

The Bristol Yacht Club MAINSHEET

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Happy New Year to all of you!

2022 ended with a bang -- or a blow, and a big one! It brought a storm surge and waves that broke over the Poppasquash Causeway (See Dave Guinther's photo below and on the last page of this newsletter.) We were fortunate to experience only minimal damage; a dozen decking planks were pulled up from the main dock. It is a good reminder that Mother Nature rules, and we must do our best to plan for the unexpected.

2023 is shaping up to be an exciting year. A list of upcoming events and regattas is posted on the club calendar, highlighted by the J/30 North Americans in August. We plan to build social activity around regattas more, so all club members can enjoy the energy and festive aspects of these events. Keep an eye out for details as the season gets closer.

Commodore's Corner



This month's volunteer shout out goes to Will Pierce for his longtime service on the Race Committee for the frostbite fleet. Will has been doing this for decades and began as an assistant to his father, who did it before him. Will's commitment is an example of everything good about the Bristol Yacht Club -- tradition, volunteerism, dedication, and family. Thank you, Will!

Happy New Year!

- Joe Whelan, Commodore



JANUARY 2023



On Friday, December 23, Winter Storm Elliott brought exceptionally high waves and a storm surge that topped Bristol Yacht Club's docks and waterfront, as well as Poppasquash Road. Happily the Club sustained only minimal damage, which has already been repaired.



It's Only A Name...

**Have you ever wondered how a particular boat acquired its name?
Peter Canzone (Commodore 2007 - 2009) gives us the answer.**

Boat: *Pearl*, 20 ft. Alerion

Owners: Max and Mary Beth Taylor

Why the name *Pearl* ??? The answer is best described in Mary Beth's own words:

"After many years of owning cruising sailboats, we decided to downsize to a daysailer, but not just any daysailer," said Mary Beth. "Because we wanted to keep the boat on a mooring, a keel was preferable to a centerboard, and we wanted a boat we could sit in, not on; we're getting too old for hiking! We also wanted a big enough boat to bring friends along but which could also be easily single-handed." Mary Beth continued "Last but not least, she had to be good-looking as well as a good performer; a big list for a small boat."

Pearl is an Alerion 20 Daysailer, manufactured right here in Warren, at TPI, and she fits the bill perfectly. She's small, white, pretty, and shiny - just like a pearl.

So now you know how the name *Pearl* was chosen for the Taylor's boat. If you have a name you would like to submit, please email me, Peter Canzone, at americanart1@aol.com.



On behalf of myself and the entire BYC staff, we were overwhelmed by the generous spirit of our members this holiday season. Thank you to all who participated!

With gratitude,

Chief Steward, Chris Healey



Backyard Boatbuilding, a Lonely Craft

by Captain Michael L. Martel

I was asked to pen an article for the *Mainsheet*, the topic being “Why do people build their own boats?” My editor probably asked me because she knows that I have built and refurbished a couple of boats myself over the years. That notwithstanding, I confess that there is no simple or easy answer; in fact, it begs the question, “Does anyone actually build their own boat anymore?” and the surprising answer is why, yes, indeed they do.

There are many reasons, actually, why someone would want to build their own boat, rather than purchase one already built. I’m not talking about commercial builders who construct multiple boats for sale, but rather the solitary, individual backyard boat builder, someone with a moderate skill level, plenty of time available, and the ability to purchase necessary tools and materials to get the job done.

A Labor of Love and Curses

It isn’t profitable, really. You end up working for perhaps 25 cents an hour (or less) by the time the project is all done, and you’ve invested plenty in hardware and materials in addition to your time.

When we talk about home-built boats, we are generally referring to small boats, power and sail, in the 8’ to 20’ range. They are usually made of wood (plywood and mahogany, for example) with fiberglass or synthetic cloth and epoxy, powered by oars, sail, or a small motor. Such boats are almost always built of new materials and usually from a set of plans. Someone might be building a boat for a son or daughter to use; at the other end of the spectrum, we might find a skilled craftsman building a one-design racing sailboat in a particular class, one that must conform to specific rules and materials in its construction to legally compete, remembering (as I do) yesterday’s Lightning and Thistle-class sailboats. Once upon a time, yacht clubs had fleets of these and other similar classes of small, fast sailboats competing in weekend races. Many were simply hard-chine designs built of plywood.

Individually home-building boats is time-consuming, difficult, and exacting work. And yet, often enough, when one is completed, it isn’t long before another begins to take shape on the same set of supports that the last one was built upon.

Why is this so?

“Passion,” explains my friend Caesar DaPonte, a local boatbuilder whose father, José, founded C&C Marine, a well-known Bristol boatbuilder. Although C&C boats are built of fiberglass, their layers of glass cloth and resin are ‘hand-laid up’, Caesar says, keeping a certain level of craftsmanship involved in the manufacture, this whereas most fiberglass boat hulls are simply ‘molded’. But you wouldn’t attempt to hand-lay a multilayer fiberglass hull in your own garage; it’s a specialized skill, Caesar explains, not typically the realm of the backyard boatbuilder, rather, a professional skill developed over time.

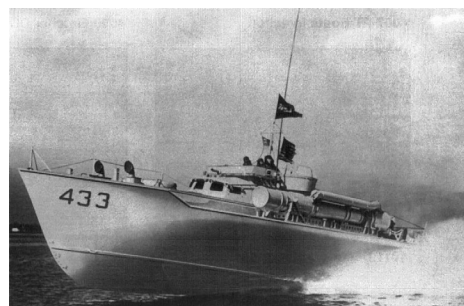
A Bristol Tradition

But arguably, the tradition of building one’s own boats can be said to have started here in Bristol, back in the 1860s when two brothers, Nathanael Greene Herreshoff and his brother, John Brown Herreshoff, began building boats for profit on the Bristol waterfront. ‘Captain Nat’ was a brilliant engineer and naval architect, ‘J.B.’, though blind, equally so, and a good businessman. They were passionate about design, speed, and the dynamics of sailing, and went on to found a dynasty of America’s Cup defenders built upon highly advanced yacht designs that were decades ahead of their time. Perhaps we can wonder if their example inspired others down



through the years to attempt to do the same thing, i.e., design and build good, even great, boats on their own.

My late grandfather Andrew Dunbar not only home-built boats, but was also part of the boatbuilding team at the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company here in Bristol during the early years of the last century. During the 1940s, while Herreshoff was building several military boats as part of the war effort, my grandfather was busy building small dinghies in the basement of his home in Warren. On one occasion there was a very heated debate between him and my grandmother as to whether or not an already-completed pram would actually fit up through the bulkhead entrance to the basement. After all, one reasons that it is probably easier to remove part of the structure of a shed than it is to remove part of a foundation. In the end, it did fit, after removal (and later replacement) of a couple of rub-rails, but after that, Grandfather was admonished to take his measurements and calculations more carefully prior to driving the first screw.



Launched in March 1944, PT-433 was one of 28 PTs built by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company in the 40s. The ships were delivered to Russia and Great Britain to become part of their fighting fleet.

Built New...or Rebuilt?



Ken Swan design, 14' sharpie, plywood and mahogany, built new.

Building a new boat from scratch (and plans) is a project. I built a 13' plywood and mahogany skiff (sharpie) from plans in my basement. It was a Ken Swan design, and I built it for my son Kevin. I barely got it out of the basement, but it lasted 25 years and has been towed, as a dinghy, all over Narragansett Bay and even to Nantucket. But it's easier to refurbish or repair an existing boat, and many who want to own and enjoy a boat follow that route. It makes sense; it's more often less costly than building new, and to an extent, easier. Every piece of damaged wood that must be replaced is in itself a template for the new plank or piece. Trace it out against a new piece of wood, cut and shape, fasten in place, and you're on your way. I learned this approach, and it made

greatest sense to me, from a past Steward at the Bristol Yacht Club many years ago and adopted it myself. As he explained, you purchase a small boat that needs repair, fix it up, enjoy it for a year, and then sell it. The money becomes 'working capital' that you use to purchase another project boat, larger perhaps, and then follow the formula until you have the boat of your dreams, each successive wreck purchased with the money from selling the previous project boat.

Following this formula, I began with a 16' abandoned Sea Skiff. Its transom was rotted, so I took a chainsaw to the last 6" of the boat and it became the world's first 15.5' Sea Skiff. I then moved on (or up?) to a 33' 1952 Richardson Cabin Cruiser, which I chose for reasons that I will describe.

How the Dream Gets Legs

Boatbuilding and wooden boat restorations quite often begin with a dream, a dream that becomes powerful and driving over time, developing, and pushing the project on well past a point where it might have sensibly ended, where the angel whispering good counsel is saying "quit now and cut your losses." But it is never the good angel that the backyard boatbuilder is listening to. I have perched on an upper rung of a ladder leaning precariously against the side of a boat in disrepair, daydreaming images of



16' runabout, lapstrake mahogany and plywood, restoration

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January and February Happenings

January and February might be the coldest months at the Bristol Yacht Club, but there is still a lot going on at the Club. Come join the fun!

New Year's Day Potluck - Today, Sunday, Jan. 1 at 12:30 - No Registration Required

Please plan to bring your favorite family recipe to our annual potluck luncheon on January 1, 2023, to share with other members.

We will have electrical outlets available for crock pots, but please bring any serving utensils required for your dish.

- Carole Mansur, Social Committee Chairperson



Soup's On Saturdays

The Soup Bar (and Chart Room) will be open Saturdays from January 7 to March 25, from 3:00 PM - 7:00 PM. Come join the Frostbiters for some warm food and friendly conversation. Everyone is welcome.

Friday Night TGIF with Appetizers

Jan. 20, 5:00 PM - 9:00 PM

Come enjoy a beverage - adult or otherwise - and some great conversation. Appetizers will be provided. No RSVP is required.

Frostbiting will resume on Saturday, January 7

To learn more contact Dave Guinther at dave.guinther@yahoo.com.



2023 Cruise Planning

Join in the planning process for the various 2023 BYC cruises at Cruise Committee meetings on Jan. 11 and Feb. 8, from 6:30 - 8:00 PM, or at the Feb. 10 TGIF. Please contact Steve Barron to learn more or volunteer to help at sbarron0724@yahoo.com



Saturday, February 4, sponsored by the Social Committee.

Look for more details in the February *Mainsheet* and weekly emails closer to the date.

Join the House Committee at a Bring-Your-Own-Dinner TGIF on February 10. No RSVP is required. Look for more details in the *Mainsheet* and weekly emails.

Friday Night TGIF with Bring Your Own Dinner





EBSF/BYC Relationship Meeting

All BYC Members and interested parties are invited to a follow-up meeting dedicated to the 2021 BYC/EBSF Focus Group on Tuesday, January 31, at 6:30 pm at the Club and via Zoom. This meeting will present the progress that has been made on implementing recommendations from the Focus Group's report. There will be ample time for discussion and Q&A. If you have any questions, please contact me at pwredman@gmail.com.

- Paul Redman, Vice Commodore



Many thanks to Dockmaster Pete Turenne and Chris Healey for installing new shelving in the kitchen pantry to improve space usage for all groups using the smallest room in the House! And to Pat Grimo and Tom Ferreira for re-roofing the outdoor bathrooms.

- Jane Guinther, House Committee Chairperson



BYC Member Nametags

Nametags are a great way for members to get to know each other at BYC events. With this in mind, starting in 2023, BYC members can purchase a high-quality reusable magnetic nametag featuring their name and the Club burgee. By default, the 2023 BYC Membership Invoice (which everyone should have received or will receive shortly) includes an \$8 fee to cover nametags for all the adults in each membership family.

If you would like to opt out of purchasing nametags, use the check box at the bottom of your 2023 BYC Membership Invoice form. Also, if you want your nametag to use a nickname, please update your first name on the invoice.

You will be able to pick up your nametags this spring at any of several events at the Clubhouse. Finally, if for any reason you are unable to wear a magnetic nametag, please let me know. I will work with you to make alternate arrangements.

- Carole Mansur, Social Committee Chairperson



A Preview of the Year to Come at BYC

Welcome to 2023! Despite the fact that we are just a few days into the new year, organizers and volunteers from across the Club have already planned a full program of social events, races, kids activities, cruises, and instructional programs for the 2023 season. Additionally, dates for the Club's official events, including Commissioning, Decommissioning, and the Annual meeting, have been finalized. Below, several Committee Chairs share highlights of the year to come.

Cruise Committee

Attention, everyone interested in summer cruising: The cruising committee is organizing more cruising for 2023 than ever before. We will start with a Memorial Day cruise to the East Greenwich Yacht Club. Then we will do our annual cruise to Rhode Island Yacht Club (RIYC) for Gaspee Days in June. We will walk to town for the parade, then attend a fantastic dinner party with live music hosted by the RIYC. We have tentative plans for a late June cruise to Newport.

In July, our week long cruise will travel west to Coecles Harbor on Long Island with stops at Pt. Judith and Stonington. We will stop at Three Mile Harbor, Block Island, and Dutch Harbor on the way home.

BYC 2023 Cruises

Gaspee Days Cruise, 6/9-6/11

Late June Cruise, 6/24-6/25

Summer Cruise, 7/15-7/23

Maine Cruise, 7/29-8/19

In Bay Cruise, 8/5-8/12

Labor Day Cruise, 9/2-9/4

New: 2023 BYC Calendars

There are now two comprehensive 2023 BYC event calendars - a printable PDF calendar and the calendar on the website. Please use these go-to resources to stay informed on what's happening at the Club and as you begin to make your summer 2023 plans.

On-line calendar - [link](#)
Printable calendar - [link](#)

In August, we have two big cruises planned. For long-range cruisers, we will do another 3-week trip to Maine. The ports are still being planned. And in response to the demand for short-range cruising, we plan a Narragansett in-bay week long cruise with overnights in Wickford, Newport, Dutch, East Greenwich, and the Kickemuit.

Rounding out the summer, we are planning a Labor Day cruise to Quonset Davisville Navy Yacht Club. Our final cruise of the season will be in September, with the specific date and destination still TBD.

We need volunteers to be port captains to help with organizing

moorings and shore activities. For questions, contact Steve Barron at sbarron0724@yahoo.com.

Instructional Committee

East Bay Sailing Foundation's youth sailing classes open for enrollment this month and adult sailing will open next month. Because sailing is among the most complicated sports, we strongly encourage you to enroll in four weeks or more of instruction, whether for yourself or your child. This gives more time to make friends and time to reinforce learning.

You may notice we are simplifying our youth classes into Beginner, Intermediate, Adventure, and Race. We generally recommend this progression also, although some people will stick with Adventure and never do much racing, while others might skip Adventure and choose Racing instead. Foiling classes will be open to anyone with athleticism and intermediate sailing skills.

For details or to register, visit www.eastbaysailingfoundation.org





Social Committee

The BYC Social Committee provides opportunities for members to gather and get to know each other in a relaxed, friendly setting. To that end, the Committee plans various social activities and events, including casual and formal events. The events are intended to cultivate friendship and fellowship among club members and inspire a sense of pride and passion in the Club.

Some favorite casual events include barbecues, the ever-popular Beer, Burgers, and Blues event, the Clam Boil, and themed dinners such as our recent Murder Mystery Dinner. For those interested in regattas, we have a sub-committee to help plan land-based race activities. More formal events organized by the Committee are the Harvest Ball and the Commodores Ball on alternate years.

Your BYC Social Committee plans and organizes Club wide events that appeal to all members. We encourage and promote volunteerism to help plan events and activities. If you wish to help plan Club social events, don't hesitate to contact the Social Committee Chair, Carole Mansur, at 704-953-8360 or by email at cmansur785@gmail.com.

House Committee

What does your House Committee have simmering for the New Year: Something for everyone!

Join our Soup Bar Saturdays this winter for a spirited, warm drink and maybe a fiddler or two. Stay tuned for monthly winter TGIF appetizers, a BYO Dinner, and Beer tasting. These are "no reservations required" events.

In the Spring, we'll continue our speaker/dinner series when our members return from many ports of call. Maybe we'll do a movie night or a field trip to the Save the Bay Aquarium, picnics, or a gold star cocktail format. We welcome your ideas.

Our Ship's Store team will continue offering nautical items for all seasons with live pop-ups and convenient website shopping.

Please visit our updated rental website with detailed information and pictures to plan your next corporate, family, or special event. Rental availability on the winter calendar is wide open!

Neptune's Beach Bar Coffee Shop will return for a third season serving up smiles and showcasing the brilliance of Saturday mornings seaside. Several new members began their BYC journey by meeting, greeting, and serving at this perfect Done-in-a-Day volunteer opportunity. All this doesn't happen without YOU!! Every season we're stimulated, refreshed, and warmed in our House by the Shore.



On December 29, members were emailed bills for 2023 dues and fees. (Those requesting hard copy bills via mail will get them shortly.) If you have not received your bill or if you have questions, email steward@bristolyc.com.

To avoid a 10-percent late fee, payment must be received by January 31. Thank You!



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the boat slicing through the lovely sun-dappled waters of Narragansett Bay, all the while hacking away at a piece of rotten planking with a firmer chisel and mallet. The daydream fuels and drives the project; it is a means to an end.



33' Richardson cabin cruiser, 1951, restoration

I don't know why I chose an old 1952 cabin cruiser, probably because it was similar to the types of boats that my grandfather owned in his later years. Once, having traveled to Newport, R.I. for the Folk Festival in my 15.5-foot Sea Skiff, and having a rough ride of it on a blustery day, I saw a big old wooden cabin cruiser anchored inshore with a group of friends aboard having a party and listening to the festival. It had an aft cockpit deck, certainly a head or toilet down below, bunks, a cooler for beer, and chairs on the little deck. A door that one could literally walk through led from the aft deck into the main cabin, where there was probably food as well. Its age and state of partial disrepair were evident. The people aboard were sitting in their folding chairs in the aft cockpit, laughing and drinking, and having a good time. That's what I want, I told myself, a boat like that, and eventually, that's what I found, rebuilt, and launched.

I even removed her engines, twin 1951 Chrysler Crown flathead-6 cylinder gasoline engines, and towed them in a U-Haul trailer over the Berkshires to Buffalo, NY to be rebuilt by a specialist, then back in a lake-effect blizzard. But that is in itself another story. One does these things, like driving through blizzards with engines in tow, not because one has to, but because one wants to. That is the life of the backyard boatbuilder!

There have been two more projects since then; a fiberglass Gulfstar 44 center-cockpit sloop, and a 1930 Alden gaff yawl, 44' long, a major project that took 8 years to complete. But those are stories in themselves that could be the basis, indeed, for a book.



44' Gulfstar Hirsch sloop, ca. 1986, fiberglass, restoration

Strategies and Wisdom

Much is learned by doing, and the wise man pays a skilled professional, such as a marine electrician, for example, to do what he or she cannot do safely or competently. In the end, the more of the work that you farm out to professionals, however, the more the project costs, to the point where you may not be able to complete the project. No one can be master of all trades, and one is bound to make mistakes; I made many but

grew better at what I was doing. The more I did myself, the more I studied, and the more that I listened to more knowledgeable people than I, the better my work became. The fellow to whom I sold my Richardson attempted some electrical re-wiring on his own and almost set the boat on fire. He could have called me, but I had done a few things haphazardly as well; and thus, it would have been a case of the blind leading the blind.



40' Alden gaff yawl, 1931, restoration

All of the boats I have worked on excepting the Gulfstar were wooden, and when I was finished with each restoration, I had a sturdy boat. Although I had made mistakes along the way, none were serious enough to cause me to get wet. What I liked about this fixer-upper approach, which ultimately involved more than 20 years of my time and effort, was the learning process involved in the repair and rebuilding of these boats.

Building a Toolbox Inventory

Equally as important as basic woodworking instincts and developing skills are quality tools, hand tools as well as power tools. All tools cost money, of course, and when I was first married and our children were young, I had no money, at least none to spare on



Cape Cod Catboat, ca. 1935, restoration

hobbies and woodworking. So we made it a point to spend some time on the weekends scouring flea markets and yard sales. I often found quality old tools such as Witherby chisels for cheap money, and they were of better metal and higher quality than costly new ones in the hardware stores. I invested in a sharpening stone system, a water wheel. A friend of mine, Paul, had an equally ingenious system for stuffing his tool chest. At the time, Sears & Roebuck had a policy of free replacement of any Craftsman hand tool that was broken or chipped. Paul would snap up broken Craftsman screwdrivers at the flea markets for pennies. “Are you sure you want that?” the seller would ask. “It’s chipped.” “No problem,” Paul would answer, and settle for paying 25 cents for it. Later in the week he would drive to the Sears store locally and trade the tool for a brand-

new screwdriver worth considerably more. This is how we built our tool inventories so that we could fix up boats. Eventually old worn out power tools such as sanders and drills gave way to new tools and well-stocked workshops.

Getting older does find one slowing down a bit. What used to take only 5 times longer than expected to, say, replace a plank, now requires nearly double that time for the backyard boatbuilder. But the dream never fades. A couple of years ago, during a February storm with hurricane-force winds, my antique gaff yawl was knocked over by another boat in the boatyard where it was being stored, and after inspection, was deemed a total loss. Her proud old wooden hull was wracked; only a total rebuild would work. It was a fitting end, perhaps, better than sinking, or burning, and this time I could not save her. Insurance paid me more than I could have obtained by selling her. It could be argued that she had become too much for me to sail by myself; too large, too many lines to pull on, too many sails (4) to tend alone if the wind came up. So she was broken up and I salvaged what I could.

Anna Mary: The Last Project?

I was not to be without a boat, however, but for a short time. While searching for a replacement, I happened upon an advertisement for a 1929 32’ powerboat in much need of repair, and after bargaining with the owner, purchased her and brought her home to my backyard. Here I was, starting all over again with a wooden hull and a box of screws. Old wooden boat romantics like me are hopeless; we will cease our efforts when we die. I re-named the boat Anna Mary after our first grandchild; work has begun, albeit at a slower pace than in former years, to repair her and restore her, and there is much to do. But I recall the words of Captain Joshua Slocum, when he began rebuilding the wreck of the derelict 36’ oyster dredge SPRAY, which he later, in 1895, went on to circumnavigate the globe in. To onlookers, rebuilding this tired, derelict boat in a front yard in Fairhaven was a futile waste of effort. “But will it pay?” they asked Slocum. “I replied that I would make it pay,” Slocum says, and tells us that “I had something to show for every day of my work.” Which, ultimately, is the very best that a backyard boatbuilder can hope for.



32’ Crosby motor cruiser, 1929



About the Author:

Mike Martel has been a BYC member on and off since the 1970s. He and his wife Denise became Senior Members in the early 1990s when they moved to Bristol. He has owned, he reckons, a total of 7 boats, including a canoe, one skiff built from plans, and the rest fixer-uppers. His current project, a 1929 32’ Crosby motorboat, Anna Mary, named for his first granddaughter, is in the process of being restored in his backyard, launch date TBD. “I wouldn’t want a new boat,” he says, “Because I wouldn’t know what the H_11 to do with it.”



Winter Storm Elliott Impacting Bristol Harbor on Friday, December 23 at 8:00 AM

(Photographer: Dave Guinther)



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The BYC Mainsheet is published monthly. Club members are encouraged to submit story suggestions and photos by emailing byccomms@gmail.com. Editor: Barbara Petrocelli.