marina in Quilcene offers 50 slips, accommodates liveaboards and offers services such as pump out, showers and restrooms. Dry storage is available. Nearby is Coast Seafoods, operating on Port land.

## Look for the Fall-Winter Newsletter in November 2021

Published by the Port of Port Townsend, Eron Berg, Executive Director  
Content: Olympic Peninsula Communications  
Layout & Design: ROHgraphics.com  
Printing: Port Townsend Leader