

BOATS

in

MY BLOOD!

H O W A R D J O H N S O N

Contents

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First Edition

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Preface

Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for your interest in my life adventures! People began telling me to write a book when I told them how I was invited to move to Sint Maarten, Netherlands Antilles, to build our forty-seven-foot catamaran sailboat and how we sailed home with the Tall Ships in Op Sail '76. As I remembered and recounted the stories of my life, I was shocked at how many and what a great variety there were and how much I took for granted or had forgotten. Extensive study has shown that my life began years before my birth when my parents found each other and fell in love sometime around high school graduation in 1933. They were a darling couple, both from families with an interesting history and background story, not like many other people.



Margaret Proctor Rodgers Johnson and Howard Percival Johnson

Acknowledgments

Many thanks to David Yarashus and Cheryl Johnson for all their help, without which I would not have been able to do all this. I am looking forward to sharing *part 2*, the latter half, of fifty years of my life! I want to encourage you to also do research on your life and write the story because I have been surprised about how much I found out or learned about *my* life, and this has been a very rewarding experience.

My Parents

Her father was Henry Proctor Rodgers. They always stipulated the *d* because it was different, and *they* were different. Henry was a Baltimore Polytechnic Institute steam engineering professor in the forties and fifties. I did not know him when I was young because I was raised by Emma Johnson and Olga Trout for six years while I was still learning how to swim. My parents went on the boat most every weekend, and my grandmother and her sister loved having a child to play with again. Both lived in row house neighborhoods where we visited their friends all the time. So they taught me everything about our families, my parents and cousins, and those that they all knew and how to behave—manners, relationships, and being polite. My mother sometimes said that they would fight over me, who gets him this weekend, and they tried to outdo each other with a big dinner where we would all sit around the huge table in the kitchen and pass the plates of delicious food and then go in the living room and watch the *Jackie Gleason Show* and *Ed Sullivan Show*, applaud the performances, and my mother would smoke. We had wonderful times!

Mount Washington, Baltimore Suburb

By working together, my parents were able to buy a newer home in a cotton milling factory village on the outskirts of north Baltimore before the war. Early pictures show them together before any of the trees and shrubs have grown. The village was designed in the 1800s outside the city with Jones Falls as the power supply for the mill in a hilly area with Western Run, a tributary flowing through many of them. When I came along, the mill was gone, but most of the original structures of homes, schools, and churches were still there, all with distinctive Victorian designs on steep hills with lots of bridges and wooded scenery. All the designs were unique, unusual, and unrelated. What a wonderful place to grow up, playing in the stream or under bridges and in woods.



I walked to school every day for six years. Sunday, the family walked to church, weather permitting. We knew many of the neighbors from card clubs, churches and the Casino, activities. Everyone was friendly and safe, so I could just go out at six or so, walk around the neighborhood until I met someone or found something to do. The Cross family across the street would invite me in; also Billy and Elwood Glaser, next door; and down the street on our side was Peggy (my babysitter), Robert, and Jay Roman, who went to the Catholic church. We were Episcopal and went to St. John's Church near the Casino, and there was a Methodist church where we went for Scouting.



I walked down Fairbank Road and turned on Lochlea to cross Kelly Avenue and go up the other side to Elementary School #221, made of granite.



It was two halves of classrooms with halls connecting both halves. Most every building had foundations made of stone, the major constituent of the earth everywhere, making gardening a challenge. The teachers and principal all were there every day and disciplined and taught us in a very personal way. I was ADHD (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), but in those days, that was not known; so in those days, I was a retarded child, good at art and reading but hopeless at math and memorization or holding still. I volunteered for Trash Can Patrol because I could get out of class and collect the cans from several classrooms and take them down to the basement where I dumped them, became friends with the janitor, saw the furnace for the school, and then returned the cans. The teachers told me that they wanted *their* can, *not* someone else's, so I had to keep track. I had plenty of friends, and many I knew right up to high school.



1808 Sulgrave Ave., known locally as the "Octagon House".
Photo by Norman Laker, Jr.

Across the street was the Walker's octagon house, thought to enhance the family's health by facing all directions. Hammy, Priscilla, and Steevie were my friends and went to our church—St. John's—a block

away. Somehow, I found out that Hammy liked model airplanes. *My* father taught me how to buy and assemble balsa airplanes. I became good at flying them on the hill and field belonging to the school and next to their house. Gradually, we were allowed to fly the planes from the upper windows of their fourth floor, out onto the school field. Then they gave us tables and chairs for the fifth floor where we could make bigger planes from kits. You would be amazed at the flights we got and how we became experts at making light, strong, neatly built models that flew well. Ham was older, and at sixteen, he would take me to nearby free flight and windup rubber band model meets.

All around the neighborhoods were great places to play. Many involved Western Run and the bridges over the water. Stones were everywhere, and skipping stones, wading, and hide-and-seek were all popular. We could make all sorts of echo noises in the concrete bridge environment. Our activities were not restricted, so the whole village was open for exploration and fun. We became known to grown-ups everywhere and went in the stores, even bars, for trick-or-treat.

Since I had polio as a child, I had a short foot and leg, was not good at sports, but hills were everywhere, and I could fix wagons and bikes, so coasting downhill was a big treat. I even made go-karts out of wagon wheels and two-by-fours that were faster and harder to turn over. Back then, it snowed five times a year; we got to be out all day, on fabulous hills, getting soaked, and never going home until dark. The Walkers and Romans always gave us sandwiches.

All the parents liked going to the Casino across the street from St. John's Church. They had regular card games, women's club meetings, and orchestra dances. My mother made me take dancing lessons there. My father insisted I always introduce myself by saying my name first thing and "Nice to meet you." We had to walk across the dance floor when the music came on and choose a girl, say our name, and "May I have this dance?" Mostly, we did the box step, so it was slow dancing with some swing, fun, and there was a break for refreshments in the middle. I got so I was good in social situations and the skills have stayed with me all my life.

We knew many of the people who worked in most every store, the A & P, the drugstore, post office, the library, and the churches.



"Say your name, say theirs, and shake their hand" was the rule. They kept little treats for the kids.



I particularly liked going to the library because we borrowed books for my parents and me. Mother would help me choose them and make sure I was careful with them. We read together, and my mother would make me read to her. I particularly liked short stories because I could often read one completely aloud to her before bed. I still have a few in our tractor trailer truck body library we built to house our family collection. This background made me collect and care for books, all my life, and it is still fun to find one I haven't read or say hello to the ones I *have!* Details and pictures of Mount Washington, thanks to a 1980 book by Mark Miller, published by GBS Publishers, a division of Gordon's Booksellers, W. R. Grace, MD 21292, ISBN 0-939928-00-0.

Fairbank Road that we lived on was a dead end, and after our house were huge woods where everyone played. I had the Crosses, Johnny and Holly, across the street, with Billy and Elwood next to them, and down the street, the Romans with Jay, Robert, and Peggy. So plenty of kids to play in the level end of the street in front of our house. Peggy was older and could babysit me along with her neighbor Bonnie Bonnykemper. Our property was big enough for great hide-and-seek games, with a steep hill leading to a stream in the back where we could wade or skip stones.

It gradually came out that I was ADD or ADHD before those terms were used. They just said that I was retarded because I talked all the time, never shut up, and never held still either. My father's family took care of me in their row houses near each other where my father grew up with his parents, Emma and John Abrams Johnson. It was the end house, brick with marble steps and railings on the front porch and on the alley, so they had windows in the hallway and bedrooms where the others had none.

My mother grew up in an individual brick home with brother, Buddy, and sister, Mary Jane. They each married along the way, so I had four nice cousins. Holly (my age) and Carol and Dale and Scott were younger and lived near our summer home, bought in 1954, after they sold the *Leda*—my grandfather's boat. Where we lived was near where Don and Mary Jane, my aunt, lived. We would stop by and find both parents passed out and the children crying with dirty diapers! So, for years, we were regulars at taking care of my cousins. Grandfather Henry gave Don a job at HP Rodgers Inc., selling equipment and made him stop drinking.

When I was young, I saw little of my mother's father. There were very few visits to the home where my mother grew up because he had married this nasty woman from Germany, and no one in our family could stand her and stayed away. She may have been nice at first and gradually became more and more selfish and mean. He was always busy before he started H. P. Rodgers Inc., a company selling electrical generation equipment.

Later, he had me, at sixteen, organize the brochures, and I *had* to get to know them all, and I *did*! So, beside his office on Twenty-Fifth Street where I was on his payroll, he had taught mechanical and steam engineering every day when my father was going to Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. In 1933, Henry was the last steam engineering teacher in the thirties. He was retired when I was going to Poly in the sixties, but some of my teachers remembered him. My father told me that steam engineering had become obsolete by then. Later in life, I learned that my father's grandfather had built a steamboat for the Union Forces in the Civil War!

The City of Baltimore confronted me every day of my life because we had to go in there, every day, all the time. We lived in Mount Washington, a small but prestigious Victorian suburb, at the end of the street-car line, when I was a child, and later the turnaround for the bus was there—the loop. Clustered all around were Crawmer's, the candy store and soda shop, the drugstore, and next to that was the A and P grocery store, and down the end of that road, a main line of train tracks that went under the Kelly Avenue Bridge, so everything was clustered right around close, and I could easily walk home from there.

Across the street was St. John's Church and the Casino. Sulgrave Avenue, #221 Mount Washington Elementary was my elementary school for six years. Then it was #233 Roland Park, Roland Avenue and Deepdene Road; and then Baltimore Polytechnic, North Avenue and Calvert Street, way down Falls Road, into the city. So I was no stranger to using city busses to get to school.

Elementary School

I had walked to elementary school at Mount Washington #221 all six years.



Walking through our neighborhood was always an adventure because I knew everyone and they all knew me because my parents had lived there all through the forties and were going to church, the club, and having parties of all kinds, and played cards with many neighbors. The war effort brought them all together by collecting things. They had charity drives of many kinds to help wounded soldiers. One neighbor lady liked baking and would come out as I was going by with cookies or a piece of pie wrapped up. On the way home, some would call me over with a book for my parents to read. We lived in a wonderful community, Mount Washington in North Baltimore. It was generally known as a great place around the city because many people ran businesses known around the city and thought we were rich.

Then in Seventh Grade

I rode the #10 bus to Roland Park Junior High School for three years for seventh, eighth, and ninth grade. I had to walk up beautiful residential Deepdene Road to get there. People all along took great pride in their older homes with gardens and flowers. I got to walk along these neighborhoods for three years of junior high, a super enjoyable part of life. Then to get to Polytechnic, I had to stay on the bus until I got to North Avenue and walk eight blocks along North Avenue in front of shops of all kinds. It was about 1958 when they raised the price of the bus from a dime to a quarter!



My favorite place was North Avenue Market, a large building where a great variety of vendors had stalls all around the inside of the building. If I was early for school, I could walk all around the friendly vendors, looking at food, shoes, hardware, and all kinds of flea market items for sale. So I also walked all over the city as a kid. I walked to Twenty-Fifth Street, north of Poly to HP Rodgers Inc., even if my grandfather wasn't there. His secretary liked me and would make me a sandwich in their lunch area or tell me about her family; she was young and very pretty. They always had work for me to do after school. After two years there, I had walked all over Baltimore because sometimes I would walk all the way down to my father's place in the inner harbor and get a ride home with him. I knew his secretaries as well and most all the employees because we spent two or three hours there every Friday, waiting for Dad to be able to leave for the boat. Most of all, I loved our city!

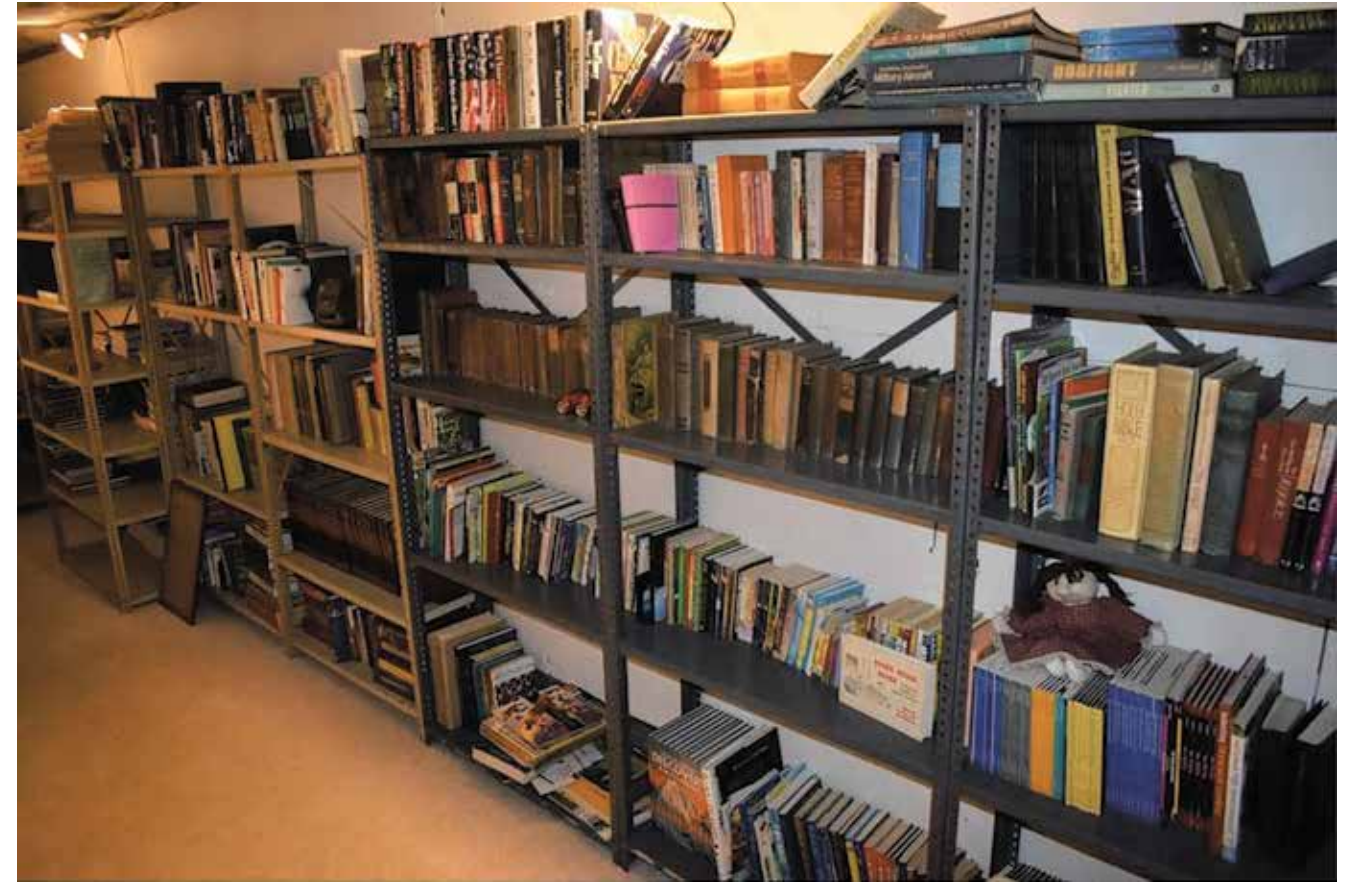
Realizations from Writing This Book!

My mother, Margaret Proctor Rodgers Johnson, began taking and mounting pictures for me, long before I was born, but her records show the underlying aspects of my life of love and boat adventures that are still important to me seventy-seven years later; actually, they were due to years of wonderful family influence and training. My parents demanded that I learn everything they knew by doing it with them. We worked together daily on a huge variety of projects constantly going on. We maintained the boats and our home and the garden. We welded up the iron railing for the patio on top of the two-car garage, painted everything we owned together, mixed cement, built walls with block and brick, repaired bicycles, maintained our two cars, repaired windows, and on and on until I had assisted them with each and every project that we took on all the sixteen years of growing up with them.

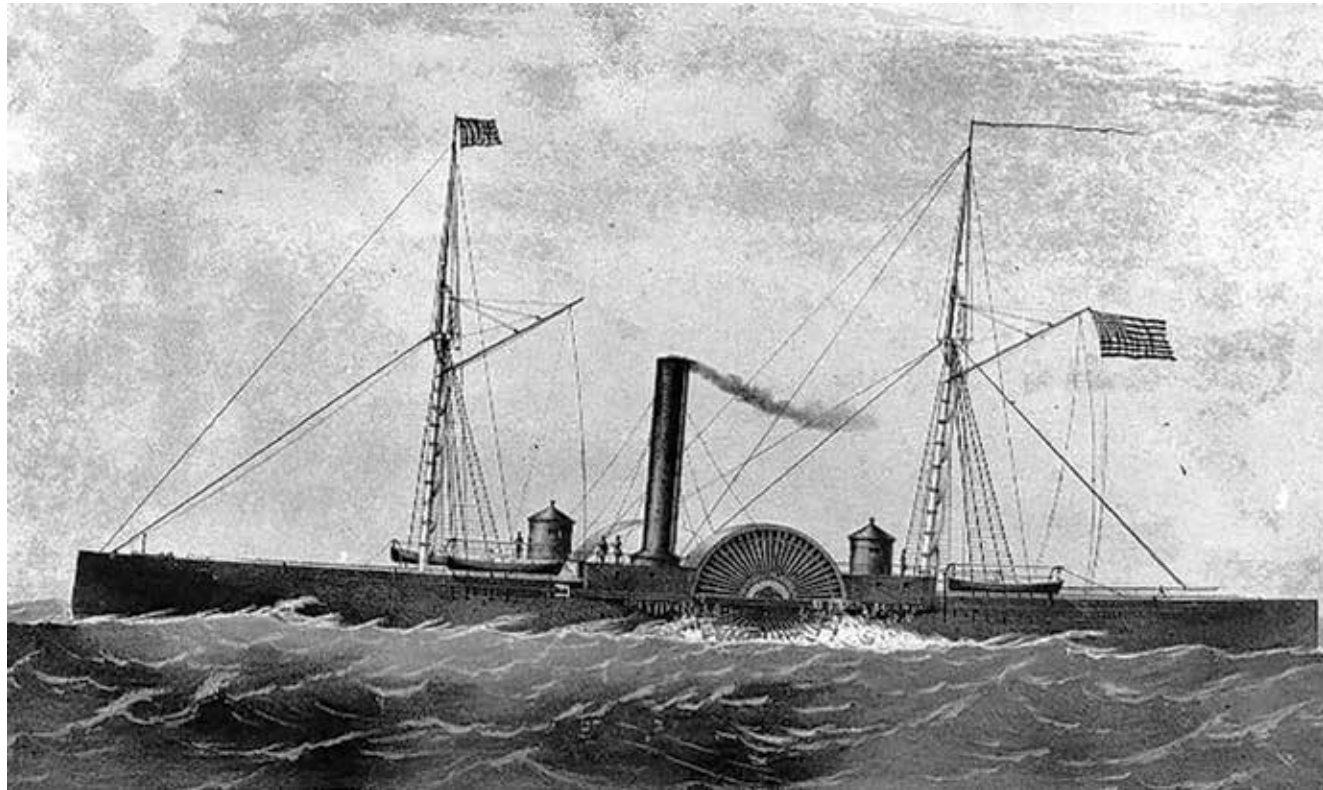
So my parents taught me to volunteer with adults in doing things, even if it was sweeping up or moving the trash cans out. The neighbors all employed me to take care of their animals, when they went away, because we had two dogs and hamsters and a parakeet, all well cared for, plus I was responsible, good at using the phone, or keeping track of things. I would make money by raking leaves and shoveling snow. If they were changing shingles, I would fill and dump the wheelbarrows. I helped my friends' families with repairing things because I had taken so many things apart *and* put them completely back together again. I was great at building things out of Erector Set and was given a huge one in a cardboard box. So I gained many skills and enjoyed great TV programs! Two coats of varnish and one of semigloss, and we had a *new* dining table! We glued all six chairs, too, and my mother and I cut and tacked on new upholstery to each seat at age ten!



So as a kid, my parents taught me furniture restoration, how to care for the books in my parents' library, which I still have! My mother said, "Now that I have taught you to read, I want YOU to read these books TO ME." So she picked out Rudyard Kipling and all sorts of other ones that we still have. We discussed each story, and my mother said, "Explain what it *means!*" So I became an avid reader of everything I could get my hands on to the point that we built a library into a tractor trailer truck body with lights and music; so we just went down and looked everything over again and saw my life *in books!*



My father's father was *John Abrahams Johnson*, and we always had a lithograph of the steam engine paddlewheel gunboat, *USS Eutaw*, built by J. J. Abrahams Shipyard in Baltimore. I looked it up. To my amazement, I found several articles and then realized that the book I found in my father's papers was about another Abrahams relative that owned his own ship and loaded it with things to sell in England, many times. The book details the story of the time his ship popped a plank and began leaking so badly his men could not stay ahead of the leak with pumping, and he prayed to God to be saved when, suddenly, a ship appeared on the horizon and altered their direction and picked them up minutes before their whole ship disappeared below the waves! See the written story toward the end of this book. How that Abrahams was related to J. J. Abrahams that built the gunboat in his shipyard is not clear but perhaps a generation earlier. My father's family had a much more interesting history than I ever knew! But the J. J. Abrahams Shipyard built this gunboat in just ninety days for the Civil War!



Ever since I was a child, this picture was on the dining room wall. My father told me that it was a steamship built by our grandfather's company, J. J. Abrahams Shipbuilding, for the Civil War in 1863. They used it to blockade the Potomac River and helped prevent the destruction of Washington DC. It was involved in several other big operations; they helped the North win the War; it was used until 1867. My father said that paddlewheel and steam were both obsolete by then because it took so long to build up a head of steam, and they were very slow to maneuver because of the paddle wheels being used for steering, perhaps reversing on one side. But these ships needed to be built in ninety days because the Civil War was so sudden, and this design was available immediately. So shipbuilding is in my family!

Both ladies who took care of me, from one to five years old, were my grandmother, John Abrahams Johnson's wife, and her half-sister, Olga Trout. They both loved little kids and had fun teaching me my early lessons. My grandmother loved everyone, and we visited all her neighbors and friends and family. So *welcome*, and thank you for joining me for Howard Johnson, *boats in his blood, a wonderful life*.

I am writing this book because of several amazing things. My mother, who loved smoking Raleigh cork-tipped cigarettes, was diagnosed with lymphatic cancer in the summer of '61 and was taking a treatment on December 8, when she died suddenly, and I did not get to say goodbye. Within a few days, I began to think that *she* and God were making all these adventures and opportunities happen for me, all my life!

Childhood

I was born in 1945 because my father's employment at Edgewood Arsenal ended in February 1945. He told my mother that this is a good time to have a child. It turned out that being a *war baby*, instead of a baby boomer, put me in a smaller crowd all my life because I was just slightly older than the larger numbers of children right behind me. Kindergarten was fun because they were glad to have children to get started with after the war. Soon they were swamped with many children all the soldiers were glad to have with their darling wives, nine months to years later. The war brought on severe loneliness with most all soldiers all over the world. I was lucky that my parents were home and had many friends that did visit in the years while I was growing up and told the stories about the War. To this day, seventy-six years later, I am still reading the details of the fighting in WWII all over the world.

Weekend Boating

My parents loved boating, bought used wooden day cruisers in the WWII era, and we would go to the boatyard often.



My mother would load all the stuff needed for fishing, swimming, eating, and sleeping on board and then drive to my father's business in Baltimore near the harbor and type letters while waiting for him to leave. My first five years, she would drop me off at the house of my grandmother Emma, my father's mother's, or my father's aunt Olga's place, both fun and wonderful to me while my folks were on the Severn River, boating. This is where I played most weekends for the first five years of my life, Chauncey Avenue, where my father grew up!



John Abrahams Johnson and Emma Kaufman Johnson, half cousin of Olga Kaufman Trout

Polio

I learned to swim at five, but in 1951, I was six and came down with *infantile paralysis* (polio) from the local swimming pool. The neighbors usually hardly cared enough about me to say hello! But they visited me to say goodbye. When I asked my mother, she told me that they all thought I was going to die. When I recovered, I ended up with a short foot and a smaller calf on my right leg and a loss of coordination where I could not run, catch, or throw; hence, no sports for me.

Sports

When we would play baseball, the neighborhood children would say, “Ah, Johnson, we don’t want you—you’re no good!” Boy, that always hurt, but I could never get hits or outrun any other players or throw the ball exactly to another player! No matter what it was, I would always *miss*, despite my desire to be just as good as *them!*

Bikes

So I would always ride my bike past a game. Sometimes, some of them would wave but not with much enthusiasm. My parents had lots of friends, and my father ran a truck repair business. His partner and the important workers would come by, and one of them showed me how to clip baseball cards to the fender supports on my bike with spring-loaded clothespins. My mother only had the cheap wood clothespins.

Next time, this guy *brought me eight* spring-loaded *clothespins—extra valuable*—and they sounded like a real motorbike! The next baseball game, I went riding by the playground, and when they heard my bike, they all yelled for me to stop and came and gathered around my bike and wanted to fix up their bikes like *that!* Boy, I felt much better after that, and they all wanted to know how I found out! Best of all were long balloons, half blown up, so the ends could be tied, and they hit the spokes, sounding like a *real* motorcycle!

So I was no good at basketball, lacrosse, catch, football, *but* I lived near large woods in Mount Washington, North Baltimore, and we played hide-and-seek, and cowboys and Indians there with roads and trails and great hiding places. I was good at *lots* of other things like painting and carving, working on models, putting up trains, and fixing things of all kinds. In an effort to keep me away from his workbench, my father gave me my own workbench and some tools, but he had the *best* tools, so I ignored his warnings to stay away, starting a hatred for me that lasted all my life. He used to say, “You little rat!”

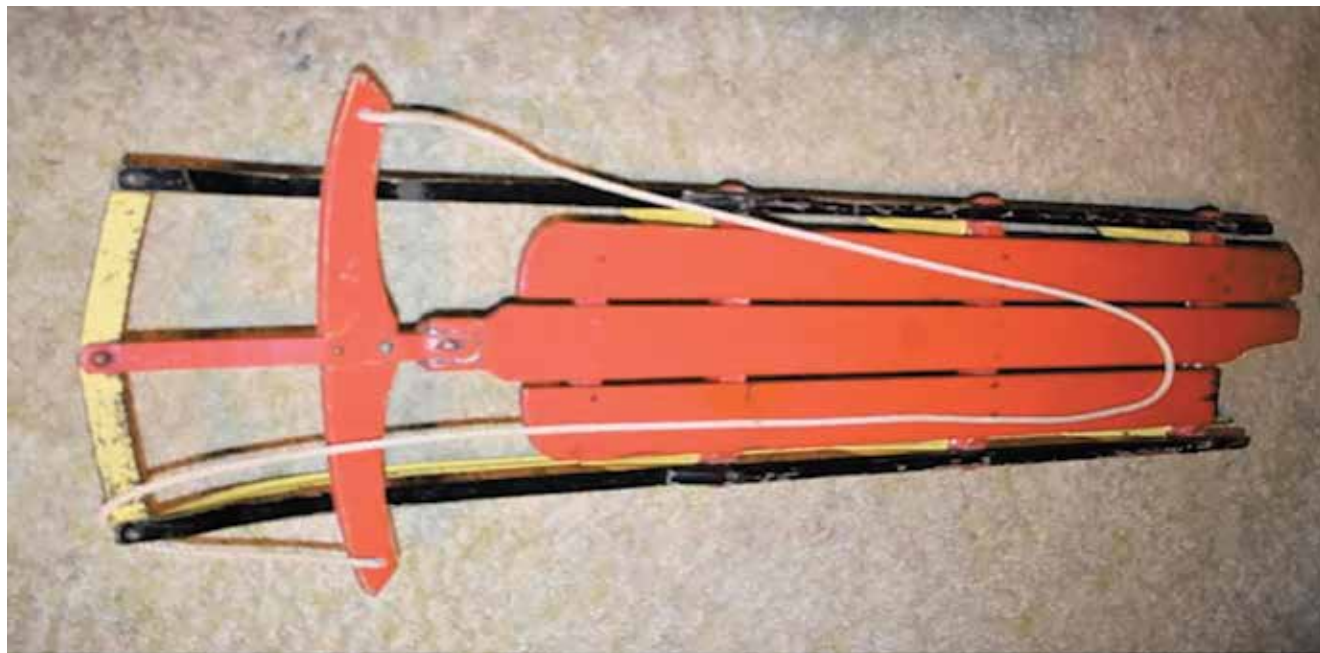
Dad

His family was poor when he was a child. He was extremely competent, hardworking, and strong-willed, and demanded absolute respect from me, but to me, he was just my father, always demanding and grumpy, so I took all he said with a grain of salt, which helped increase his lifelong annoyance with me. He said I was “no good,” but he did help me with everything, buying me millions of things, and teaching me everything there is. So I am forever thankful for all he did and cry when I see his picture. I miss him so much and think of him often. I have his shoebox he made and used to earn money as a child by giving shoeshines. I never thought much about it, but my parents always had me shine all their shoes with his shoebox, and then, recently, I saw that at some point, he rebuilt the whole thing, and now it had become quite worn again! This was a very high mileage shoebox.

Sled

Winter was often cold, and we had lots of snow. I had a little short sled that I painted red with a brush, but I was growing taller at eight. One day, on the way home, I noticed some metal parts sticking out of the dirt next to the path. Somehow, by digging and yanking, I pulled it out of the leaves and dirt. A sled, old-style, longer, with the center deck rotted away.

At home, I scrubbed it clean under the hose and showed it to my father. That night, he said, “You didn’t steal this, did you?” I told him the whole story of being alone and finding it buried in the ditch. He said he would get some material—plywood—and help me make the missing parts. Each evening, we worked on cutting out the three boards, and me sanding and rounding the edges, and him finding the fasteners to hold them on.



Finally, my mother helped me get and mix yellow, red, and black enamel, and I used the project for my Cub Scout merit badge. My mother was the den mother for Den Number Five. The sled was an older style, and the new boards made it strong, and the paint made it look new. The runners were really rusty, and my father got me some coarse sandpaper to sand them off. The center of the runner shape was much rustier, and the more I sanded, the faster it would go on snowy hills. We put a rope on the handles, and I was able

to use it on steep hills six times a year, always trying to be faster than the other guys, so I would *always* sand before going out.

Then my mother showed me to put paraffin from a jelly jar lid on the metal. I started being faster than all other guys’ sleds. My runners were wider, and I could not turn as well, but I was *always* faster! I could beat the other guys, and they wanted to know why I was faster! Nothing they could do would make any difference—I was *always faster* than other sleds! So I beat them on every hill, and we had hills everywhere! Sledding was always *fun* for me! And it made up for my failure at many other sports, like baseball and football. I developed many other creative skills, was good at drawing, painting, and artwork, so my mother took me to a variety of courses at the Maryland Museum of Art.



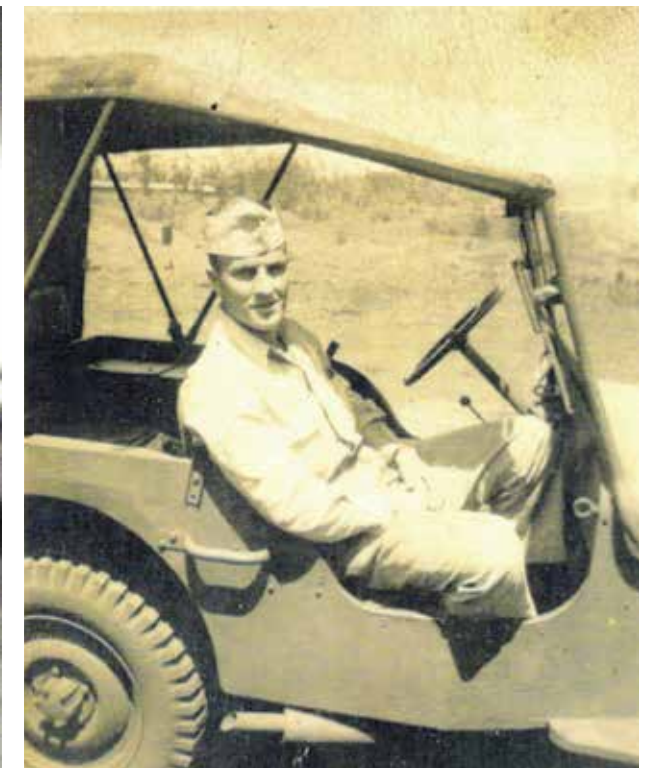
Where we went sledding—huge hills!

Dirt Pile

My father planted and raised decorative evergreens in a huge garden he had and liked to have a huge topsoil pile. Several neighborhood kids would help me build roads and garages, and we could drive around our toy cars and crawl around on the pile, our miniature world, so this is another activity I did to have fun without being in baseball games. One of us was a pretend rich guy, and we would always make up stories to tell while we would be making the roads or homes and garages for our cars. This and many other experiences led me to have a fabulous creative imagination and brain that has led to a wonderful life for seventy-six years!

Edgewood

All the friends Father made at Edgewood decided to help him at Middleton and Meads, when the war was over, and they were working there with him while I was growing up. They never said much about Edgewood, and later I read that the government told everyone who worked for the war effort not to talk about what you did because the war was so horrible. I could tell, as a child, that everyone loved my father and was devoted to him and would do anything he said and not complain, which is what he demanded even of me—do not complain!



Then, in February of 1945, he was given notice that his department was shut down because they had enough to kill every one of the enemy six times over. He came home and told my mother, and they decided that now is a good time to have a baby! So I was born one month after the Japanese surrendered, November of '45. As soon as I opened my eyes, all kinds of friends and coworkers of Dad's and all people they knew came to visit, see me, have a drink, and tell about where they were during the war, so much so that I grew up with stories about the war and got maps of the world to see where all these places were. I grew up saying to everyone else, "Where were you during the war?"

Olga and Nannie and the Geographics

My parents went out on their boat on the weekends, and I could not swim yet, so they left me at Aunt Olga's or Nannie's house so they didn't have to worry about me drowning.



Nannie let me do everything and had the run of the house and took me everywhere to show off her grandchild. My whole family would come, and we would watch Ed Sullivan and Jackie Gleason. Boy, was that fun after dinner, everyone laughing.

Her sister, Aunt Olga, would put me in her club basement with the bar and her *National Geographic* magazine collection. Comic books? *No!* Just millions of Geographics. I looked at all the pictures and articles for hours, when I was just learning to read, held prisoner in my great-aunt's basement as a child! Somehow, this got into my blood, and I just treasure Geographic so much. I have collected several complete sets of them back to 1912! Seven hundred and fifty is one set! So much so that I built shelves across the living room for them to be available and on display.

Books

Of course, I collect books and subscribed to magazines about WWII, all my life, as well. I just finished reading Karen Farrington's *Handbook of World War II*, where the names, dates, and locations of every battle location were explained, along with eyewitness accounts and maps of all the war zones on the globe. So many places and dates, all are so much clearer now, including the six years of war, going back to 1939 in Europe. It is so nice to have a more detailed and intimate collection of all the information going back before my birth.

Proctor/Rodgers

As a young child, I realized that my mother was Margaret Proctor Rodgers Johnson, my grandfather was Henry Proctor Rodgers, my great-uncle was Proctor Rodgers, and my mother explained that our family was all related to the Proctor family of Procter & Gamble, who made all the washing and soap supplies for the country. All these stories were repeated many times!



Proctor and Gamble

Everyone on my mother's side of our family had the middle name Proctor. My great-uncle, my grandfather, my mother, and her brother, and sister, my aunt—all were Proctors, a family tradition, to name everyone this way.

Many of our first family members to come here were from England. William Proctor, a candlemaker, and James Gamble from Ireland was a soap maker. They each married sisters, and their father-in-law urged them to become business partners.

They both settled in Cincinnati, Ohio, where there was a large meatpacking industry, so quantities of fat used for soap and candles were readily available. The partnership was established in 1837 with \$7,192.

By 1890, the business was doing well when James N. Gamble invented Ivory soap.

Repair/Refinishing

My mother said we never inherited any money, but they gave us their antique, handmade, mahogany furniture that needed repair. So as a child, my father said, “When I get home, we will copy or repair the legs and glue the chairs, table, and other decorative side tables. So he showed me how to copy, cut, and fit, and sand parts so the wood matched and each thing was identical to the original parts, no longer loose, and how to clean the joints, mix the glue, and clamp the repaired parts with long heavy furniture clamps.

On other evenings, my mother put down papers in front of the TV, and she showed me how to scrape and sand the finishes until they looked fresh and even, down to new wood and smooth, until we would apply a coat of linseed oil or varnish, then sand again in a few days, and then a semigloss topcoat or rub the varnish until dull with four-O-steel wool, and then buff with old towels. She always would smoke Raleigh cork-tipped cigarettes while we would work and watch *77 Sunset Strip* or *Father Knows Best* on TV. This early suffering and work created in me appreciation and respect for furniture designs and the beauty of mahogany wood I would see in other people’s homes.

Family Boats

At other times, my father would show me all the beautiful kinds of wood in our boat, and my mother and I would refinish that at the boatyard on the weekends. My parents told me about how they had boats together in high school or college. The first was a fifty-dollar canoe with a Caille Redhead engine my father said was a piece of junk, but then they got an Elto, and they loved going places together on the river and looking at coves, scenery, and other boats. When I was young, they would get a different small cruiser every two years. I always remember one where there was a spotlight right above where I sat in the middle. When it rained or was wet, there was a hole that would drip on me.

Pump Out

As soon as we would get there and open up the boat, my job was to pump out the week's worth of water from the bilge.



Hard rains would make for more pumping, and the hand pump would squirt me with leaking water, whether it was cold or not. Worse, I was being hit in the face or neck with spray, and my father didn't want to hear any complaining, but, sometimes, he would take pity on me, and we would lube and tighten the packing nut and, like magic, for a few weeks, it would not squirt me.

Ice

Then the next job was to go get the cakes of ice so we could cool the food in the *icebox* for the weekend. I would borrow the wheelbarrow and ice tongs the yard had and go get two cakes of ice at the boatyard ice-house. I had to load and push these square-foot blocks through the main part of the yard, up a hill, down the other side, across the parking lot, and down the hill to the pier, and then out to our boat, which was near the end, then hand them across to Mother on the boat, and then use the tongs to take it down below into the icebox, then take the tongs and wheelbarrow back to the icehouse! Two blocks of cakes of ice would last all weekend! Dad would use an ice pick to stab off some chips of ice for everyone's drink and, sometimes, the adults would have *several drinks!*

Activities

So we would use the boat to explore the Severn River or go to Annapolis, and they would pick out a cove to anchor for the evening, swim, and then make dinner, and we would sleep there. We would swim in the afternoon and sometimes all day. When we were cruising, sometimes, my father would let me use our wood and canvas dinghy with oars, and tow me behind the boat. He liked doing this because he was rid of me and wouldn't have to put up with my incessant talking. They all said, "You talk too much." But some of my friend's families liked it, and I had lots of friends. After hours of riding behind our boat and steering with an oar, I would yell, "Dad, I want to come back!"

He would yell, "No, stay out there!"

Fun

Other times, they would let me bring a friend along for the weekend. Besides great swimming and using life preservers or inner tubes, we would explore the woods around the beach or fish, have sunfish for dinner or go crabbing. Six or more would make it worthwhile to steam some crabs, and they would have fun with other boat owners and beer.



Overnight

In the evenings, there was always the beauty of the stars, and night swimming off the ladder of the boat when we were anchored out. Sometimes, we would tie up at a yacht club where there was dancing with an orchestra, and my folks loved to waltz or jitterbug and tango with friends and the open bar. They would say, “Can you hear the music? That’s where we will be, and if you need us, just walk up there!”

Sometimes, we would have lunch at the club, so I could see where they would be. My award would be being allowed to sleep in the top bunk, and I would have to climb up. You could see out the portholes from up there with fresh air. One night, I rolled over while asleep and hit the floor from six feet up and lay there, crying to the music that they were dancing to, hundreds of feet away. I patched myself up and climbed into the lower bunk I usually used. The next day, they said, “What happened?” I told them, and they said, “Oh, isn’t he grown up?”—Probably ten years old.

Adventures

Stopping at the beaches we loved, there were cliffs to climb and paths to follow, where others had campfires or slept overnight with views of distant beaches and water off in the distance or sliding down sand hills before swimming. Sometimes, their friend Bill Smith would meet us and take us for a ride in his Chris-Craft 47.



We would go zooming along with the wind in our hair and the thunder of the inboard engine. My father would like using his Aquaplane Surfboard on a rope behind the boat as we were going along. One time, he let Bill try it, and he was good until he fell. He began yelling, “I can’t swim!” Boy, my father got over there quick, and we pulled him aboard. They always told that story for years later!

Mother

My father always told me what a wonderful woman my mother was. She was very talented, and neat, kept a beautiful home, and was good at entertaining and socializing.

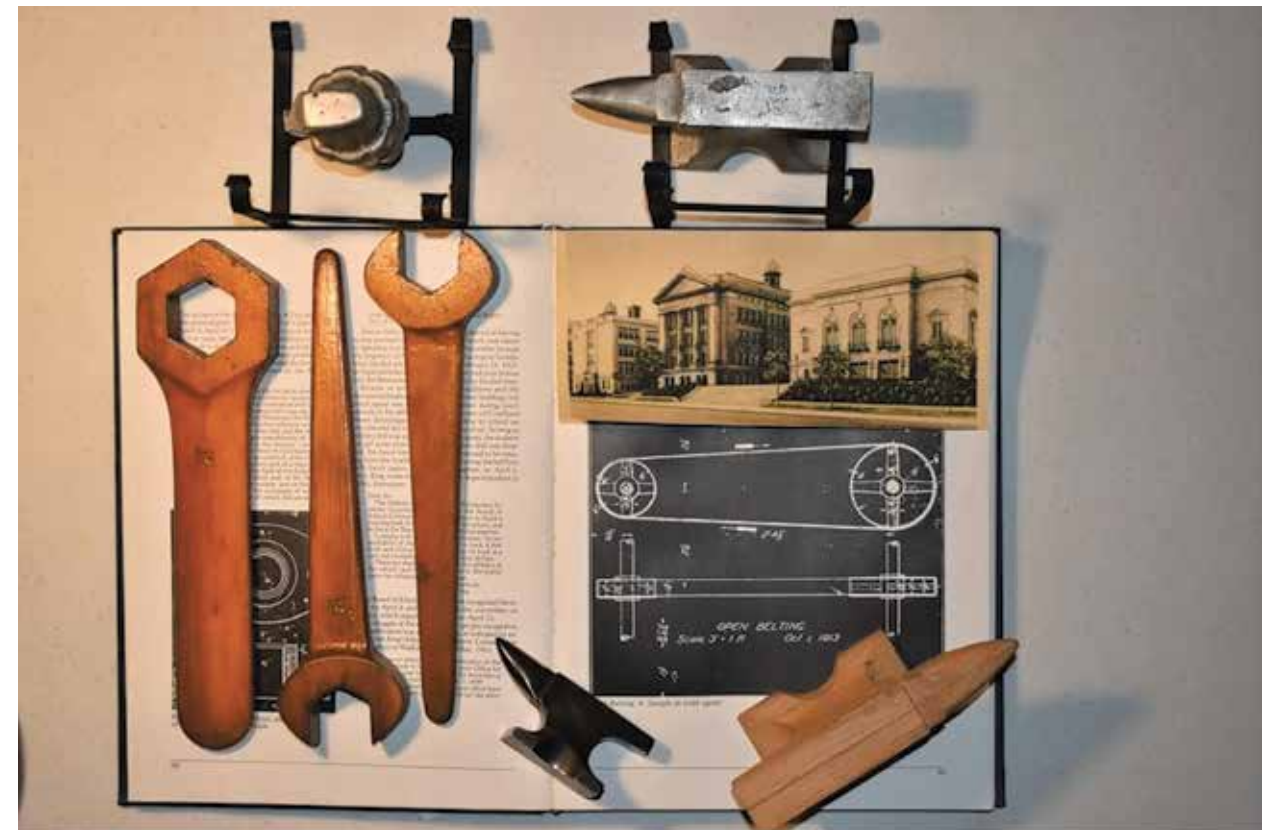


She sent me to their country club, the Casino, for dancing lessons. They would show off the step, and then put on the music. The boys were along one side, and the girls, the other. They had to walk across, pick a girl, introduce themselves, and ask for this dance. It was fun. I was good at it and enjoyed dancing all my life.

My parents had fun together from high school on. He went to Baltimore Polytechnic on North Avenue and Calvert Street, and she went to Forest Park High School. Her father taught steam engineering at Polytechnic. He was the last one to teach steam engineering because the age of steam had passed. My father never took that course, but when not teaching, my grandfather, Henry Proctor Rodgers, sold power plant equipment at H. P. Rodgers Inc. on Twenty-Fifth Street, part-time, and gradually built a business with generators and industrial equipment, including nuclear power.

Casting Patterns

I loved going to Baltimore Polytechnic Institute because we had mechanical drawing classes for use later in woodshop and pattern shop, where we had carefully drawn something that would be used in pattern shop, made of wood, and A and B side, and then used in metal casting shop to be copied and made a real permanent casting.



When I was a small child, my grandfather had these same casting patterns at his house, the same as we did at ours, from my father's attendance at Baltimore Polytechnic Institute. The skills were all linked, year after year, and admired. As a child, I hoped I would be able to go to Polytechnic like all the other family members did. My father and Henry had these items on display at home, from their years there, and, sometimes, I saw them at my cousin Jerry and my cousin Frank's place, and I hoped even more that I could do that craftsmanship when I got there. Today, I have my patterns on the shelf in my office.

Dad's

When we went to my father's Middleton and Meads Company to meet him to go down to the boat, he would take me around and introduce me to his men. He would make me stick out my hand and say my full name so they would know it, and I would say their name aloud so they would know that I knew them. I used this technique for introduction to people, all my life! Each time, he would leave me with one of the men with instructions for them to “*teach him something!*” They taught me what they did in truck repair and how you do this. Over the years, I learned many things my friends did not know. Welding with a torch or stick electric welding, how to cut steel with a torch, grinding, shaping, drilling, alignment, frame straightening, working with men from all walks of life, tools of every kind, cleanup of all kinds, and how trucks are repaired. I spent years in the inner city and the Baltimore harbor in an industrial sight, blocks away from where they made McCormick spices.

My father was Howard Johnson, and my mother said she didn't want two Howards in the same house, so she called me Johnny, Johnny Johnson, when I was at home and to all my friends. It was a fun name to have, J. J., but, at school, when they would call out Howard Johnson the first time, everyone would laugh out loud because America was in love with Howard Johnson Restaurants. Because I was given the name Howard Percival Johnson Jr., people kidded me about the wonderful orange roof restaurants all around the country and on TV. The blessing was that no one ever forgot my name! Then, as I have gotten older, I realize that it makes me popular because as soon as I get introduced, most everyone fondly remembers something about their restaurant memories, and it's a great conversation starter.

But looking back at my life from age seventy-seven, I feel like I have always been mildly popular. I looked like my mother and was blessed with good looks, everyone said. I liked having fun and saying nice things or just being nice, and everyone in my family was nice, except my father who was the boss, (so we all *had* to put up with him), but I had good, kind examples. I don't know why exactly, but I was good at making friends and stayed away from sports because I had polio and wasn't good at any, so I did all the other stuff instead. I was not competitive. They said I was small for my age—still am! But I didn't get fat. My parents were both shapely and fit, worked hard. In fact, I was taught a great work ethic by them. For years, I thought that my parents used me as a slave, but as I became an older adult, I realized that they taught me to *do* everything *with them*, and I do everything well because of that.

What a blessing! The only thing was when I was young, my friends said, “Johnny Johnson, we are never coming over to your house again!”

I asked, “Why?”

And they said, “Your parents made us work!” Then, when they were older, they said, “Every time we have to do some work, we think of your parents!”

Work

Sometimes, my father and I would do smaller projects at home or “down the place,” like he always said of Middleton and Meads. If we were on the boat, and the engine would not start, he and I would jump down into the bilge, clean, and set the points or make sure that the choke was on or the fuel was coming into the carburetor. Same for battery maintenance, we did it all. In fact, we did so much I could teach all my friends how to do whatever was needed when something didn't run. My father told me that everyone *has* to work to pay the bills, but it is what you do at home, later, that allows you to get ahead. So we always worked at home!

Then I realized that they were *not* using me as a slave after all. They were teaching me how to do each one of these things so well and completely that I could do it entirely on my own! What a blessing!

He taught me that this is how to build and set up a workbench, and I have made dozens exactly like this, even in Sint Maarten, so I could get right in there and repair or build *anything* with all needed tools at arm's reach. I credit his wonderful design to the fact that I have succeeded in everything I have tried all through my life.



Middleton and Meads

The building had a block-long, yellow-brick frontpiece on Lee Street that went to the main highway, along the waterfront of Baltimore Inner Harbor a block away. The yellow bricks were around the two big truck door entrances, the machine shop entrances, and windows, and then the office door entrance and big windows. The name was in huge letters standing above that. The entrances led to many different work areas where the floors would become covered with grease, and every five years or so, they would have the grease scraped off; grease and oil were used on most everything they did. In the big truck areas, they often used huge torches to heat or burn things, and these torches were loud and made a huge red light. There was smoke and smell with everything they did too.

In the office was less, but a day working there would make you dirty. At first, we would only go there when I was five, on Friday, to wait for him to be able to leave because he was the manager. Sometimes, he would have to stay until a deal or procedure was finished or a truck was picked up. Satisfaction and the happiness of the owner and driver were so important that most times, my father talked to one or both about the job at the end. Many times, they would make plans at that time because, often, this job would lead to them modifying their equipment to this new improvement. So each Friday visit was a little different, and I got to know every building and all the men.

They had gradually bought up other buildings and row houses in the neighborhoods behind there and hollowed them out as they built other shops for the business. You had to cross alleys to get to the other shops, and Arabs would come along with fruit or vegetables off ships that they had for sale off wagons pulled by a workhorse, clip-clopping along. The Arabs would yell something that sounded to me, like, "Hey, yeo up!" over and over. Just like at home, my father wanted me to *learn everything!* And starting at five, he would take me to a favorite employee and say to me, "INTRODUCE YOURSELF!"

This was something he insisted on that I would say, "I am HOWARD JOHNSON JR." in a loud voice and hold out my hand for them, ready to shake, and they all did!

Then he would say, "I am going to leave him with you," then yell, "TEACH HIM SOMETHING!" The employee was proud to have the boss's son and went out of his way to treat me well and take care of me, like give me two dimes and send me to buy us a Coke out of the red Coke machine, which I loved doing! Sometimes, they gave me jobs where I could crawl into a small space like under the dash and find the wire they were pulling on or give me the wire and have me string it along through the supports in the whole frame, no matter how long the truck was, because they added turn signals to millions of trucks back then.

We would climb around on everything, and I would help install hydraulic dump body pistons or work on the front end, including hold and use the grease gun. Sometimes they would bring in a damaged garbage truck that could not be emptied until repaired. The stench could be smelled from almost all the shops and the *office!* Some days they all would be scraping the floor because as the grease that was semidried built up, lumps would form on the floors, and they had to be scraped off. I would drag the buckets out and

dump them in the truck that hauled it away. Sometimes, they would give me nice jobs, like put new bulbs in burned-out droplights, millions in a big cardboard box. I tested each one with the new bulb, replaced the socket, and switch or repaired the plug. When I was an employee, my father started me at two dollars per hour, fourteen dollars a day when taxes were taken out. The bathrooms were filthy, and they had hand cleaner and Lava soap, and you had to use that sandy soap on your face or liquid hand soap that was yellow!

We wore old clothes to work and then wore rented uniforms to work. They were so expensive to rent. I almost didn't make any money. Many things about working there as a teenager made me depressed, including riding in with my father who told me how lazy, stupid, and dumb I was and that I never do anything right or put things away in the right place. Another thing besides tough jobs were loud noises, many huge truck bodies, or steel beams were dropped, and straightening things often involved hitting the steel with a sledgehammer, while someone else heated it with a huge torch that made a loud roar, loud noise all day because all kinds of jobs would be going on all over—all six of the shops. The spring shop made springs out of steel and then put them in a huge furnace and heated them until red hot and then reached in with steel tongs and pulled them out and quenched them in a huge tank of black water; steam exploded out in a huge cloud.

The first ones were the biggest, and while cherry red hot, an eye was rolled into the end with a machine, and they were put back in the furnace and reheated to cherry again. Each one was placed on a table, and a curve was bent into it, called an arch. The steel would throw off red hot ash that could burn you. As these were stacked together, as many as eight or ten layers were in use everywhere, and there were ships with smokestacks all along the harbor, two blocks away. When I would go down there, the garbage on the water was so thick according to how large the truck was and the load it would carry. They all were held together by U-bolts that were made on different machines including threading the raw steel rods on each end and then bending in the U.

I avoided watching these operations because they would make you deaf and burn your eyes. The men that worked on them were the toughest, meanest men in the world, heating and quenching steel and bolting everything on a clamp table with huge bolts and air wrenches. To mount these rear springs, the entire axle of the back end of the truck was unbolted, most had twin rear axles, and the alignment was critical, and the driveshaft was taken off. A whole shop was just for driveshaft work, cutting the pipe to the correct length, then mounting the universals in the parts after the sawn edges were "cleaned up," then mounted in a lathe that would slowly turn the pipe while the welder would lay a bead along the new edges. All parts were made to run true and parallel at this point or the driveshaft would knock, wear, or make noise, which was why they were in there in the first place.

Then after all four parts were precisely welded in, they were all assembled with new roller bearings pregreased out of boxes that were stacked in huge nearby closets, by the millions, in all sizes for all the sizes of universals from import car to mega off-road trucks for quarries and mountain work. Middleton and Meads did many jobs that no other company would even undertake, and often, my father would tell stories about things they did at the dinner table with my mother. There were six different shops all going at one time with different managers and employees in each. They had old-fashioned phones that you just picked up and asked the operator in the office for the number, and loud intercoms with speakers around, facing all directions, and everything was filthy because the janitors only swept the floor and emptied the trash.

That was it. Even people's cars were dirty because it was an industrial city, and the air was often gray with soot because of coal. I was certain that I could stand on it but never got a chance to try it. Some were three feet thick because so much was waterlogged and permanently there. I think I was twenty when I finally told my father I was going to get a "regular job" and went to work for Great American Insurance Company

in Silver Spring, Maryland, wearing a suit all day and sitting at a desk with a phone and doing small claims work, “in” files on one side, and “out” files on the other. I lasted two years.

I worked in my father’s body shop, for Joe Phadenhauer, for years, and painted trucks, did all the steps—sanding, body work, rust repair, straightening, frame straightening, paint prep, paint priming, and taping for a neat job, spray painting, spray gun maintenance, and paint mixing, paint handling skills, cleanup, and careful reassembly for happy customers. Then I painted many hundreds of vehicles of all kinds, *in my shops*, all the rest of my life. I loved it and felt blessed to be able to do these things. As the years went by, I came to appreciate all I learned and how I was toughened and was able to do and accomplish anything that needed to be done. Over the years, I did many things that no one else I knew was able to do or try! Also, I was taught the depth of industry in America and what goes on in the cities that many people never see.

At Home

We had a big garden with vegetables, several kinds of bushes, evergreens, plants, flowers, and maintenance of all kinds, including lots of shoveling, moving of topsoil, raking, grounds care, and mowing. My father made me crawl under the summerhouse with the jacks so we could level the house on blocks. Then they decided to gradually dig a basement under the house with wheelbarrows and shovels; a small crew poured footings and laid block for the walls as we went. It took two years of working every weekend. Then we had a floor poured, and he and I installed a hot-air furnace and all the ducts, including wiring and the thermostat. Of course, I crawled through the entire attic and insulated everything! He had pilings driven for the pier, and we built the whole thing with boats.

We built all kinds of things of wood and took care of a beagle and setter dogs, hamsters, and rabbits, painted the entire interior of the summerhouse after taking the Celotex walls down, hanging insulation, and then putting up drywall and tape, and puttying and sanding the whole inside, and then painting. Then, years later, I did all this to my several homes and gained money later by selling them. So I have built a septic tank out of well rings and installed a toilet and bathroom, several times, a kitchen, re-roofed several places, cut down and cut up many trees, and maintained every kind of engine-powered equipment like generators, lawnmowers, rototillers, and chainsaws. In fact, my friends and neighbors like lending me equipment because they know that I will return it in better condition than it was before—another good habit my father taught me.

Blair

My father enjoyed hunting, and his partner, Blair Middleton, had several huge farms in Waldorf, Maryland. When we would visit, when I was a kid, he would drive us around the miles of fields in his 1950 Lincoln car, showing us features of the farm and what they were doing—talk about adventure! He was the only person I knew who drove the fields in a car. This used to be way out in the country, so we had fresh meat to clean and prepare as well as for good eating. Blair was a big, handsome man with a deep voice and knowledge of most anything in the world, a huge family, and very successful mother. Everyone in the family loved her with all their heart and bragged about how happy they were growing up together, and here was me, an only child!



Church

On Sunday, my family would walk to St. John's Episcopal Church in Mount Washington, where we lived, in northern Maryland, in our suits and good clothes and say hello to our friends and neighbors on the way to services. There, we had Reverend Bass and the choir to sing hymns and give thanks to God for all we are and have, said the Lord's Prayer and the Twenty-Third Psalm, and Sunday school with all our friends. The love we shared with all the other members and the value of everything we learned is still with me today, in every way. I am still amazed how much we were taught and how much meaning it has to us in our lives. The value of believing in God and Jesus Christ enriches our lives and lifts up our spirits.



CYO

My parents loved listening to show tunes on our 45 RPM record player. They let me change the records each time, and I became skilled at working with delicate equipment. On the other side of the neighborhood was the Catholic church, Sacred Heart. My neighbors, Peggy, Robert, and Jay went there and babysat me often. I was so familiar with the place that when I was a teen, I attended the Friday night dances with Jay, my best friend, and because I had been raised with 45 RPM records, I became the DJ for several years for CYO, Catholic Youth Organization.

My mother taught me to join everything, and I also went to MYF, Methodist Youth Fellowship, in Pimlico, with similar great times and friends, like John Jacobus. He got me to join the Fisher Body Guild and use our styling and creation skills that we could enter to the General Motors Fisher Body Competition. We ordered the wheels and received our dimensions for our auto body shapes. Both of us received acknowledgment for our cars, but no prizes like the real winners, and we still had the model cars we made.

Scouts

We both were scouts together at Elderslie Methodist Church in nearby Pimlico near the horse-racing track.



My mother ran Den Number Five with seven kids, and my father showed us projects to enter competitions and how to build these things. We were proud to put them out in front of the troop for all to see. Cub Scout meetings were every Friday, and my mother always had a plan of what we were doing due to the Cub Scout Manual and what we prepared to take to the big meetings to show off. One time, each one of us made a railroad boxcar with side doors and wheels left over from some product Middleton and Meads had helped make. Everyone like seeing what we had done at our Scout meetings.

Model Planes

My other friends, the Walkers, Hammy, Priscilla, and Stevie, lived in a huge old five-story, eight-sided, Victorian brown shingle house across from my Elementary School #221, designed in the 1800s, to enhance the owner and family's health because each point of the compass was said to bring you good health.

My father taught me to build model airplanes from balsa wood kits. Hammy and I would fly planes out the windows, up on the fourth floor, out onto the playground of the school, big enough to land without crashing (sometimes).



His parents let us set up a build-and-repair station on the fourth floor, and when he began to drive, they let us go to places where you can fly planes with rubber bands or tiny gas engines. We saw fabulous radio control and free flight planes flown by others with great skill. In fact, we began using gas engines on boats in the summertime, sensational fun, because, often, the models were faster than our real boats! We would use model airplane engines .049 that faced aft with the airplane propeller, and often they would hit a wave and take off fifteen feet high or go right up on the beach.

Day after summer day, Rick Mayers and I would be out there watching them zoom along and then go chasing after them with our boats. I had a flat-bottom, plywood rowboat with stain and varnished sides, green interior, and 5 hp engine that was light and fast.

Rick had a fourteen-foot 3/8 plywood V-bottom that had a 7.5 hp Mercury engine, faster than mine but harder to start.

We would spill oily model airplane fuel in there and require good cleanup when we got home.

Leda

In 1952, my parents, Micky and Howard, bought my grandfather Henry Proctor Rodger's thirty-two-foot 1929 American Car and Foundry double-cabin yacht so he could get a forty-two-foot Richardson. We kept it on the same pier at Sappingtons Yacht Yard in Severna Park where we kept the previous one, the *Nona*. The rules were the same. I did all the same jobs, but the boat was larger, and I had my own aft cabin with three portholes in the stern so my parents had some privacy. I had two bunks, room for toys, and a friend could go along. Oh, it was a wonderful boat! A wooden cruiser, just like the seven we have on display now at oldtimeworld.com.



Lakeland

In 1954, my parents decided to sell the boat and get a summer cottage on the Severn River, with a beach.



Well, in fact, it didn't have a beach but a low area where you could build one. The job was shoveling sand from near the water, and later, the tide would fill it back in. We shoveled sand every weekend and after school for two years. This is how I got my allowance. We also had to build a walking path on the hill, down to the beach, and we used logs we held in place with used or damaged U-bolts from Middleton and Meads to make steps up the huge hill that took ten minutes, just going up to the tiny summerhouse. But it had a great view because it was built out onto the cliff where they mined the sand for the Naval Academy, in the teens. We got to climb those cliffs to see the whole river or row over to the islands out in the river or millions

of other great summer fun things. My father found a local guy building twelve-foot, 3/8 plywood rowboats with oars and seats. I stained it mahogany and varnished the exterior like my mother taught me years ago.



The interior I did in light green, and it would go like hell with a 5 hp engine. My father used to tell me that I was spoiled rotten. Maybe I was! So we got to explore the river and got to know other kids with boats. A summerhouse with a fabulous view, a beach, and great neighborhood of dead-end roads ending at other beaches with nice kids and happy families. After my father built the new larger house, the Troja family of seven lived with him the rest of his life until age ninety-two.

Severn River

So summers were great growing up on the Severn River in the fifties. Rick's boat was nicer than mine with a Mercury 7.5 hp engine. We could use water skis behind it as long as only one person was in the boat. When I would visit Rick, several houses down the beach from ours, I noticed that next door was a similar boat, always covered. One day, they pointed out where that person lived, and months later, I asked my mother to stop there when we were on the way to the store.

Mr. Kittinger/Rick

I introduced myself to Mr. Kittinger and told him how I was friends with Rick, next door to his beach property, and his boat looked like Rick's. He said it was, and I told him how my father taught me about engines, and I could get it running for him. He said that would be great because he was always too busy to get it together, and he would pay any expenses. "And please let me know how it goes," he said and gave me his phone number.

The next week, Rick and I uncovered it and made some lists of stuff needed: 15 hp, electric starting. This was deluxe, and I cleaned and painted the inside with the same leftover paint I used on my boat. When Mr. Kittinger saw the boat, ready to use and the new green paint, his eyes got bigger, and we went cruising all over the river near home. I think he took me home to his house for a sandwich and gave me fifteen dollars. He was so happy! From then on, I kept his boat ready to use, and mine started collecting dust. It was the same speed as Rick's and could pull skis. This led to lots of fun outings and further exploration of the river. This experience and the blessings we enjoyed led me to volunteer to work on other people's boats, numerous times, in later years.

Driving

Right around that time, one of our family friends, the Kneips, invited us to come down to Ocean City for an overnight stay and fun on the beach; my father had to work. Mother was still driving the '51 Buick I loved, and we both enjoyed going to Ocean City. We had a fabulous time swimming with Phillip and his sister, and the mothers had beer and, later, scotch and water.

Well, next day, we had to head home, and on the way to Salisbury, my mother was lighting a Raleigh cork-tipped cigarette with a match, the tip of which popped off and hit her in the eye. She was in such pain and tears she got the car going and said, "Here, you steer."

I was twelve or thirteen, and, at first, she held the wheel, and I did so well that she gave up steering and sat there with her eyes shut, and we could see that I could *drive!*

'56 Ford

Of course, after she healed, Mother kept us fed and fixed up with clothes and rides everywhere in her new '56 Ford, which I cleaned and waxed.



The medium green was beautiful with that new car shine. I waxed it after washing, shined all the windows, and vacuumed it out regularly. It was a Customline, so it had a rubber front mat and a V-8 engine. When Mom would step on it, we would shoot by everyone else. Thunderbird V8. She showed me a hundred on the way to OC once! I loved that car. In 1961, after Mother's funeral, my father tossed me the keys, and the car became a regular part of my high school experiences.

Lionels

We went to Annapolis when it rained in summers, and they had a wonderful hobby shop, HACK's, on West Street. When we went down there, it was a dream come true. My parents let me have Lionel trains on a Ping-Pong table in our basement. I made mountains out of screen wire and plaster of Paris, painted all different colors of green, and train, garden trees, and bushes, and tracks going through the mountain tunnels.



I had cardboard houses with lights and Matchbox cars on the roads made of black paint and sand. When my parents had friends over, they would take them down into the basement, and once I had everything going, my mother turned off the overhead lights, and we could see by the houselights on the platform and the trains going along—our whole miniature world. They loved it! I was a hero. My baseball friends loved it, too, and they saw me flying planes as well, but they couldn't do any of that stuff.

Motorbike

After the flapping baseball card bicycle incident, I started wanting a *real* motorbike. A neighbor gave us a worn REO Reel Lawn Mower, which we got running. Then I found an English bike frame with seat and handlebars, no wheels. My father gave me an old hand truck with nice ball bearing wheels. I put a one-and-a-half-foot bar across the front vertical bar near the bottom for feet with a small U-bolt and a plywood plate across the rear wheel horizontal members with small U-bolts for the engine.

Then I drilled the rear wheel and drilled the large sprocket off the pedals to bolt onto the rear wheel with one-fourth-inch long bolts and mounted the small sprocket off the rear wheel of the regular bike to a pulley that fit the engine shaft, so there was direct drive, no clutch—all this with my father's tools and supplies. No wonder he didn't want me using his tools! I had to drill mounting holes in hardened steel sprockets. You should see those drill bits smoke! He did teach me how to sharpen drill bits, so I learned *that* skill too! The gas tank was mounted on the engine, four-cycle, so a few pushes, it would start, and go like hell! No gears, so it would slow down really quick too—no brakes. But now I had a *motorbike*, and I went driving all over the place with *no* driver's license and *no* tags!

Months later, I got stopped by the police, and I told him all about how I built it myself out of a lawn mower, and he said, "Okay, just be careful!" A nice policeman! I was eleven in 1956! When I went past the baseball game this time, they all surrounded me, begging to try it, and I told them, "I will help *you* build one!" You guessed it—no takers! My father gets credit for this one. You should have seen how many drill bits I burned up drilling those sprockets. My father taught me how to sharpen drill bits! See my story near the end—"Sharpening."



Mother Sick

Then mother started feeling sick in several ways. During the summer, my father met with the doctor and said, "What is it?"

He just made the sign of a "C" with his finger in the air. No other information, but that she would need treatments every month. So she started going in and made good progress for a while, and then in September, began going downhill again. They had been making huge changes in our summer cottage on the Severn so it could be a winter home. My father paid Mr. Rembold extra money to add workers so she could enjoy the new place for a while. Things were looking great in October, and we made frequent visits. My father got the moving company to pack us at home so we would be ready to go. November, she was weak most of the time.

Death

December 8, she went in for a treatment; later that day, I was surprised to see Dad at school. "How," he said, "Mother died today." Then he began to weep, took my hand, and we walked down the halls of Poly, weeping, side by side. The other students knew that something horrible was wrong. We had a big funeral. Mother had many friends from the Mount Washington Junior Women's Club, the card games, the Casino, our community club where I took dancing, and our church, St. John's Episcopal, and Cub Scouts, and our neighborhood. Days of sadness and visiting friends followed.

Days later, after the burial, to my complete surprise, Dad called me to the steps to my room and tossed my mother's car keys up to me. I just said, "Thanks, How!"

Later, he said, "I got the new place all fixed up for your mother, but she didn't make it. So we are going to move anyway."

December 8, 1961. So sixteen years of living in Mount Washington, North Baltimore, Fairbank Road, ended, and we moved to the new empty house in Severna Park without mother. It was rough. He was miserable and sick at heart every day. I had to do everything she taught me, to make every meal, and do the laundry, which he never had to do, shop, clean, deal with all our friends and families, and clean our cars and vacuum, take care of the dogs, and our new place without Mother.

Mother's Love

Somehow, to my surprise, I found out that she was still there, watching over me, doing things for me that can only come from a mother's and God's love. Kids in Severna Park High School were overheard saying, "Hey, who is the new kid with the blue Poly jacket?" I didn't know what to say.

Colleen

It was embarrassing, and I didn't know what to do, and then this cute blonde, Colleen Colona, came up to me, and said, "Hello. Would you be willing to take me to the basketball game on Friday?"

I said, "Well, sure!" She gave me her number, and I got the directions.

Days later, when I was there, in Mother's '56 Ford, she said, "Would you be willing to pick up my girlfriend, Kevin Brooks?"

I said, "Sure," and we drove over there. At the game, we were late, and both stands were full. When we walked in, every eye in the place was on *us*! We sat down, had a great time, and the next Monday, every person in the school knew my name! They all said, "Hey, Johnny Johnson!" *Wow!* I just knew my mother did that! Now at seventy-seven, I have counted forty wonderful favors like that my mother has done for me with God from heaven!



**Johnny
Johnson**

Dad

Meanwhile, at home, in December and January 1961, things were tough. I made my father sick. He said that I was no good, and I reminded him of my mother. Our relationship was rough. I had become best friends with some cool guys that saw me with the most beautiful blonde girls in the school. They liked my '56 Ford too. We began to do things like go waterskiing in their boats, after school. We went to frequent dancing events, and I was good at that too. I was able to get dates with good-looking girls. In fact, Severna Park had many educated and beautiful girls. My father had taken an interest in my mother's friend, Virginia Troja, down Fairbank Road from us on the turn. She had lost her husband, Dick Troja, to a heart attack a year before we lost mother, and they had six nice children, well-behaved and good students. They dated, and Virginia knew all my mother's friends, too, so it was a good fit. The children were all well-behaved and good students the way he wished *his* child had been. So sometime around '65, we could see the writing on the wall.

He had our summer cottage in Lakeland at the end of the road with the gorgeous view of the head of the Severn River and the islands where we had always gone boating so that Mr. Rembold and his crew could build a huge house with larger rooms. Now he added bedrooms to the basement so that everyone had a bedroom, seven of his children, all under one roof. I still had my larger room above the garage with double beds. Too bad the down-stairs was not heated. It was colder than the other rooms, but they became used to it, I guess. The oldest was Sharon, a year older than me; Rick, who was six months younger than me; Michael, a year younger; Roger, a year younger than Mike; then Mary Jo; and the youngest was Barbie, my father's favorite, who sat in his lap and admired him. Gradually, they took over his life, and I moved along. Five decades later, they inherited the majority of his estate.



Me, Barb, Mike, Roger, Mary Jo, and Rick. Sharon is missing.

Washburn's

Chris Washburn had this MG TD his father bought from *Road & Track* magazine, with a Volvo engine, powerful, and was built for speed. I was good at fixing things, and now, my cousin Edith *gave me* her '54 MG TF, so I helped Chris keep his going.



We had every kind of unique wonderful experience with these darling cars that everyone loved driving around Severna Park and Annapolis, Maryland. Next door, Mr. Steele was someone who lived in Baltimore, like I did growing up. I introduced myself and stuck my hand out like I had been taught. We hit it off. I told him I admired the siding on his house, Formstone, and that I would rake his leaves if he was not there. Was there any chance we could ever use his empty one-car garage? "*Sure!*" he said. "I never use it!"

So now we had a place right next door to Chris Washburn's house. Mrs. Washburn always told me, "We enjoy your visit. Don't worry about calling. Just come on down if you can."

And now I had a home away from home. So we had wonderful meals with Chris and Dubby and Mr. Washburn, and he invited me to ride in his Rolls-Royce up to the car show in Hershey, Pennsylvania, to show the car in '64! What a great family!

Stude

Years before, at Baltimore Polytechnic High School, I became friends with John Stude from church. One day, he told me that they had a motorcycle in their basement that his brother wanted to sell, one hundred dollars. I went over there with Mother's 1956 Ford. He, Eddie, Roddy, and I carried it up the basement steps through the house, down the front steps, and put it in the trunk, and tied down the lid. I had never heard of the name, ever. Velocette, made in England. One cylinder, 250 cc. I didn't know how to repair it, so it gathered dust for some weeks, but when I got us Mr. Steel's garage, I took it down there, and we began getting motorcycle magazines, and one day, I found out about cleaning and setting the points. At first, it would only pop, but, gradually, I got the gas tank clean and found out the full name was Velocette Venom Clubman Veeline.

We would push it to get it to start sometimes. Then I came up with another cheapie called a Victoria Bergmeister from Germany. A V-twin, but cylinders sticking out the side. Sometimes, we could get that one going by pushing, too, but sometimes, both would just make us tired, and we began calling our garage the Push a Motorcycle a Day Club! We had fun, and all our friends enjoyed coming over there, and no one *ever* complained. We shared L&M, Winston, and Marlboro cigarettes too.

Mrs. Washburn

This was a life-shaping experience for me. One night, Mrs. Washburn, who treated me like one of hers, showed me how her sons had wrecked her furniture, rocking back and forth, at meals, for years. I told her, "Mrs. Washburn, I can glue these chairs for you!"

"What?" she said, unbelieving. "Okay, just take *one* to try."

So I did. The chair was like new. She was so impressed that a week later, she let me do all the rest and paid \$25 each to a high school kid! She told her neighbor, and she invited me to look at her loose furniture too. She said, "I volunteer at Historic Annapolis, the Hammond Harwood House, and the Chase Lloyd Wright House. They need furniture repairs too. Would you be willing to try those too?"

So I drove down there with my Volkswagen bus and met the lady who she recommended and got to work. Now I had more jobs, one after the other. I generally made friends with the new customer and then, at home, I marked and scraped every joint like my father showed me and glued them with his clamps. He didn't even know. Thanks to the kindness of all these people, the phone was ringing on a regular basis, and I had a small, steady supply of money. As the years went by, I kept buying tools of every kind and working on more and more customer's projects with satisfaction. For forty years, I was *self-employed*!

The Antique Doctor



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Howard and Cheryl Johnson

OC Summer of '62

Yet, repair jobs or not, my father, for the summer, told me that he wanted me to work at Middleton and Meads. I rode in with him and worked for Joe Phadenhauer in the body shop which I had done off and on for years. I figured he needed me to work with Joe steadily and yet treated me cruelly; and after two weeks, I finally told him that I would like to get my own job. He said, "Okay, find yourself a job."

So I spent the whole next day going to small businesses along Ritchie Highway and telling them I could do auto detailing or that I was looking for a job, on foot, and no one seemed to want a kid like me. By four-thirty, I was tired, out of money, and dragging. I started looking to hitchhike home. A car stopped. It was my friend Mike Jones, from school, and his friend Bo Quick, and brother, Pete Quick, saying that they were headed to Ocean City. "Want to come?"

I thought for a minute. "YES! Please stop at my house to get some clothes and money." I only had one hundred cents, gave that to Bo for the bridge, and we took off in his white '57 Ford. What a nice ride! When we got there, they said, "Where do you want to go?" I had no plan but knew that my girlfriend's sorority was at the Ambassador Hotel on Sixth Street. So we went there, and they dropped me off. Everybody was glad to see me, and after I told about looking for a job, the sorority mother said I could sleep on the floor.

Diamond Ring

The next day, we had a nice breakfast and helped her daughter to load her car because she was starting a new job at home. After she left, we all went out on the beach and had a great time. Around four, the daughter called her mom, saying that she had lost the stone out of her grandmother's diamond heirloom ring, perhaps by hitting it on the opening for the trunk. So all of us walked around in the parking lot for an hour, looking—nothing! Sadly, we went back on the beach for a while, and later, they started up card games, got some beer, and we were allowed to smoke cigarettes.

As the sun had set, I had too much smoke or beer and had to step outside for some fresh air. Looking out over the parking lot in the dark, I saw something glinting. As I walked toward it, I had to duck down, lower, and lower to keep my eye on the glint. Finally, nearly crawling, I picked it up in the near dark. A stone all right. I felt sure I had found something big. I went around the back and up the stairs, waited, not to interrupt the card game, and went to her mother and said, "Is this it?" and showed it to her.

She screamed, and I dropped it into her palm, and she grabbed me and hugged me, and everyone was excited, jumping up and down. She said she would help me with whatever I needed this week to help me find a job. This was another example of my mother and God looking after me.

Sadicks

They fed me and let me sleep on the floor, and soon I found a great job at Corner News and Variety, working with Maurice and Mrs. Sadick on Dorchester Street, taking care of the store's front porch. I inflated all the balloons and beach toys at 6:00 a.m., hung them up, and organized the entire newsstand, all the newspapers and magazines that were put away inside each night, and swept the whole front area, floors, and entrance. She made me a sandwich for lunch, and they told me many stories and gave me little treats and leftovers from other days. One day, to my surprise, I saw my father drive by and look at me. I guess he was satisfied, never stopped or said anything—that was my father.

Ryan's Gifts

After two months, I got to know their friend, Mrs. Ryan from Ryan's Gifts. She was young and beautiful. Their store was up on the boardwalk, next to Thrashers French Fries. Then, one day, I was out on the beach and saw her. She asked me to sit down and told me that they had a spot for me if I wanted to join her group. I did and asked her if she would ask Mrs. Sadick. She did, and I got a job for more money, a day off every other day and evening, and working with zillions of great gifts. I liked it all and met happy kids and girls enjoying french fries, and us getting free plates of leftover french fries from Thrashers, next door, very often.



During the day, so many were dropped that since I worked in my bare feet, gradually, I would have soles on my feet made out of dried french fries! Mrs. Ryan was so nice and trusted me, and she often asked me to take the store paperwork up to their other store in Rehoboth in her '57 Cadillac! She kept my money for me, and when September came, I hitchhiked home to my father's with \$400 cash. I laid it on the table, and he never said a word, but I knew he was impressed! That summer was unforgettable all the rest of my life. Another gift from Mom and God.

Mahani Kai

So I met Bill Dyson, Chris Washburn's friend, and he and I became closer each year. One day, on the way to his house in Linstead, we passed a home with part of a boat showing out back. We decided to turn around and see. They had some sort of catamaran back there. We knocked on the door—no luck. But we decided to return another time, and next time, we met this retired military guy who was once stationed in Hawaii. He said, "After my years of service there, they said you can get your boat shipped home, and that is how I got this one here named *Mahani Kai*."

He continued, "Unfortunately, there was some damage, and I am too busy to work on it."

We said that we had lots of boat repair experience. He said he would pay any expenses and that he would like to get her sailing again. All the sails and lines were in the basement, and he took us down there to get all the bags. Worse yet, a tree had fallen and holed the deck. We made a regular habit of working there, making the parts, and fitting them with Epoxy glue. Gradually, we tested out erecting the mast.



Then he helped us tow it down to the beach. In two weeks, we had it going and took him out. The next time, he was busy, but three of us were out there when we saw another catamaran going along—a rare thing in those days. It was a Chessie Cat—new and exciting. We headed over there and began to catch up. They saw us coming and trimmed their sails. We did also and caught up, and they were trimming, and so were we, but we were passing by them when, all of a sudden, there was an explosion! Our mast came crashing down when we were noticeably ahead, barely missing our friend, Steve Singer. They came over, no injuries, but we were extremely upset after being so excited moments before! They towed us in the Chessie Cat, a new and very special boat, when catamarans were new on the Chesapeake Bay. They were expensive, and we had passed her. Too bad that bulkhead member had pulled up through the deck. Back to work again!

Phil Link

At home, same old thing! My Father, finally, at breakfast one day in 1965, said, “You make me sick. I can’t stand the sight of you. Find yourself a place to stay.”

I was eighteen and not sure what to do, but I went down to Mr. Steel’s garage next door to Washburn’s and went to work on something. A little while later, a stranger showed up and said, “I am Phil Link. Bill Dyson told me to stop over here.”

I told him that I went to church with Donny Link at St Martin’s-in-the-Field! I told him that my father threw me out of home today. He said that he and his wife broke up, and then she didn’t pay her bills and had to move to Pennsylvania, so they abandoned their house. He was having to drive up to Glen Burnie. “Want to go see it?”

I said, “Yes” and rode up there with him. We had fun talking. The place was fixable and at \$90 per month, \$45 per person, which I could afford. So we made a plan to meet and start cleaning, painting on the place the next day. How is that for a quick solution?

We were doing the living room next day when the phone rang. His wife said in a loud voice, “Come get this child or I will kill her!”

Have you ever heard something like that in your life? His child—Cindy! So next day, Phil drives to Pennsylvania, and now we have a two-year-old girl to take care of—our family! We fixed up a tiny room for her in the kitchen pantry, a big closet, and bought all kinds of food. Now we have his daughter, Cindy, to raise! How could all this be possible? My mother and God, taking care of me, of course! Each time I took our rent money over there, I hit it off more with John Barnes! We would always talk, and he would like what I said. Finally, a year later, I said, “Can we ever buy the place?”

And he said, “Yes!” In spite of me not believing it, we made a deal for \$6,500 for the house and property, so here my mother was doing another thing like Mister Steele. God is helping me! What a blessing!

Meanwhile, Dyson, friends, and I went hiking on the Appalachian Trail, and while going along, we found a cabin just off the trail, and while they were looking in the windows, I found the key in the *mailbox*! So later we decided that all we needed was food. During the winter, he said, “Hey, let’s go up there and see if we can find it by car.”

Sure enough, with maps, we did! We were nervous, but by dark, we figured that no one was coming and built a fire in the fireplace and put music on our tape player and opened some wine, sat around the fire, telling stories, used our sleeping bags. Next day, after breakfast, cleaned up really well, locked up, and put the key back in the box! *Wow! Great time!* What an amazing experience!

VW Camper

Donna and I bought a ’61 VW Westfalia Camper with a real wooden interior, medium green, and after some rocker repair and serious prep work, I painted it yellow at Middleton and Meads. Then we took a fall trip to New England to work things out in the VW. We had fun and began to talk about doing a tour of the USA in the summer. I installed three five-gallon water jugs, hooked together to a water spigot and hand-pumped shower so we could stand outside on a plastic mat and wash in a bathing suit. I had repaired the rust holes and sanded it in the garage at Faubert Road. We traveled on weekends and became comfortable camping out. We studied maps of the states and our nation. We realized it would be difficult to see so many states, so we decided to get started in her last day of teaching English at Glen Burnie High School.

USA Trip



We left on June 30 and headed South, through Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, and over to Alabama, then along the Gulf Coast, stopping in small restaurants and cafés in each town we found. At twenty-five, we were still kids, and people would say, “Aw...look at these cute kids traveling the country.” Some would say, “Come on over to my farm, and we will show you around.” Then they would say, “You can stay on an island in our lake.”

One adventure after another in every state—hiking, camping, and sightseeing. We went down through Texas and into Mexico for the day. Guadalajara—there was never a dull moment. We drove up and through

the Rocky Mountains with our 40 hp engine, twenty miles an hour for miles, but everyone was patient with us. We enjoyed Salt Lake City so much we decided to go through it again in the other direction. We visited Chris and Kevin Washburn when we got to Washington State where Chris was working for a lumber company. We stayed with him and Kevin in a cabin they rented in Snoqualmie National Park. A bear came to visit while we were there. We admired Washington State, Seattle, then down to Oregon, where we followed the coastline, always stopping in cafés and restaurants in the towns.

California countryside was spellbinding, but we avoided the big cities and headed back through Nevada and back through Salt Lake, Utah, known for setting high-speed records on the Great Salt Lake. Up into Montana, Wyoming, and Illinois, there were so many things to see and do. We stopped in every state park along the way, and we saw that we were starting to fall behind because Donna had to be back for her job teaching English at Glen Burnie High School on September first. We barely made it but were thrilled to see Phil and Gabe and shared endless stories for the rest of the year! Right away, we saw we had problems. They bought so much stuff, and so did we, that the house was out of closets and storage space. They barely made it, but I saw that I needed a storage space of my own.

Smith Farm/Hamilton

While Donna went back to work, I set out to find a place.



I drove around in the bus, looking at driveways leading onto farms, and I decided to try this one, off Old Telegraph Road. The driveway was very long, natural sand, and it led to a big old farmhouse in the center of the farm. As I drove in, it ended in a circle in front of the farmhouse.



A guy was sitting on the porch with his dog. He waved. I got out and walked over, stuck out my hand, and said my name. We shook, and I told him I was from Severna Park and Glen Burnie, and he offered me a seat. I petted his dog, Jerry. We found out that we knew some folks in common. I told him about coming home from our trip and that I needed storage space. Earlier, I had already looked up garage rental in the newspaper, \$30 a month. I couldn't afford that. He said they had a potato house they weren't using. "How much?" I wondered aloud.

"Thirty dollars," he said, "a year!"

I was so relieved. I could afford that, so he took me over to look at the potato house—perfect. So, gradually, we made friends. I went there, more and more, and took Donna over. We swept and cleaned and met his Uncle John, Aunt Ora, and later, his Uncle Rupert. For years, Hamilton's father ran the farm with his two brothers, all kinds of crops on 125 acres, but when Hamilton's father died, they decided to retire, so they had three huge barns and two tractor sheds that weren't being used. Looking back, I always used to wonder, *How did I find Smith Farm?* My mother and God showed me where to go!

So, gradually, I became a regular visitor to put something in the potato building I had rented. Gradually, I looked at the other unused buildings—three huge barns, thirty-by-thirty-by-ninety, and two tractor sheds, quite large. Hamilton did not use these, and they sat empty. Any communication we had would be minimal. He was not a talker, but, again and again, he was willing to rent me his buildings until I had the whole potato building, two barns, and two tractor sheds. Years later, Bob McCarthy and I built a nice home into the potato house. I added on four inside parking spaces to the tractor shed where I stored the school bus workshop I had built for my return from the Caribbean in '76. I used and lived at Smith Farm for ten years!

Dyson/Owens

Meanwhile, while we were away on the trip around the country, June to September 1969, during that time, Bill Dyson got a job working on Charles Owen's, of Owens Yacht Corporation's, personal yacht, the fifty-foot yawl, *Oceanus*. It had been neglected, and right away, when we had returned from our trip, he called and said, "JJ, you are the only one I know that can help me deal with this."

We had worked together on several big jobs and had established a great rapport, going all the way back to the motorcycles. Then, days later, we cleaned the entire bilge, then we shined and polished everything else on the boat—talk about a project! I got to spend hours with Chuck and Marge Owens. They were friendly and easygoing. Bill's job would include being skipper for the family, and in the fall, moving the boat down the East Coast of the USA and across the open ocean to Christiansted, Saint Croix, to its winter slip at Chandler's Marine. Not long after that huge trip and their arrival, he called me and said that Chuck and Marge were going to go to Italy and spend a month touring Europe, and why don't I fly down and stay aboard for January 1970.

Meanwhile, Donna was working and taking care of her parents, so she said, "Go ahead and go!"

So I booked a flight on Eastern, "The Wings of Man," and went over to Friendship Airport with carry-on luggage for the flight. Being there was summer weather in winter and like having the world at your fingertips. We rented scooters (mopeds) and toured the island with all the scenic beaches and hotels, restaurants, and fabulous homes. Everywhere we went, we were welcomed and had just turned twenty-five.

Christiansted/ *Three Cheers*

Several partners, including Dick Newick and Jim Brown, were building *Three Cheers* in the yard there, a trimaran for the Single-handed Trans-Atlantic Race. We had followed their success years ago with *Cheers*, a proa, and now we met them in person and volunteered to work with them on the boat. They trusted us, and we did everything exactly as they said, with them. Meanwhile, *Oceanus* had its own Dyer sailing dinghy, and Dyson suggested that I use it to teach myself to sail. I did and had a blast. Twice a day, a beautiful *Catalina* flying boat would land and drop off passengers from other islands. I stopped what I was doing to watch every landing or takeoff. Flying boats—sensational! Still my favorite!

Then we noticed an overgrown twenty-one-foot ocean-going Olympic catamaran at the Hotel on the Key, across from our slip. We went up there and spoke to the manager. He said that he would love to get it going and would pay for any supplies we needed. We scrubbed the whole thing and got new lines for the main and lubed all the blocks, pulleys, and other moving parts, and within days, we were going twenty knots at times *and* made a new friend of the manager. Everything was so beautiful and refreshing. At the same time, we made such progress with *Three Cheers* they took us for their first sail. Everything about it was exciting and, of course, later, they won the race! You could say, "Who made all this happen?"

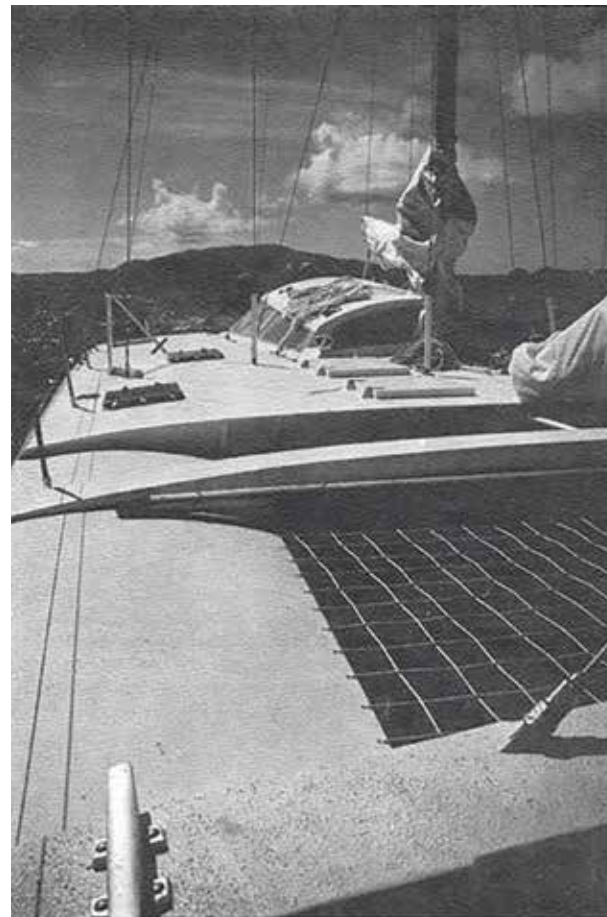
"God and my mother, naturally!"

Dyson and Spronk

Back home, we kept in touch, and soon they brought *Oceanus* home and tied up at Port Owens. Charles Owens bought the Yacht Yard! Dyson enjoyed staying with us at Faubert Road and told this story. After I left, he had the opportunity to go to Sint Maarten, Netherlands Antilles, one hundred miles to the north of Saint Croix. As they approached the island from the south, the first thing they saw were these four hulls lying on the Simpson Bay Beach like huge brown cigars. He had never seen anything like it, went over there right away, and introduced himself around. They were surprised at his knowledge and interest in catamarans, invited him to come back often. He bought a loose-leaf notebook, changed his plans, wrote down the stories they told him, and took pictures.

After a while, many pages were filled with notes from the great designer, Peter Spronk. These hulls were made of molded veneer, light and strong. The newest design was going to be of lapstrake waterproof plywood. He had prices, amounts, drawings, and pictures, and had made new friends with them. At the same time, I had studied Whirlwind boats they made near here to the point I had enough for an article—"Wild About Whirlwinds"!

When he got back, he showed me everything, and I told him I wasn't interested in doing all that because, after all, I had the house, garage, and all the 356 Porsche projects going. *But* he would *not* stop talking about it and, gradually, over a month, convinced me that it was the opportunity of a lifetime for us to build a fast catamaran and sail it all over the Caribbean. After the month of steady repetition, I was gradually sold on the idea and gave in! We had to figure out how to rent a big building and commute to Baltimore for all the construction. Suddenly, we received a letter from Peter inviting us to move to Sint Maarten and live on his new land, use his old building, right next door to their new building. We could be nearby and copy everything for our forty-seven-footer while they built a sixty-footer! Another dream of a lifetime. We were so excited we ran screaming up and down the hallway, just trying to imagine how we could be so lucky all day! We were changed forever! Who did this? Another from my mother and God!



Tsje Tsja, Peter Spronk's new catamaran

Catamaran/Big Trip

Now I would have to divide everything. We packed up twenty-one-foot lockers of tools and equipment and took them to a freight-forwarding company in Baltimore. Very soon, Bill and girlfriend Evelyn and my stepbrother Michael got packed up and flew down there with tents.

School Bus

I was left home by myself to divide my possessions, build a school bus workshop, storage place for returning, with workbench and clothes, camping gear and a stove and sink, including tools for a complete place to be to work and make money with a desk, tax records, and a place to start over five years from now, whenever this was over. I found a Bingo place in Dundalk selling used school buses for \$50. The guy was so nice. He said I could have as many parts as I wanted off the other buses. I got everything I needed to get mine going, plus extras, and he said for five dollars additional, his friend would tow the bus to my house! We left at midnight.

He warned me that we would be stopping now and then for a pint! I paid for those too! His truck couldn't lift the front off the ground, so I had to steer. The bus had no windshield, and it was raining lightly, but I was in a tight spot, so I gradually became soaked. But we made it at four in the morning! Now I had my new school bus in the driveway at Faubert Road! Wow! Very exciting to have been able to make such a big step for so cheap. Another magic thank you to you know who!

While I worked on the school bus, I made sure I told all my furniture customers about the auction I was looking forward to having and all the treasure opportunities for them. I was surprised that so many were coming.

House Sale and Auction

Meanwhile, I told real estate friends about my house being for sale, and soon they took a look and told me \$22,500! I was in shock. I only paid \$6,500 for it a few years before! So I went ahead and had the auction for all my possessions. I was surprised at how many friends and customers showed up and how they outbid each other all day. Gradually, we kept going until there was nothing left, and I thanked them all for coming and their generosity. What a great time! A big pile of dollars in one day! \$17,404.59—I counted while sitting on the bare, empty floor!

Money for *Taruma*

I made a pile of all the money and checks, and as the sun went down, I counted \$17,404.59 for my bank account! A few weeks later, they put the house on the market, and it brought \$22,222, so my hope could be that I wouldn't run out of money in the upcoming years. I threw myself full into the project of the school bus and getting everything ready to store it on Smith Farm, right by a heavy-duty outlet and spigot inside the tractor shed. I even made the outdoor doors fit so things would stay clean.

My family told me that I was out of my mind. No one does anything like this, and they were worried that I would disappear and that they would never find me or hear from me again! I promised my father, face-to-face, that I would write a letter to him every month, from the time I got there, and I did! To my surprise, I found all twenty-two letters from then, fifty years ago, in my father's papers. What a treasure! Another gift from him! I assured them that I was going to take a Panasonic tape recorder and keep them up-to-date on everything we did. I did, plus I took hundreds of tapes of favorite music to keep us entertained while we worked.

Peter's Shed

Dyson and the others got down there months ahead of me and moved Peter's old building over from Simpson Bay to the new property on Simpson Bay Lagoon where everything was new. The Dutch were good at dredging swamps and making usable land. This area was sitting five years before it was legal to go there without getting stuck.

Construction

The building they moved was about fifteen-by-fifty, made of used galvanized corrugated sheet metal, all piled on the roof of our Volkswagen car and hauled over there a little at a time. You have to understand that it was the islands in the seventies; everything was in short supply and more expensive because it had to be brought in by ship! I wired the building for lights and outlets. We laid Peter's old pressure-treated railway; we were to use it as a guide for us to bolt together all the frames of the hulls. So everything was made level, true, and straight as it went together by us with plywood walkways the whole length, just the way they had them. We did everything as they had previously, and they told us all the steps, then built one frame after another until we made and installed the stem and transom and then the planks, one at a time, on either side, staggered, lapstrake glue joints with resorcinol glue, and then carefully aligned and bolted together until dry, then bolts removed and replaced with glued dowels.

Everything was stiff and straight on each side with the parts for the other hull made and marked for later assembly and put aside. We laid quarter-inch walkways along both sides and ends. We were walking around the construction area so much the wood showed wear from our feet from the whole project. Behind us was Peter's new huge building with concrete floor, ready to keep the seventy-by-thirty-foot boat under a roof. They also built a huge concrete box to be a cistern to store water off the roof with a pump for dishes and showers after every day of hard work. We copied everything they did in our smaller sizes, forty-seven-by-twenty-foot. My father's letters, copied at the end of this chapter, will tell more details.

Louis St. Bernard

Peter would occasionally visit us and look things over along with his partner, Malcom Maidwell, from England, and long-term assistant, Louis St. Bernard, from Grenada, farther south, but English educated, kind, and charming—our great friend—and Paul Paresi, lifelong islander, made a whole family of catamaran enthusiasts, along with regular visitors from other islands where catamarans were new, lightweight, and the fastest of all sailing craft.

Land

So I was able to buy a one-fourth acre across the road. Soon I had my tent up there instead of behind Peter's place. There was an old concrete cistern there to catch water, mostly a big hill, but good views and a road. A start. Jeff and Ann let me use their bathroom, and I taught their children hundreds of things, read stories to them, toured the island, and went boating together. Soon I built a twenty-foot-wide workshop across the back of their house and could do boat maintenance work there.

Bill Dyson's wife, Evelyn, had benefitted for years by being married to him and also by everything I had donated, thousands of dollars, and the Treaddle Zig-Zag Singer sewing machine she used that I found and restored. Still she decided that she could not stand me and insisted constantly to Bill that he would have to buy me out. Between he and Hugh, they were able to come up with ten thousand dollars that they could offer to compensate me for leaving our effort. I told Jeff and Ann what was going on, and after a few days, they explained that they were also out of money and struggling to pay for everything. Also, they came to understand how little they knew about sailing a large catamaran and taking care of guests on the open ocean and invited me to join their effort to own and use *Maho*. I thought about it for a few days and decided that I would much rather join them and their wonderful charter business than going home with ten thousand dollars to the school bus on Smith Farm.

This I later regretted, but too late. So I said goodbye to Hugh, Bill, and *Taruma* and spent the most time with Jeff and Anne and Peter's crew. It was amazing because I fit right in, had my own tools, and was skilled in all the same things necessary on their boat as I was formerly doing construction on *Taruma* that once was mine. I spent more time skin and scuba diving and teaching Ann's children, Jordy, Kate, and Reid. We had great diving experiences because my friend, Jeff Jeffcoat from Severna Park, and I had enjoyed scuba diving together years before, and I learned many of the techniques and was an excellent swimmer. Here, a great more detail about the whole complicated partnership needs to be added from the thirty detailed letters I sent home to my father who kept them all for *fifty years!*



Hobie

Bill brought his sixteen-foot, orange Hobie Cat, and Jeff and Ann had their fourteen-foot Cats that Peter had already built for their water sports business they had at Mullett Bay Beach Hotel on the other side of the island where we had some fun recreational time when not working. Our project with Peter brought us many new and interesting connections in ways we never imagined possible.

Camping/Meal Boat

We brought with us our cabin camper tents, nine-by-twelve, from H and H Camper Surplus in Baltimore and set them up in the woods on the other side of the road behind Lanseair so that all we had to do is walk home in the evening. Before long, an American couple approached us about anchoring their boat in front of Lanseair for storage while they had to fly home due to a family emergency. They gave us keys and phone numbers, and we began keeping food aboard so we could use their refrigerator to cool food from our weekly shopping and for daily meals.

I decided to swim out each evening for an easy cleanup after a day of sawing and sanding, and I decided to see if it would be possible to swim out every day for a year! And I did! We had a pump of our own, bucket shower, and toilet out front of the boatbuilding shed too. We enjoyed feeling clean. The sun was *hot* there, and many times, the shower was *very welcome!*

Island

Little by little, we explored Sint Maarten, half-Dutch and half-French, some thirty-five square miles, with two-thousand-foot mountains in the middle, many small towns, and great views. We gradually explored many places but fell in love with Pic Paradis, a park up on top of the spine of mountains with views of both sides of the island from one spot. There was a huge radio tower at the end of the road, and no one there, so we got to climb up to perilous two-thousand-foot heights with no one stopping us. Many exciting opportunities. One led to a park where we found rocky tunnels with dark areas leading all the way back down to the ground, Currosol, a tiny dead-end road to a few homes surrounded by small scenic mountains.

Roland

Another time we visited Grand Case, the French side, near the northwestern part of the island, and admired all the cute shops and places like we had never been before. With my art background, I led my friends into an art studio and met the owner, Roland Richardson, who had created color combinations and techniques that could capture the beauty and unique feelings like the Caribbean as we saw it. We as newcomers suddenly felt at home. He took an interest in us, and we told him about our Caribbean boatbuilding project at Lanseair. He said that he would stop in sometime.

Roland's Party with Champagne and Caviar

To our surprise, he came by a week later, enjoyed our tour, and told us that he was having a party in two weeks, champagne and caviar! Wow! None of us had ever gone to anything like that! We cleaned up and put our best clothes on. It was a New Orleans-style home. We had never been to France. Full porch across both floors of the home with private countryside views, a large crowd of all his admirers and family, mostly French, welcomed us and put up with the new goofy Americans. Waiters with trays walked among us, offering only caviar or champagne! A small combo walked among us with charming music. We felt that we had never had a more wonderful time.



Dungeon

Next day, I told my friends that I needed to look at the VW bus I had noticed the day before while driving to Roland's party, but they had obligations. So I retraced our trip from yesterday and took a flashlight to have a look at the underside of the bus. Mine needed a transmission. It looked good, and almost immediately, here came the polished boots of a gendarme I saw coming my way from under there. "Bonjour," he said as I slid out. "You are under arrest for suspicion of auto parts theft!"

His assistant walked me to the back seat, and they explained in French-English mix that they do not tolerate auto parts theft on the French side, like the Dutch do. That I may have to go to the main prison on Guadeloupe! We went through the main entrance of La Gendarmerie and into the courtyard where I saw with horror a turtle upside down on a stump post, held by a knife through its body but still alive—sickening!

Jail

They locked me in a nearby stone dungeon with a thick iron door, holes across the top and bottom, and bent from hundreds of human impacts from prisoners. An hour or so later, they took me out. I said that I needed to "go," and they showed me the steps up to the latrine, and I noticed that this could be a way to jump over the wall. We went in the office and began to fill out the papers. Suddenly, the phone rang, and it turned out that the other police car had broken down in Phillipsburg on the Dutch side. They left me to sit with the office telephone operator. His phone was on the other side where he was briefly out of sight. I measured with my mind how long his calls took. The car repair issues were repeated, and I beat it, out the back, to the latrine steps. At the top of the wall, I jumped, and I was surprised to land in the middle of a children's marble game. I said, "SHUSH!" and put my finger to my lips and ran like hell through the back streets of Marigot and toward the Dutch side, into the woods down by the water until I was safely hidden, then rested and kept a careful eye out for police, later going by on the main road with sirens wailing.

Finally, it began to get dark. In full darkness, I made my way down to the water and swam home with just nose and eyes above the water's edge. It took hours. Sometimes, I walked in the shallows but still submerged and keeping a careful lookout. About 10:00 p.m., I came quietly up the beach of Simpson Bay Lagoon to the boatbuilding shed. They all almost screamed. They were so surprised to see me and made a circle around me. "What happened?"

I told the whole sordid tale. They all agreed that we needed to tell Roland.

Roland Helps

The next morning, Bill and Hugh went over and told him the whole story. When he arrived, he had already decided what to do. He made me memorize “*Ja’i peur comme une bete.*” (I had the fear of a beast that is why I “left early.” I am sorry.)

The Gendarmes accepted Roland’s explanation, and we were free to leave. I was in a state of shock. He told me, “*Maintenant* be careful!”

I vowed to never look at any potential parts car on the *French side!* I felt like he saved my life.



As the years went by, I felt like he created and captured how I felt about the colors and simple images of the Caribbean and all the islands, and every time I have seen his work, from then on, it all came back to me, just like I was again twenty-five. What a treasure!

Peter Spronk/Assembly

So on with the boat work, actually with several years of continuous work punctuated with wonderful Caribbean experiences and island memories.

Peter Spronk was very generous to us. Along with his old building, which we moved and rebuilt, he gave us his old construction railway of long stringers and cross bars where the sixteen or so frames were mounted in order, along with the stem and stern and then the laminated keel the whole length, joining them all together. When all were bolted and glued together in place, were now sturdy and secure, we began feeling like we had a boat going instead of just piles of parts waiting. Over there at Peter’s, they were building a sixty-footer and both hulls at the same time, under roof, whereas we were building ours one hull at a time, and later we would sew a huge tarp to cover us while we joined both together with the bridge deck. So the whole first year was us cutting and marking the planks and connecting the planks, two at a time, so both sides were supported the same, ten to twelve planks, and finally, the many fasteners were all done.

When the first hull was finished, we decided to have all our friends over for a hull-carrying party. We called Heineken, and they knew we were building the boat—small world. We were surprised how many showed up and how easy it was to put it outside, out of the way. Free beer, right? One of the things that was nice was that our location was near the main road and lots of local people liked checking on our progress, and we made many friends. So after seven months, we were starting in on the second hull assembly. It went faster than the first because we had already done all the steps before. We often worked an extra hour or more because we were afraid that Peter’s team would get ahead of us, and we would fall behind, and then we would miss the steps that they were doing. We were blessed that they wanted us to succeed and often checked on us to make sure we were doing everything right.

The second year was coming to an end as we were finishing the second hull. As I promised my family, every month, I recorded the progress on a cassette audio tape and sent it home to my father and stepmother, Virginia Johnson, to share with her six children, Michael Troja, who was living and working with us, and my uncle and aunt, Lloyd and Eileen, and other family members, Olga, Jerry, and cousins, Edith and Jerry Trout Jr. They said, “We became closer because we had to share your tapes and visited them and talked about all you were doing with them.”

Maho

Of course we were doing all sorts of other things at the same time. I made friends with the people who owned the sixty-foot *Maho* that Peter and his crew were building. Jeff and Ann from Savannah, Georgia, were running Maho Water Sports at Mullet Bay Beach Hotel on another side of Sint Maarten, the Dutch side, at a very beautiful beach and waterfront area. I went scuba diving with them and their guests, several times, on the other end of the island. They showed me their property with two homes and beautiful views on the hill nearby Simpson Bay, across from Peter's Lanseair location.



Taruma

After owning Faubert Road for a year, my friend Bill Dyson got a job working for Chuck Owens of Owens Yacht Corporation on Owen's personal yacht. I helped him clean the entire vessel, and two months later, he delivered it down to Saint Croix, US Virgin Islands, to its winter berth at Chandler's Yacht Yard. So Dyson called me, saying they were going to Italy for a month and to come down and stay on the boat with them. We had a fabulous time, and months later, he went to Sint Maarten, one hundred miles north and saw men building catamaran hulls near the beach. He was impressed. They were friendly. He bought a notebook and began writing down everything they told him, and when he returned to stay with me, he talked nonstop for a *month*, about building a forty-seven-foot catamaran sailboat, until I decided to join him in the project.

Then, suddenly, I would need to sell Faubert Road, *and* the great designer Peter Spronk invited us to move to Sint Maarten, Netherlands Antilles, and use his old building on his new property on the Pond Fill land by Simpson Bay Lagoon. Bill, Evelyn, and my stepbrother, Mike, went down there to get started, summer of 1970, while I made auction and home sale plans. Suddenly, way more storage was needed on Smith Farm because I was moving out of Faubert Road. Now I was up to \$100 per year rent. By December, the house was sold and everything newly stored on Smith Farm and the family brought up-to-date on the changes. Because I had to plan for my return, I found school busses for sale for \$50 at a closed bingo hall on Eastern Avenue in Baltimore. The guy was very generous. For another \$20, he let me take extra generators, starters, and carburetors off the other buses and called a friend to tow it home for me for \$5! It took us until 4:00 a.m. to get home, and I was steering my bus in the rain due to no windshield.

Months later, with it all running and driving, I put in a toilet, water supply, bathroom, kitchen, bed, closet, storage food, and everything I would need to camp out in there on my return. Luckily, my parking place on Smith Farm had both electric and water supply, which I hooked up but did not turn on. I figured it might be there five or six years! And it was! I even hung the big doors on the tractor shed and sent the Smiths all letters and picture postcards from the island, just like family.

Load of Luggage

I flew from Friendship Airport near the farm to Saint Thomas and then took an island hopper to Sint Maarten, hitchhiking to Lanseair; the first person who stopped knew where it was and asked about the catamarans.

Work

I put my tent up on the property behind Peter's property and went to work on finishing the cutting out of the frames for *Taruma* the next day and then bolting them to the frame supports on the building jig that came with Peter's old building where they made one hull at a time. His new building was four times as wide, and the whole sixty-foot *Maho* would be built all at one time.

Three months later, we invited neighbors and friends to help carry out the first hull and have a Heineken beer or two. The planks were easier to make because we paid extra for sixteen-foot sheets of waterproof marine plywood by Brunzeel, Dutch, made just for boat construction, five layers and marine glue. So every full-length plank required three six-inch tapered glue joints. Glad I brought all my C-clamps.

There were five lots parallel to Peter's on Simpson Bay Lagoon. One belonged to Frank Mundus, a shark fisherman from Montauk, New York. I got to know him well and dated his daughter, Patty, for years. He was known for the inspiration for *Jaws*, a book and movie about sharks. *Wikipedia* has a long biography of Frank who created quite a character. The last lot at the end was a marine store, Island Water World, and they carried many products for boatbuilding that we used.



Boatbuilding

Boatbuilding became a full-time part of my life for four years, and two years being skipper and maintenance technician for *Maho*, '70 to '76. Adventures of every kind came our way. Lots of people stopped by to look and ask questions, and the locals introduced us to others who were interested in what we were doing and had built boats. We traveled to nearby islands to visit tour boats and boats for hire and visited stores from different countries with unusual products for sale. Luckily, Peter advised us well about what we would need, and Dyson and I went to Baltimore and bought twenty-one footlockers for everything. We took it all to a freight-forwarding company, and to our shock, they were *six months* longer getting it to us! We ended up going out and buying much of the supplies we needed that were now duplicated, and our old ones were now stuck in our trunks at the other end of the island chain.

Sleeping in our cabin camper tents was nice because, in the evening, it was cool and often a gentle breeze since the water was nearby. We each had a private location with a path to follow to our tent. We all agreed—no food at the tents. That worked well. No bugs or mice. We built a nice cooking area next to the stern of our hulls under construction with a bottle gas stove and the 12-volt, 110 fridge for our boat. We made a table and chairs out of scrap plywood and had a nice routine of daily life.

Nearby were islands belonging to other countries like Saint Barts, France, and Saint Thomas, and Saint Croix where Chuck Owens had his *Oceanous* yacht berthed at Chandlers Yacht Yard, where I stayed the whole month of January the previous year, swimming, sailing, and exploring. When we had time, we visited most of the nearby islands, like Saint Kitts, St. Barts, Anguilla, and Saba, all from different countries and available for nice day charter trips where we took our guests. Half of Saint Martin was also French and scenic, all were beautiful in hundreds of ways, but I had to be careful going to the French side after my run-in with French police, looking at the abandoned Volkswagen the day after Roland Richardson's party. I did have a pink Volkswagen bus with seats and used it to gather supplies and take friends to sightsee when they visited.

Ten members of my family came for a week, twice, and loved all the details of touring the islands. It is so easy to get to know tourists and locals there. My daughter's roommate told me yesterday, Christmas Eve 2022, that she enjoyed two weeks in Sint Maarten last month, and it is still nice to go there and be there. That is *good news* because she said that many other places now have crime problems. I was there forty-six years ago and still need to write the story of the rest of my life since then!

What it came down to was that after six years, nothing was bringing me much success. All was still a daily struggle. Being skipper or first mate on *Maho* was fun and exciting, but we weren't making much money and seriously needed maintenance and repairs were always making demands on what there was financially. Hugh and Bill were no longer friends or partners after I was thrown out by Evelyn, Bill's wife, who contributed very little, whereas we did most everything. I was using the land on Billey Folley, across from my partners, Jeff and Ann Klein, to have my nice tent and their bathroom for a shower each night, and their

workshop I built on the back of their house with tools. My place had no water or septic, and I was not getting the final ownership papers I was promised. The owner's health was in decline.

For whatever reason, I was no longer welcome at Landseair, one less place to go. I could hear the whispered advice—time to go home. I was thinking of the flight and the short hitchhike from Friendship Airport to Smith Farm, my locked buildings, and the thirty-three-seat school bus with all the conveniences of a motor home that I had built in there six years before leaving. It is dry indoors with water and electricity and lights ready to turn on. How can you beat that? What happened is that my family told me that there was going to be a big celebration for my beloved Great Aunt Olga's seventy-fifth birthday. And I was a hero for having them visit twice, five members, each family for a week, so they invited me to come, and I didn't want to miss it. Great excuse to go home.



Tall Ships

Then, on top of that, Bill and Hugh invited me to accompany them to St. George, Bermuda, to anchor out in the harbor and wait for the tall ships to arrive. Bill told us that theirs is an old tradition that when any of them arrive, if there are ships previously at anchor, already there, they get invited aboard as guests for a welcome tour. So I loaded my stuff on board *Taruma* and told them all about Aunt Olga's seventy-fifth birthday and how I would fly from Bermuda to BWI, Baltimore Washington, Friendship International Airport. I took a cab to the Bermuda Airport and made my arrangements for the flight. Sure enough, the first tall ship from Genoa, Italy, arrived and, an hour later, sent a sailor over to invite us aboard for a tour. Some had us climb in with them, and others invited us to use our boat. We made sure it was ready to use.

Once aboard, we were welcomed by several other sailors in uniform, and conducted through quarters, shown the captain's stateroom, and allowed to climb the rigging. Hugh and Bill climbed to the tops of their masts as a challenge, and I climbed the ratlines to the crow's nest, safe and comfortable, watching them, and when back down, they showed us to a table with sweet biscuits and drinks. Then our welcome crew returned, and we thanked them for their hospitality and departed on the stern boarding planks. What better way to spend part of an afternoon? The images would stand out in our minds all the rest of our lives; one by one, all the famous tall ships from the well-known cities all over Europe and Russia.

A week later, every ship was astir with activity, and Hugh rowed me to town to get a cab to the airport. I said goodbye and good luck as we parted ways for a good while now. It seemed like I saw some of the ships moving west, away from the island, perhaps from the air flight. It was all like a dream to be remembered forever. The flight was comfortable and smooth and several hours long. I retrieved my luggage and walked out to Route 175 and got picked up right away, me, a twenty-five-year-old with suitcases. The driver was surprised when we passed Dorsey Road, and I had to get out—short ride. “Yes, sir, and many thanks.” Now the long walk to Old Telegraph Road and the sand driveway past two huge fields with the suitcases in hand, but I made myself keep going, in the now dark, arriving unannounced, and not disturbing Hamilton's dog, Jerry, and quietly snuck in, lay down, falling asleep in the bus bed without any fanfare.

Next day, I let him know that I was back with a big box of printed books and pictures from the Caribbean (I sent him stuff all along) and then got to work getting my VW bus to run. Six years is a long time, but not so much when you are still feeling young.

Olga's party was a huge success; everyone had a wonderful time doing all the mega celebration traditional things like cake and ice cream and keepsake mementos and pictures. I called my friend Larry Smith and told him I was home, and he told me that he had begun getting Honda Civic autos to repair at his workplace, Honda City in Glen Burnie, Maryland. I knew nothing about these compact four-cylinder cars with transverse engine and four-speed front-wheel drive, tight bodies, and low fuel consumption, and fast as well! A little ugly, but so what—*new!* He brought one over needing body work and repair that night! We

got to sawing and banging on it right away and soon installed the new fender, hood, and did the primer! He got paid for that, and we split that.

Back to work *right away*. Of course, I had to open everything up and charge all batteries and get *new* batteries, but while we worked, I was able to get everything back to the way things were six years ago—visit my folks, have meals, and keep myself clean and comfortable. I had a nice laundromat nearby where the watch lady would do the laundry *for* you, for a small fee, like \$15, and fold and fill the duffel bag! *Wow!* I had that at Potomac State College in Keyser, West Virginia, too, right out of high school. Very handy if you can find it. The ladies are taking care of you!

Passing Away

I decided to keep a list of friends that have passed because there are so many, and I lost track of why and when they died, up to fifty friends now. Hard to believe. I never had any children with Donna. And after that, I began taking care of my friend's children. I took them sledding, ice-skating, hiking in the woods, camping, reading, and making things like Erector Set and craftwork of all kinds, twelve or fourteen kids over the years, and have watched them all grow up. I enjoyed every one. Many have become my friends now and help me do things!

Dancing

My mother sent me to the Casino, our community center, when I was seven or eight, and they taught polite, slow dancing to music with new young friends that I picked out from the row of girls on the other side of the room, opposite the boys' side! Dancing, music, and refreshments was a community group sensation! Pretty girls serving lunch! So I have been a socializer and dancer all my life. What happened was that I spent five years in the Caribbean, building the catamaran sailboat, and when I returned home, all my friends were married with children. I needed girls to date right away!

So I went to a ballroom dancing studio in Severna Park and took waltz, cha-cha, jitterbug, and tango lessons for two years. Within minutes of walking in the door, I had my arm around a lady! I enjoyed everything they did until I decided I had enough paying for it after two years, but they called me for a new owner party, so I attended that event and met *Valerie Yarashus*. I told her about my lifetime of furniture repair. She said that she had a table that needed repair. It had a big scratch. When I went to our appointment, she apologized. She had a meeting at her church, so she left her son to watch my repair techniques. We looked at his .22 rifle and talked guns and ammo.

The next day, he said to his mother, "Why don't you date someone like *that!*"

She called me and said she could not tell where the scratch was. So I owed my new relationship with her to him. We enjoyed dating and then married for ten years! Starting in 1983, we did everything imaginable together, including church. For two years, we went to Boston twice a month to be with her daughter, Valerie Ann, attending Harvard Law School with Obama in her class. But even though we had bought a beautiful home in the country, Valerie felt for years that she needed to move to Boston, Massachusetts, to take care of her daughter, Valerie Ann, who went to Harvard and became a judge but still needed her mother's love.

She moved up there, and my stepdaughter is doing well now. Valerie spent happy years up there, plus led to me finding my present wife, Cheryl Beveridge Johnson. She and I go to live music events and dance regularly. Recently, I went to a music event, and Cheryl and I started dancing with the first song. Soon everyone was dancing! One of the amazing blessings of my life is to always be able to get up and dance and entertain others with graceful moves and encourage *them* to dance.

D’Vibe and Conga

Recently, we met our friends at the nine-person band, D’Vibe and Conga, getting ready for a show, and the guitar player, Jeff, motioned to me. “Howard, come up here. I want you to know that the band recently voted you and Cheryl their favorite couple because you guys dance, and then everyone dances, and so then we all have more fun! So we will play for FREE at your house.”

So now we are having a spring *and* fall party at our place, oldtimeworld.com! Check it out! Music makes the world go round! Our lives have been enriched by the fact that every music event we go to see, we try to be the ones that dance. They always welcome us to get things going, then, minutes later, hesitant couples join us, and the whole thing turns into a real party.

Then, another thing happened. Dave Yarashus, my stepson, called me in 2020. “How, I have not seen you for so long.”

“Come on over, Dave, and visit,” I said, and he drove over, and we shared all the treasured memories we loved and started doing work together, all the great things about work I taught him years ago, just like my father taught me! Wow, what a blessing! So now we are getting together every weekend!

Medical Examination

I recently had a full medical examination. My doctor said, “Howard, you are my only patient that is seventy-six and looks forty-five!”

I was shocked. No other doctor ever told me that, but I have been blessed with happiness all my life. Maybe it is keeping me young! What is happiness anyway? Where does it come from? Well, it surely is the from the parents and the example they set. My mother loved me very much and said so often. The same for Dad, and we had many activities aboard wooden boats and the weekends on the river. Mother liked people and had many friends. From the time I was born, they had a different boat every two years, lots of swimming and picnics and sleeping at different anchorages for the night. Adventure!

Values

The quality of my life has come from many things like a belief in God, self-discipline, honesty, consideration for others, kindness, generosity, thoughtfulness, presence of mind, wisdom, learning from others, respect, and all these values may be what brings about happiness and success. Cheryl and I have looked up values, and the list includes

1. *Faith*—including belief, trust, fidelity, loyalty, and conviction. I went to church and Sunday school every year with my parents, and many years, thereafter, all throughout my life.
2. *Hope*—desire, belief, reliance, expectation. Close family ties, belief in others, confidence in them.
3. *Charity*—generosity, mercy, benevolence, helpfulness. Giving fills one's heart with joy and lifts their spirits.
4. *Fortitude*—strength, courage, endurance, resoluteness. We had many times we were ready to give up, but *we didn't!*
5. *Justice*—fairness, equity, rightness, impartiality. People can tell when you are fair or stingy.
6. *Temperance*—moderation, restraint, self-mastery, frugality, sobriety. Loss of self-control can end a valuable relationship.
7. *Prudence*—wisdom, discretion, vigilance, carefulness, thoughtfulness.
8. *Integrity*—responsibility for self, family, and friends, completeness, soundness, probity. Adherence to a code of behavior.

Things that *money can't buy*: manners, respect, common sense, patience, integrity, morals, character, trust, class, love, generosity, devotion, and motivation. Valuable advice to keep in mind. Amazing to think how many good traits one must have to get the best out of life.

Seven Deadly Sins

Avoiding the bad traits or ensuring that the good ones will be outstanding!

1. *Pride*—vanity, thinking one's self is above *God*.
2. *Envy*—desire for another's traits, status, abilities, situation.
3. *Gluttony*—inordinate desire to consume more than one needs.
4. *Lust*—craving the pleasures of the body.
5. *Anger*—wrath spurning love in favor of fury.
6. *Greed*—avarice, covetousness, desire for wealth or gain above *God* or faith.
7. *Sloth*—avoidance of work, both spiritual and physical.
8. *Narcissism*—excessive or erotic interest in oneself and one's physical appearance.
9. *Vanity*—self-love, conceit, egotism, selfish pride.

These last we avoid. The others, we believe, make for happiness and good relations with others all throughout life. On a recent thorough examination consultation, my doctor said that I am young for my age of seventy-six, maybe more like forty-five! I was shocked. All I can do is watch my diet, avoid overweight, and stay active as I have been all my life. My father told me that everybody has to work all day to make a living, but it is the work you do at home that helps you get ahead and take care of your home and family. He left them twenty million and lived to be ninety-two. Pretty great performance!

So here I sit, telling stories at seventy-seven, yet I have a list of seventy friends who have passed away. Nothing to do but regret that they are gone. After repeated reviews, I realize that I am guilty of *greed*. All my life, I wanted everything I ever saw and collected 135 boats, thirty-seven antique cars, endless tools, hundreds of every kind of powered machinery, models of everything, and treasures from the past, of all kinds, all on display now in four buildings on our seven-acre farm, oldtimeworld.com!

My Father Said

My father said many times that in February of 1945, his department was shut down because they had enough weapons and ammunition to kill every one of the enemy six times over. He came home and told my mother, and they decided that now is a good time to have a baby! So I was born one month after the Japanese surrender, November of '45. As soon as I opened my eyes, all kinds of friends and coworkers of Dad's and all people they knew came to visit, see me, have a drink, and tell about where you were during the war, so much so that I grew up with stories about the war and got maps of the world to see where all these places were. I now have a vast collection of books about WWII!

Return to Smith Farm

So the tall ships, Operation Sail 1976, and the bicentennial year went on by, and I was back to work with surprisingly steady supply of Honda Civics that customers would wreck as fast as we could fix them back up. My old furniture customers found out I was home, began calling, and I had evenings to pick up or do more work and further get things going. I gradually opened up and got going lights and heat and electricity for several work areas. Larry was glad to have a place to work. He could drag something in any time, no complaints, and call me from work with what was next.

Just like Bill Dyson, I was always honest, and it helped us in every way possible, and we enjoyed the results. As a matter of fact, forty-six years ago, we were doing this and are now still friends and helping each other today! Still driving and repairing Honda cars too. Hamilton Smith always seemed to be slightly interested or ignoring what we were doing but glad to have us around and not worried about the money.



I began to realize that I needed some outside entertainment and decided to sign up for dance lessons in a private Severna Park studio where I could learn dancing once a week and meet some ladies. This story is a repeat of page 104, but it was a very special experience and another gift from my mother in that dancing leads to a wonderful marriage. I attended for a year and never met anyone I wanted to date but got better at waltz, cha-cha, tango, rumba as well as swing, my favorite. I finally had to acknowledge the expense and said thank-you to all. Months later, they called me and said that they had sold out to Arthur Murray and would like me to attend the event to celebrate the sale. Sounded like a big crowd, so I dressed well, and orchestras were playing. It *was* crowded. I danced with and sat with this nice lady, Valerie, and when she heard that I touched up furniture all my life, she said, "I need your phone number. I have a scratch in my dining table."

Later that week, I went over Friday evening, and she apologized vigorously that she forgot a church meeting and would leave her son, Dave, fifteen, to sit with me while I worked on it. As I laid on the color coats and lacquer finish, he asked if I could look at his .22 rifle from his father that he had never fired. Safe? Yes. So we looked it over together, and I promised him we could go shooting soon. She invited me over

again, and she told me that her son liked me, and we sat and watched a program together, and suddenly, she began to *kiss* me. I was shocked but kissed back.

When her son got home, I gave him boxes of ammunition. We went to a museum together and a library. We were a nice compatible three. She liked to dance, and her older daughter was going to go to Harvard, a straight-A student, Valerie Ann. One thing led to another. We attended her church together many times, and the pastor said he would marry *us!* Seems like one blessing follows another! Marriage! Not only did we enjoy ten years together, but when she needed to move to Boston, she made a plan where I could buy the farm in Upper Marlboro from her. She said, "I bought that farm for you anyway."

I was on Smith Farm, and this single guy came walking down the road. *Who is that?* I wondered. It was the son of Bob of Bob's Bottle Gas, Bob McCarthy Jr. Ever since Faubert Road where we had that house with the car and half garage, I had Bob bring me gas bottles for this wonderful instant heat stove that Phil found. Bob would hook them up fast, without waiting, and tell us some funny stories, and his service was not too expensive. One day, he brought his son, but I had forgotten about him. When I saw it was Bob Jr., I said, "Where have you been?"

"In jail," he said, "and I don't want to talk about it."

So I never did ask any questions after that. I asked if he wanted to work and have a place to stay. "Yes," he said.

So we put up one of my tents on pallets and plywood in the barn and covered it with a tarp. He liked it, and we ate together and started fixing up the potato house I rented from Hamilton, the first building, I think. Now I was up to \$100 a year for four buildings. Ham said it was all right, so we cleared it out and insulated the walls, built a stairway up into the half attic, and hung drywall panels neatly on every wall. Valerie and Dave would visit. Then we installed this fifties metal kitchen cabinetry from tract homes where my aunt and uncle lived, only now they were upgrading, and this all was like new, just old-fashioned. We laid a linoleum floor and then carpeted everything else and the upstairs. It was tight and brown shingle. Valerie and Dave enjoyed every visit and helped get the place ready to use. Gradually, Bob made some contacts and found a roommate, visited less often, but we worked on his car so he was having fun too.

Valerie's son, David, treasured his years on Smith Farm and Upper Marlboro and, four years ago, called. I said, "DAVEY! Come over right away!" Now he comes every Sunday and helps us on the farm and *helps* with *this book!* Another wonderful treasure from our *past!*

Synopsis

As a child, my parents had raised me with the broken mahogany handmade furniture from my mother's Proctor family of Proctor and Gamble. My father said, "They never gave us any money, but instead this beautiful furniture, which I will show you how to glue, repair, and make replacement matching parts for the missing ones," and he *did*, too, starting at age five or six. He said, "You can't go out and play. You have to help me *work!*" And my mother showed me how to sand and apply coats of varnish to make it like off the showroom floor while watching *77 Sunset Strip* and other great fifties TV shows like *The Ed Sullivan Show*. I was used to my mother showing me refinishing on our Chris-Craft boat in the boatyard on the weekends.

My parents met in high school and bought a canoe for fifty dollars and owned all kinds of mahogany boats together ever since then. Gradually, it became clear that they intended that I learn every talent and skill they had. Both were very talented in all educated fields, mechanics, industry, gardening, farming, animal care, family care, music creation, and talent-related skills. My father had attended Baltimore Polytechnic Institute in downtown, North Avenue, Baltimore, Maryland, and my mother's father had taught steam engineering there, the last one. All the men in my family went there and learned mechanical drawing and then patternmaking for casting.



When I went there, I had to stay after school until I cast two of my own patterns and then welded up decorative bookends of thin steel, painted them flat black, and mounted my patterns for display! It was an experience of a lifetime, and I rode the bus every day for four years and walked across eight blocks to school to have the pleasure.

In 1961, my mother had been sick and treated for cancer, often, for most of the school year. December eighth, my father suddenly appeared at my English class. I was called, and he said, "How, Mother died today."

We both stood and wept, tears poured from our eyes while we walked through the halls. My friends all knew that something horrible happened.

Days later, he told me that he had paid the builder, Mr. Rembold, extra, to finish our house faster, but she hadn't made it, so we had to move anyway, from Baltimore and the bus for attending school, to Severna Park. "And you have to drive your mother's car to school."

Well, *that* was good news! He threw me the keys. Gradually, all my early years, I realized that my parents were teaching me their skills *every day*! And, surprisingly, I learned many of them well! Very many to the point that I have been self-employed at furniture refinishing and boat care all my life. I made money from sixteen years old to seventy-six years old—sixty years!



So Valerie Yarashus (Rollin) and I were married fifteen years until she needed to move to Boston to be with Valerie Ann and her grandchildren. I was left with the seven-acre place (no complaints) and kept her posted on what I was doing and shared with her stories of Boston adventures. We stayed friends, and so did Dave and I. It was a wonderful time of life, the late eighties. So then I decided to plant many nursery plants on the farm to get my farm tax base. So I bought 120 small Kousa Chinese dogwoods from Japan, a treasured beautiful miniature decorative species that blooms for three months in late spring, covered with white blossoms, all measured and spaced exactly in rows with rich soil. I dug every hole and tamped every planting, months of devoted effort here. All seemed to flourish well, and soon I had two huge blossoming fields with more hoped for the next year.

Gift from God

This one year, my resources were depleted and nothing coming in. Bone-dry account. I decided that against my will about money, I would pray to the Lord for help! I told *God* that I had done everything but *failed* to cover my bills and needed his help and went to bed in despair. Nine o'clock the next morning, I was awoken by the phone. "Mr. Johnson, this is Russell Watson. Years ago, you told me that you have hundreds of Kousa Chinese dogwood trees that you have raised. Can I come look at them?"

"Sure, sir," I said.

He came in fifteen minutes. I barely had my clothes on. He said, "Can I put tags on the ones I want?"

"Yes, sure, sir."

God and my mother, again!

So while I watched and ate, he looked and tagged and then said, "Can I have my men come dig these?"

"Yes, sir!"

Then he said, "When you are ready, follow me to the office, and I will cut you a check."

So by 11:30 a.m., he cut me a check, and by noon, I made a deposit in my *account!* *God* answered my *prayers*, and I have never had to ask him again! Every imaginable improvement was made on the farm buildings, roads, grading, grass, and tree trimming.



Arena

My friend Jackson called. "We are on a job and taking down a huge warehouse for a much larger one. Do you want the trusses?"

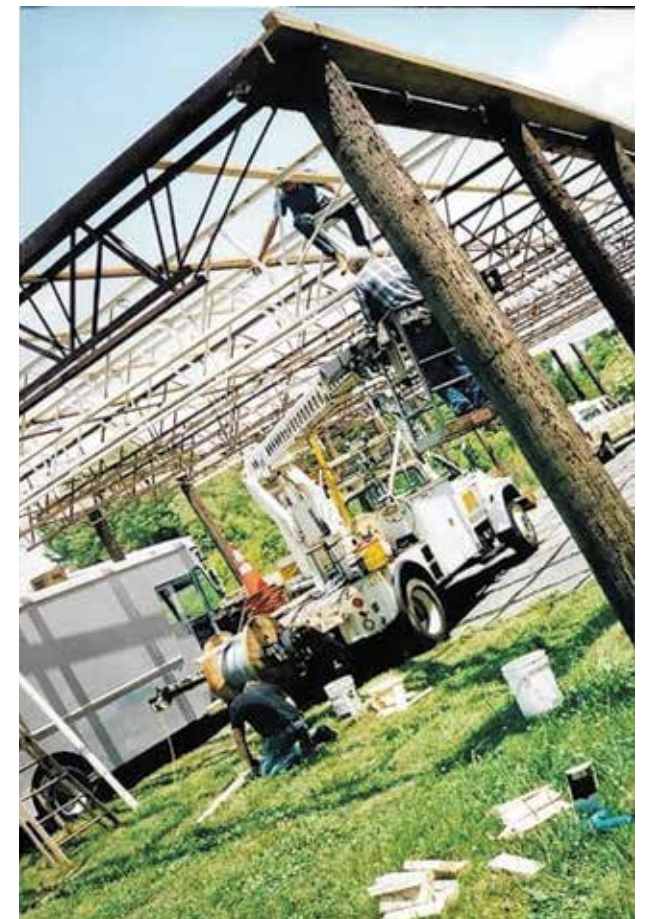
"Why sure, Mike! How many?"

"I'm not sure."

Later I found it was thirty-seven sixty-foot-bar trusses! It took the neighbor and I with his flatbed *all day* to bring them to my house and stack them outside the huge level site I had chosen. Later, as I did grading to level the area, I realized it would be 160 feet!

Months later, just by luck, I stopped to watch Wilson Sexton and his men putting up poles along my road, and at lunch, they invited me to sit with them. I told them about my project; they said, "Sounds interesting" and later came down here to see the site. They said, "We can do it!" and charged me \$700 each Saturday of work to do it, a whole year of \$700 Saturdays. They first dug and stood fifteen poles on each side in perfect alignment. Then they told me to buy *oak*, eight-by-eights, and I did, from the Amish, and they cut them, put them up, and anchored them with huge telephone pole lag screws!

The next weekend, they put up the trusses, one at a time, held them down to the oak eight-by-eights with lag bolts as well. Then they told me that I had to buy five hundred feet of square tubing and weld all the trusses to each other. Then I spent the whole winter welding. Lucky I grew up at Middleton and Meads. I am a good welder! Now the whole thing is rigid in *both* directions. Then I joined sixteen-foot two-by-fours together to make eleven lengths of material in a row the 150 feet of the shed. I bolted those down, as I went, to the steel girders so there would be strong material to hold the roofing. I had prepared this whole huge stack of corrugated, galvanized sheet metal for the roof. I was lucky to secure with the aid of five helpers, and I spent an entire day handing up and screwing down all the sheet metal. It took us all day to do the entire job, and all at once, I had this huge empty building! Or actually roof, not closed in yet.



1940 Chris-Craft

Monday morning, the phone rang. “Mr. Johnson, this is the Alexandria Seaport Society. You helped us put on a fundraiser a few years ago, and today, a member has contributed to us their 1940 Chris-Craft thirty-four-foot cruiser. We have no way, currently, to use it here. Can you use this boat somehow?”

“Yes, sir. I think I can,” I said.

“Well, the truck is here now with the boat on the trailer. Can we send it over with a set of jack stands right now?”

“Yes, sir,” I answered, and in a half hour, the truck drove in with a complete and beautiful Chris-Craft cruiser, parked it on the corner of the new building, and by noon or so, it was blocked and on display in *the new building!* A fantastic treasure!



Arnie's Boat

When I was at the University of Baltimore in about 1966, I had an apartment on 1621 Calvert Street in Baltimore and could walk over to the college each day for classes. Another student had an apartment nearby, and we found we had many interests in common, growing up on the Severn River and around Severna Park, so we would get together often.

One weekend, I went home with him, and he showed me the boat that he and his father built together that just needed finishing. A few years later, when Phil Link and I rented Phil's wife's home on Faubert Road in Glen Burnie, we began to have room for projects like this, 1968 or so.

Arnie and I would work on the boat and got five or more smooth varnish coats on his deck and interior. He gradually fell in love and started to have a family. He said, “Johnny, take the boat and bring it back when we can use it,” and I did; inside storage over the winter.



During the summer, we kept it on the mooring in front of his house until '92, when I was out on the Severn one day. There appeared a small group of other boaters waving me to come over and introduced themselves. The Antique and Classic Boat Society, Chesapeake Bay Chapter. They asked me all about my boats while sitting in their Chris-Craft and Centuries. They told me that they were planning a trip up north to the Antique Boat Museum in Clayton, New York, for the Antique Boat Show on the St. Lawrence River that separates us from Canada and connects the Atlantic Ocean to the Great Lakes. They had rented a cottage on Grindstone Island, the biggest of 1,850 islands in that area called the Thousand Islands and planned to commute to the show with their boats for ten days; would I be interested in going? I think that my mother sent this opportunity to me from heaven.

Valerie was busy taking care of H. T. Brown's Century 21 real estate office and said, "Go ahead!"

So soon I was meeting with Chuck Warner, Jim Holler, Tab Miller, and Herb Zorn to plan the trip and make lists. Months later, off we went, and, of course, Arnie approved using his boat! He was always glad that someone was getting meaningful use out of it. But this was a big deal, and towing it all the way up there, following each other, and no cell phones! Somehow we made it with gas stops and all the challenges of a seven-hour tow, all the way up to the top of the nation.

When we got there, right away I noticed that the benches in the yard were damaged with holes in the tops of the arms and backrests, right where you might lean. Ugly problem, and luckily, months before, I had been trying new kinds of polyester body putty fiberglass strand reinforced, and this one, a new brand I had been working with at home, was the *same color!* I had developed an auto body repair technique where you prepare the rust hole by sanding and rust removal around the hole, then the patch is marked and a stiff, semitransparent shrink-wrap plastic is marked to match on the other side and the two-part repair material mixed and spread on the flex sheet and slapped on the job, smoothed out around the edges and held in place without wrinkles for the ten minutes until firm, then the backing sheet carefully peeled off, leaving the repaired area ready to use!

So as we met our hosts, I told the manager that I could easily and inexpensively repair their benches. They began to question me about how I could do this. While we talked, my friends signed up for the river tour that was soon to leave. I explained everything to the head of maintenance, and they said, "We will get a quart of the fiberglass reinforced body putty and try it." Fifteen minutes later, I showed the maintenance man the process. He was so amazed. They said, "Go back and get a *gallon!*"

So I busied myself repairing ten benches in the shady beauty of the museum grounds, sanding around the edges with real coarse paper, and marking the patch on the shrink-wrap plastic, and then mixing the polyester and hardener on the other side, and then slapping the patch neatly on, and holding it across the opening, while keeping it shaped and free of wrinkles until it firmed up in ten minutes or less, and then gently and carefully peeling the white plastic patch support off, leaving a matching repair in place. Ironically, the patch material was the same color as the bench plastic, so no painting was required. Sometimes, I had to make a small addition in case of a gap or air hole, but once we got going, it was twenty arms and backs that I fixed, and after a while, the maintenance man brought the manager and staff out to see the repaired benches and gave me a ring of keys to all the doors of the museum, and my tired friends all came in from the freshly docked river tour and saw the ring of keys and said, "We take a tour, and *now you work here!*"

After that, I was a hero, and we had the time of our lives exploring everywhere we went and enjoying everything; none of it ever running out. Suddenly, every brand of pleasure boat was more interesting, and I realized that there was a story in every direction I looked because my father allowed me to read his boating magazines since I was an only child, from the time I could look at the pictures.



Antique and Classic Boat Society

So summer of 1992 brought into my life a gradual interest in collecting more boats and visiting other museums. The ACBS Chesapeake Chapter had a yearly show in St. Michaels, Maryland, on the eastern shore, and the museum did everything to make us feel at home, including meetings throughout the year to plan for new activities, for lectures, group needs, and meals—a huge variety. I learned many things from every visit and came up with the idea of half man and half outboard motor for a show, so I built my *outboard man costume*, wore it all around during the show, and it was a huge hit.

I gradually got to know wooden boat enthusiasts locally and nationally—a gold mine. I got to know Ginger Marshall Martus, a local writer who shared her articles with me, and we decided to write a newsletter for the ACBS group called the *Stuffing Box*, tried a few copies, it was well received, so we were a team for eight years, making a well-rounded newsletter and sharing with other groups around the country, our twenty-five issues. I still have all the files with each better quality computer I bought; my writing and files have grown to where we have difficulty managing everything. Ginger introduced me to everyone she knew, it seemed like, and my knowledge of wooden boats became ever more broad; I gave lectures on every aspect of restoration, history, or problems of boat ownership every year. Ginger introduced me to Earl Brannock, a fabulous author and storyteller. We became great friends. I bought a stack of his books and gave them to my friends. His life story was so fascinating. It helped me to decide to write my own life story.



Library

We decided to build a library into a tractor trailer truck body with metal shelves bolted in down one entire side, my entire collection of books in some usable order, with seating, workspace, and friendly decorations, a library full of familiar books, many still unread but appealing, from a lifetime of gifts or hoped for read time. At seventy-seven, I do not take in outside shows but instead use the books waiting for me down there. I quit TV and movies in 1966. All my early years included visits and stories from family and friends, just home from the war, so I still collect and read books of every battle of WWII.

Upper Marlboro

So when we bought this place in 1985, another gift from my mother, I had to restore every building, one at a time. Every square inch of the house first. We removed the living room and dining room wall, put up a beam and posts, varnished that, refinished all the floors, and then putty and painted everything. When one of Hamilton's big barns went down in a storm, we spent years taking things apart and making piles of similar sizes in the *next* barn so we had plenty of unused wood organized for every need. We spent two years going back and forth because we continued living there for a year before everything was ready to move in down here. We replaced the well pump, septic tank and pump, oil furnace, and had air-conditioning put in. The windows, storms, and original doors are all still in use.

Toolshed

There was a dog kennel for eight hunting dogs next to the house where they raised them from puppies and later trained them as hunting guides. A mess then and not useful for much for me, except outdoor maintenance equipment like hedge trimmers, tree trimmers, rakes, chainsaws, and a huge collection of shovels, rakes, and hoes of every kind, including snow shovels, crosscut saws, push mowers, and power mowers, funnels, and gasoline cans. You can see that the place became useful and crowded, keeping all this in order right from the very start. I had to recover the roof with roll roofing and drill hundreds of holes for large nails that were close together and up high to allow many similar tools to be on each pair, together, extremely handy and under a huge old elm tree that gave delightful shade in the summer, close to the house hose and great for washing cars.

We were blessed to have this as well and still in use for all the same things now, although I have added another storage building and workshop onto the front and side so we have big workbenches and hand tool storage benches, workspace, more concrete floors, lights, and indoor storage for three or more cars with used carpeting everywhere. I find it is easily available, makes for cozy comfortable in the cold, oil furnace and fan in the overhead for winter. Now that we had a strong repair and maintenance area going, we could throw ourselves into restoring the giant tobacco barn, three-story, *full of eight-year-old tobacco!*

Barn Restoration

First I used neighborhood kids to climb up in there and throw piles of dirty stale tobacco, bleached out with age, down to be hauled away for disposal. We were doing this for months when we were surprised to be notified that we were being sued by the former owners! We went to the local settlement attorney we used, and he said, “*Yes!* There is an unused allowance for previous owners to continue to store their tobacco in *your* barn without rent for some vague time. Just pay the bill!”

So we had to pay \$800 to former owner jerks for *garbage that they had abandoned*. Seemed very unfair, *but* we finally got *control of our barn* after years of monkey business *from them!*

The barn was dirt floor with posts down the entire middle. So the first project was the floor for the whole forty-by-ninety length of the building. Luckily, I was able to find an Amish team to grade and contribute labor to the concrete company so that in a day of hard work, we had a nice, thick, level floor with aprons for the doors on both sides. Having the slab made it possible for me to build trusses across the fifty feet with two-by-sixes from the Smith Farm Barn that fell, and we cleaned and saved from that loss but kept ready to use. I always asked Hamilton about everything, and he mostly always said that he didn’t care, “Go ahead.”

So the help we had from my great friend happened over eighteen years and was immeasurable in every way, including keeping the school bus inside there so I could get started again with *no problems* upon return from Sint Maarten. Looking back, I say to myself, “How could this have been possible?” *But* I always come to the conclusion that *my mother did that!*



So the barn project was *huge!* I had never built a three-story stairway, and my first one was so steep I could see that I had to tear it down and build landings and turns so we could carry things up. So a second one was designed and built—two separate stairways with a landing and handrails, all steps the same size. There is a lot to know to do something like this. Soon I cut all the oak posts off even, with the floor and trusses, so we had a full span. The neighborhood kids helped me insulate every square inch of the downstairs and ceiling with batts of pink insulation, and then we hung drywall all throughout every square inch of the downstairs and, later that year, built in a huge overhead oil furnace pouring heat into the downstairs only, automatically, with a 250-gallon tank right outside, ready to fill, on automatic delivery so all three tanks we could have regularly filled! Soon there was *nothing* that *we* could not do. Welders were hooked up, all sorts of wood cutting and shaping equipment were moved in and permanently hooked up so things could be built everywhere. Any kind of job, farm, or moneymaking could be taken on or gotten going with future accomplishment brought on for success.

Gradually, the remainder of Smith Farm materials arrived, and we emptied that place out, and we haven't been back for years. Never to stop being thankful for my mother's help finding it and Hamilton's lifetime of generosity, we are forever thankful to my mother and *God!*

Valerie Yarashus

By 1985, Valerie and I and Dave had a lot going on in Upper Marlboro, and we were busy doing restoration on boats, furniture, and cars in every imaginable way. When I look at all the leftover equipment sitting around here, I realize that I was willing to do *any project* if I could buy the correct equipment to get it done, and I *did!* David went on to college and then his life. Then his mother needed to get up to Boston and help nourish everything in her daughter's life. I gradually came to understand that the problems of getting along with Ray (her ex) cut into her care for her daughter who was ignored to some extent, leaving a lasting feeling of obligation. Valerie felt that the struggle with Ray caused her to ignore Valerie Ann in her formative growth years, and she got stuck there, so we began going to Boston every week for a year or more, and Valerie said she wanted to move up there! So we started working *another* year together to make that happen. She could always come back here, too, I felt, over the years!

So, gradually, I saw that she was happy up there and that we would just have visits. Soon I was single down here on the farm with endless boat and car work in the several shops we kept going, year after year, just like Smith Farm.



Smith Farm

For fifteen or so years, he let me use the wonderful tractor shed concrete block cement floor, and I lived in the upstairs. Suddenly, one day in 1978, it caught on fire while I was away, and I came home, and the whole thing had burned down. The local volunteer fire department called to apologize. They had been called several times, but they were already at a fire, so couldn't come to ours, so I lost everything I had in the bus and everything else and had to start over with nothing, all my picture collection, clothes, dishes, desk, and paperwork, personal records, and shoes. I shoveled the ashes up into piles with snow shovels, and we buried the piles on the edges of the farm.

A giant storm hit one summer, and one of the barns fell. It took me years with crowbars to disassemble and move barn number three into barn number two, stack it by size, but we had plenty of lumber, and huge amounts are still there to this day, I am sure. Larry and I repaired and painted Honda cars of every kind and maintained every imaginable kind of cars and trucks and helped our friends with their projects. Nothing beats being able to do whatever you want. I had constant furniture repair and refinishing going on, and starting in '68, with Arnie's boat, added boat work to my regular projects.

We built a replacement metal building over the slab where the tractor shed burned, and I increased the size of the other one by double with all the wood from the barn. I have always blocked out of memory all the bummers so I have forgotten what all I lost! So now, all these years have gone by with dozens of great stories to share. My father's papers had the twenty-two letters from Sint Maarten, fifty years ago, 1972 to 1976 or later 2002—I kept writing after that! I felt that I always owed my father an explanation of what I was doing! Not wasting my time but actually always being productive! Many different things good for power production and organization, year after year. So I have been thinking of all these things and writing for a year because everyone kept telling me to write a book! I was surprised how many things I remembered that I had forgotten. Now I am working on pictures and stories (eighteen) I already have written to add on at the *end*.



Neighborhood Children

My first wife was Donna Sopchick in 1969. We never had children because she needed to move back to Johnstown, Pennsylvania, and take care of her parents, leaving me at Faubert Road by myself. Across the way was the Hernandez family, and we began having fun and making things in that little garage we had. In Sint Maarten, my partner, Ann, had Jordie, Kate, and Reid, and we found all kinds of things to do like working on boats and using them, swimming, and bicycle riding. They loved riding in my green dune buggy, and there were many places to visit or explore. I found that when we moved to Croom, there were about five boys of similar ages living up and down our street. Chris and Patrick Curry, the LaRoques, and the McKenzies. I liked taking them on hikes in the woods, boat rides on the Patuxent River Park, and camping out in tents. Valerie called this Camp Johnny, and we found all kinds of great things to do over the years.



They are men now but still help us with plumbing, heating, and air-conditioning, thanks to their father teaching them practical skills with McKenzie and Sons, working with tools, and having two younger ones for later. One day, they stopped by with someone from school saying that they think that I would like him. Laszlo was from Romania and had no family, and I invited him to stay in the basement bed I fixed up for Dave. I fed him, took him to school; we knocked out all kinds of interior paint jobs, digging, and farm maintenance. It was *very* helpful to have a young handyman on call 24-7. After a year or so, one day, right

out of the blue, came a phone call. “Hello, Mr. Johnson. You don’t know me, but I am Arpad Kovacs, Laszlo’s uncle, and I called to thank you for taking care of him. He said that you fed him, took him to school, taught him all kinds of things, and were friends with *his* friends. We had difficulties in our family, and I want to make a website for your business as a thank you for your year of care.”

“Are you *the antique doctor*? Furniture touch-up and repair?”

“Yes, sir.”

Well, Arpad built us an amazing website we named oldtimeworld.com, which is now six movies and seventy-five great stories available to the entire world! Another fabulous blessing from my mother and God! We have become great friends, and I pay his reasonable bills whenever they come. Oldtimeworld.com—just type it in on Google or any search engine. Another fabulous reward for taking care of children from one’s heart.



Sylvia, Árpád, Réka, Árpika, & Attila

He decided, out of the goodness of his heart, to make us a fabulous website! He seems to enjoy all I send, very much, and take pride in it just like he wrote it. Every writer needs someone who will put up everything you create! I always come up with the fabulous ideas right out of nowhere or the blue! What is this? Advanced brain power!

Then years later...



Valerie's Family

When I returned from Sint Maarten in '76, I had been away for five years and had lost touch with many people, in spite of still having the school bus workshop still safe and sound on Smith Farm. I wondered what to do. I decided that if I took dancing lessons, at least I could hold some of their students in my arms. So I signed up at a place in Severna Park and began enjoying waltz, tango, cha-cha, and swing lessons. I enjoyed a steady year but didn't hit it off with any of their students. Finally, I had enough and quit, but weeks later, they called, saying that they had made a deal to sell out to Arthur Murray, and that they would like me to attend the transfer of ownership party.

When I went, everyone who had attended Arthur Murray was there, and I met a lady, just the right size, shape, age, and enthusiasm. She wanted me to touch up her dining table. I met her son, and we hit it off; the table repair went well, and she told me that her son said, "Mom, why don't you date someone like that?"

So she invited me over. As soon as we got settled down with snacks and drinks, by surprise, she began to kiss me. All I could do was *kiss back!* Then we were a lot closer and started having all kinds of great dates and spending time with her children, and we asked Hamilton if we could fix up the potato house into a place to live, and he said, "Yes!"

So Bob's Bottle Gas Son and I worked for two years on making a nice comfortable place across from the tractor shed where the school bus workshop was stored for five years. Here is Dave in his Fishburne Military School uniform, and Valerie Ann after she was invited to go to Harvard after her all-A successes in college.



We All Had a Great Time!

For a few months and moved to Smith Farm, into the potato house, Bob and I fixed up with Dave's help. We had two great years there—Valerie, Dave, and I. When Hamilton said he needed a place for his mother-in-law, we began looking for a place. In 1985, New Year's Day, we went to look at three places. The first two were right on the street, Third look great just driving in Small house, bug barn, 2 plots of land totaling 7 acres. We decided to go sign the papers. Another couple followed us in, and they appeared at the real estate office while we were signing—\$120,000. She had money.

Later, she told me she bought the place for me. I sure have flourished here. Now we have Old Time World, three big buildings full of boats and other treasures, and love showing everything to folks daily. Now that I have turned seventy-seven, I am starting to want to make something permanent out of OTW, for our nation and its citizens.

We visited Valerie Ann many times in Boston. Gradually, I could tell that Valerie's interests included helping raising Valerie Ann's children. She was going up there more and more often, and, finally, we decided that she would gradually stay. That's when she told me that she really bought the farm for me. Now, years later, Dave comes for dinner every Sunday and sometimes brings some of his children with Heather—Zac, twenty-four; Havalah, twenty-two; Sam, twenty; Zeke, eighteen; Phoebe, sixteen; Mathias, thirteen; and Joelle, ten. What a gang! Now we need to help them all find productive things to do!



Their grandfather has found all kinds of extra tools and collectable items that they could use in their own lives and save money! Why do we have seven acres and all these buildings anyway? Scott Ouder Kirk showed drone views of the property, and Cheryl counted twenty-two storage areas, total, on the buildings. I looked in each and saw that I had collected so much that I started to make a movie of each area so we have an inventory of all we have; way too much, to write everything down, but amazing to see all and try to describe, all extremely useful stuff, too, that could be sold.

We need more income now that \$10,000 per month is used up, paying for all our bills. February 2023 is a new challenge for everyone we know!

Another strange thing is that the weather has changed all winter, so it is sixty degrees most every day, and we sleep with the windows open at night and *no screens* in the *winter*! What in hell is *this*? Now we are moving all our boats for this big party, forty-five or more and two bands. Everybody had a great time, but *nobody* even said thanks! So we know we need to *stop*!

Letters

So here are few of the twenty-two letters I wrote to my father from 1972 to 1976. I was delighted to see that he kept them. They tell the details of many things I did in Sint Maarten, building the boats. I had to transcribe them from my handwriting. I hope to copy on *in* my handwriting as well.

Edith and Jerry were my cousins who have now passed but were a wonderful help and support to me and twice brought five members of our family for a week of visiting down there. After the letters are eighteen stories I have written, and after that, many stories from the *Stuffing Box*, our Antique and Classic Boat Society newsletter.

Simpson Bay Lagoon
January 12, 1973

Dear Edith and Jerry,

I hope you had a great time in Saint Thomas. I spent ten minutes there on my way here and was sorry I couldn't spend some time at your house before I left. I stayed home an extra week, just to visit everyone and still didn't make it. Now I write letters.

I am having a ball getting used to this new home. Everything is beautiful and unique. This island, half-Dutch and half-French, is linguistically as well as socially different. It seems like everyone speaks three or four languages or dialects. I am beginning to be able to understand the natives through my dealings with them and several of the friendships I have made. The natives live simply but comfortably. They are not neat or tidy around their homes, and they enjoy breaking bottles, but they are very friendly and good-natured. There is no race problems or discrimination. They share local problems and care for each other's children, have good habits of personal hygiene. Many are very handsome. I like them.

The island itself is still impressively beautiful to me, and I have been looking at it for a month and a week. I am still exploring, and every new bumpy road I find has delightful surprises around every tight curve. Sentry Hill (right behind my tent) rises 1,200 feet above sea level, and many of the hundreds of peaks on Saint Martin are nearly as high, so everywhere you go are friendly people and good views. We live on the edge of a five-mile-long lagoon, separated from the sea by peninsulas and mountains, a huge ring of them, some French, we are Dutch. The land our shed is on was dredged up out of the lagoon some years ago and is made up only of white crushed seashells. Grass and some palm trees grow outside the fifty-by-twelve wide galvanized, corrugated metal shed, which we disassembled and moved from its old home in Simpson Bay Village nearby.

This shed was used by Peter Spronk and his men last year to build the two catamarans that Bill saw when he came here in early May. They constructed one hull at a time and then joined them outside. We will follow this procedure, and right now, the bulkheads are made out of four-by-one-half Douglas fir plywood. After the two hulls are parallel and right side up outside, we will join them with a bridge deck which will have the navigator's cockpit, a stooping deckhouse, and the mast mounted on it. The mast and rigging will go on very near the end of the job. Peter says we may be done next September. There is so much more I could say that I'll continue about the boat as the work progresses.

Peter Spronk is a charming, witty engineer, designer, craftsman, artist who lives aboard *Blue Crane*, his original '47 catamaran, with his wife and three delightful children. *Blue Crane* is anchored out in the lagoon in front of our building shed. As we reassembled his old building shed on his new land here, he and his men were busy building a new shed about five times as large as ours, right behind ours. It is the new home of the Lanseair, the Caribbean Catamaran Center. Since I arrived December 9, they have worked one-thirty to five every day, and this Friday is the grand opening.

We are completely organized and ready to begin making the bulkheads, which form the basic shape of the hull. We have leveled the dirt floor of our shed and built a jig into

the ground, which will hold the bulkheads upside down in the correct relationship to each other. Once we are satisfied that each one is correctly positioned, we will put on the keel, then parallel to it an eight-inch inside strake of wood as long as the boat. We will join sixteen-foot sheets of plywood for these strakes. One after the other, they will be cut, joined, shaped, and placed. After the special resorcinol glue has dried, the heavy fasteners are removed, and wooden pegs driven in their place. When all the strakes are in position, the hulls will be taken off the jig and placed on a cradle outside. Then we will make a second one opposite to the first (mirror image). Bear in mind that they're only four feet wide.

This big shed has a large plywood storage area, power tool, and workbench area, a small kitchen, an office for paperwork and model displays, a drafting room for plans, and room enough to construct a sixty-foot catamaran and a sixteen-foot one at the same time. What a place. Tomorrow, I am going to finish the wiring for them because the electrician is so undependable. They can't trust him to get it done by Friday, the big day.

Peter is well-known by all here. The last two catamarans were very spectacular, and nearly the whole island turned out for the launching. A speech was given by RWO Van Delden, the lieutenant governor, and he and everyone else associated with boats will be here. I am so excited I can't sleep. Movies will be shown of the catamarans after they were launched racing together in sailing down islands. These boats are graceful, eye-catching, and exceptionally fast. We think ours will be even better. Peter has come up with many improvements on them since last year as well as ways to save money. With Bill's knowledge of boatbuilding obtained from five years at the Coast Guard Yard as a shipfitter. I have become acquainted with the many facets of boat design, and we have managed to stay in step with Peter's development work on the new lapstrake planking method. This project is so exciting and daring I am often euphoric. Of course, being in such a perfect place has a great deal to do with it.

We collect rainwater off the shed roof in fifty-five-gallon drums, and each night, I put on my bathing suit and stand out back next to one and dump wash pans full on myself, lather up, and rinse off. Each day, I swim in the lagoon out to one boat, over to *Blue Crane* where I again appreciate her beauty, and then back to our neatly organized work shed and cooking area. We take turns with the cooking. We shipped down many of our favorite grains and health foods. I sprout all kinds of good lentils, mung beans, and azuki beans, alfalfa, loengeck seed, and more.

Bill, Ev, Mike, and I all have tents in the woods behind Peter's land. My tent is the most far away, a three-minute walk on a pleasant path near an ancient wall; on the other side of it is my nine-by-twelve Eureka cabin tent with an army poncho on each end for awnings overlooking a private field of silvery golden grass, trees, and mountains, with not a single house or light in sight anywhere. At night, it is completely silent when the wind stops. Each morning, the goats romp and play outside, the roosters of the people of the nearby town of Koolbaai wake us up. It is common to have to chase cows or donkeys away from the palm trees we've planted. They must be very tasty. I often arise at dawn to see the mountains shrouded in a pink glow. The clouds make constantly changing patterns against the crystal blue sky. I've never seen clouds like this before.

If it rains, often there will be a rainbow over the lagoon. The entire bow will go from one end to the other. What a sight. On the way to town, you can see Saba and Sint

Eustatius and sometimes Saint Kitts in the distance. Of course, all kinds of gorgeous sailing ships visit here from all over the world. A friend of a friend invited us aboard the seventy-foot *So Fong* (Fragrance), a 1930s gaff-rigged cutter. Made entirely of now unobtainable teakwood, this outstanding boat is a monument to craftsmanship and attention to detail from the past. She has two staterooms, three heads, a large main saloon, comfortable galley, and so spacious at forecandle you could live there entirely (was for the crew when the owners were aboard). It's like living on an inside of the most magnificent solid teakwood working antique imaginable. We were served a magnificent meal for eight with a flaming Spanish coffee. What a delight.

It seems like every event here has the magnitude of the above one. I skin dive and made a surfboard behind Bill's Hobie Cat, and we sail and hike, and I have fixed up a nice VW beetle with yellow wheels, and we have made many wonderful friends. I hate to brag so, but things couldn't be better. I hope they are so good for you both and Sally, Jerry, and the tailless wonder. Say to everyone you meet who would care, "Hello!"

Love and sunshine,
Johnny



Simpson Bay Lagoon
June 29, 1973

Dear How,

I really appreciate your letters. Each day, I regret dozing off before being able to reply (at this time we were living in private tents in the woods behind the boatbuilding sheds). The letter said that we are having a difficult time keeping our hull progress one step behind theirs. As a result, we have been having to put in twelve to sixteen-hour days all month long. Bill and I are pleased with our progress as a result of the more urgent schedule. We have fully planked the hull and filled the holes with the fastenings used to hold each until the glue dries. We used two-part resorcinol glue, a big reusable sheet metal screws, removed when dry, then drilled out the holes, glued in dowels, and sand these smooth on both sides. The fine silicon bronze plates you sent are handsomely finished and neatly set into the stem, bedded in Epoxy, and fastened with twelve two-inch anchorfast nails.

This week, we plan to make the stempiece to cover the ends of the planks and the chainplate, then it will continue along the keel in a Douglas fir shoe. Then we will round all the edges of the planks to half-inch radius. This will make it much easier to get the Dynel cloth to lay over the lands. The cloth and Epoxy will make a fillet in each joint.

Hugh McCoy, our partner, has just arrived after taking a nightmarish sail to Jamaica and back. The home-built Piver trimaran he was sailing here suffered one serious gear failure after another. They lost the boom and rudder, and after repairs in Jamaica, the boat started to break up; it was so poorly built. They motored back to Florida, and he arrived here by plane this week. Now he says he knows what *not* to do!

I was deeply pleased by your offer to build our rudders. Bill and I appreciate your generosity. It makes us happy to have your support. We will see what we can find before we accept. Although I think your offer will be hard to beat. We have been studying ways to simplify the design with Pete. We are waiting for replies from some Dutch firms Peter has dealt with before. At this time, we have ordered all the parts to build the boat—nuts, bolts, hardware, masts, booms, and sails. Bill and I each have added an additional \$1,000 into our boat account. We hope that this, plus the additional money from Hugh for not working for eight months, will carry us through. All the parts for the second hull have been made, so it will be a simple assembly process. It takes an amazing amount of labor.

I have paid the final taxes and transfer fees for the land I bought. I am sorry sometimes that I jumped in and made the purchase because sometimes now my funds are dangerously low, and sometimes I feel that I wouldn't want to live on such a small island anyway. I hope it will sell easily if the time comes.

(It never did! So perhaps I still own a quarter acre down there.)

Hello to all the family!

How



Simpson Bay Lagoon
August 1, 1973

Dear Family,

The summer seems to pass more rapidly than any one before this. Working long hours, six days a week, hastens the passage of time. Perhaps if I were cruising and relaxing down islands, I would not be so concerned. Only misery slows the passage of time.

We had a big party on July 21, invited all our friends, and carried out the first hull, all smooth with Dynel cloth and three coats of Epoxy resin and two white prime coats of Epoxy paint. It looks like nothing I have ever seen before, lying out there in front of our shed, forty-seven-foot long and only four feet wide, with all fifteen strake lines accentuating the length. It is beautiful and quite impressive, even from across the lagoon on the road from the airport, so our quota of curiosity seekers has increased. It was a pleasure to have thirty friends together. We had a washtub full of Heineken beer and a cookout with hot dogs and salads. It reminded me of corn roasts and crab feasts growing up.

Peter was genuinely happy with our work and said it was lighter than he expected. There is no unnecessary wood in it anywhere. The Epoxy coating added measurably to the strength of the hull. On the day after cure, it was sand able, but two days later, not even 50 grit belts can abrade it. The stuff is so thick we spread it on like putty with our gloved hands on the lands that had been radiused to one-half inch.

Now we are rapidly assembling the second hull. Put the first plank on today and the second on tomorrow—both sides. Again, we had to set up all the frames and level them with our water hose, assemble the stem and stern webs, then install the daggerboard box between five and five A, ten in all, laminate the keel out of three laminations, four-inch-wide, three-quarter-inch-thick spruce, ends scarf glued to forty-five-foot, then cut out and fit six gunwale sections, joining all the frames along the rub rail at the deck. We will be doing the planking in two weeks. That's progress.

Peter, Malcom, and crew are working on other projects, mostly a floating pier for Island Water World, a marine supply place right down the beach from us.

Their two sixty-foot hulls are sitting there, waiting. Maybe we can catch up yet. Our sails and spars are confirmed by Gowen & Sparlight of England. Island Water World is supplying all paint and hardware as well as an attractive white rubber inflatable dinghy. Only rudder and deckhouse are undecided at this time. We are making good progress, all are happy, and the money is holding out. So far, so good!

Hugh didn't arrive until July first. He had taken a position with some young trimaran owners as outfitter and skipper. He re-rigged the boat and equipped her for the trip to Saint Thomas and then down islands. His crew was inexperienced, the boat not so well built. The sea was rough.

The first day out, all the slides that hold the mainsail to the mast failed (probably sun-damaged plastic), making sounds just like gunshots, and so now the mainsail was no longer attached to the mast! The boat stopped dead in the water, and sail flapping out of control. There were numerous gear failures, a shroud pulled up through the deck, two lower stay eye bolts failed. Then the rudder broke off! They couldn't sail at all. They made a jury rudder, but it failed too.

Finally, they drifted two days and sighted Kingston, Jamaica, in the distance, then were able to get towed in, in heavy seas. They stayed three weeks, made repairs, and struck out again, hitting heavy seas. Two days later, the deck and cabin top began to pull away from the hull sides. They began taking on water. Everything got soaked. They all were miserable but managed to limp back to Florida where they came from! What a trip!

He was wet and worried most of the time and really appreciates the lightness, flexibility, and strength of our boat. He likes Peter's watertight hatch design that can be dogged down and locked eighteen-by-twenty-four inches, two on each hull. Every effort has been made to use a minimum of hardware.

The boat will have continuous flow through ventilation via a large scoop in the leading edge of the bridge deck. We doubted that we would be spending much time tied up at piers. Probably most swinging at anchor or a mooring, facing the wind for airflow in the bridge deck and water drainage holes in the bottom. Air will flow out the mushroom ventilators in the aft deck of the hulls, so it should be cool and dry in the hulls that are so slim and fair it should cut through the water instead of pound, and steer well. We found that the design employs many great ideas.

Suddenly, it is August 27. We have been working sixteen hours a day for seven days a week. The second hull is almost ready for paint. She'll be moved out and set parallel to our port hull at a big party here on Sunday, September 2. Peter told us around plank ten that we could all have our hull turnover party together and that they would wait an extra week for us. We were so pleased with this we have worked full-time to help make it happen.

Now we will be joining the hulls under a huge tarp next to the shed blocking Peter's access to the water, so we can hope to be launching first. The shed will hold the tarp and block the wind. We are going to have to share the cost of a big crane for raising the masts, and look forward to a big launch day together for the big *Maho* Cat and the forty-seven-foot (no name yet). We are looking forward to a launch event in November and hope interested members of my family can attend. It would be very expensive to come for a group, but this may be the biggest accomplishment in my life!

You would be welcome to use my clean, bug-free tent at Fort Johnson. I had to add one-hundred-foot of barbed wire to keep out the cows! A cow knocked down my tent fly and ridgepole, causing a five-foot rip in the material that took two days to repair and reerect.

Tomorrow, we want to put on a coat of Epoxy and microballoons on one side and the bottom, sand one side, and put a cap strip of Dynel and resin, so I must say goodbye for now.

Saturday, September 8, 1973

This past week was so busy that I was not able to complete this letter. There were warnings about tropical storm Christine. We made every conceivable preparation for her coming. We took down our tents and lashed them to the ground and packed all our tools in footlockers placed up inside the overturned hulls. Extra bracing was added to the shed and sandbags placed on the roof. The port hull outside was guyed to the ground, and two-by-twelve legs clamped on to keep it from blowing over. Our head and shower were tied down, and extra covers and lashings were put on all tables and chairs and all that could float or blow away. We rescheduled the turnover party. The storm hit but wasn't much more than forty-mile-an-hour winds.

We used this downtime to make plans for the turnover party. We will have eight hamburgers and two washtubs of Skol beer on ice.

We have put two coats of white Epoxy primer on the second hull and a first coat of dark green bottom paint on both at \$68 a gallon. They look longer than ever and will be improved by two coats of dark green Epoxy topside paint, if it ever comes. The Boot Top Stripe will be white as well as the tumblehome plank and decks. Now we are working on making two fifteen-by-thirty-foot covers of white nylon reinforced vinyl; tarps under which we will work joining the hulls and building the rest of the boat.

Sometime under this final stage of construction, Peter will fly to Puerto Rico, prepared to design rudders using available materials. He feels that he can pick and choose the necessary parts, labor, and shipping in person most efficiently. We have our fingers crossed.

In our spare time, we have visited with Jonathan and Pam aboard the Baltic Trader Ship, *Evelyn*. She is seventy feet long and built in 1898 and rebuilt in 1938. Her planks are three-inch thick on four-inch ribs that are four inches apart, planked inside and out all the way up to the deck. She's a traditional-looking boat with a gaff main and mizzen, topmasts, and topsails, and three jibs running out onto a thirty-foot bowsprit. It's a thrill to climb up the ratlines and sit in the rigging, a great view, and to feel the gentle roll of a hundred tons beneath you. He has worked on it for five years and is day-chartering for the Concord Hotel near the airport.

Everyone on the island hopes that this will be a good tourist season; last year was not, and everyone has been struggling to hold on for this year. Big hotels and small shops all depend on tourists, and since it's the only industry here, everyone feels the pinch.

If there were ever any major failure of the American economy, this would be an unpleasant place to be.

Here we depend on ships for everything. When you are hungry, and there's no food, money is useless. Recent *Time* magazine articles point out so many dangerous problems. I feel like I would rather have tillable land than a nice view. We hope to travel on the boat and find a place where land is cheap. I have heard wonderful stories about the beauty and richness of Costa Rica. We are all looking forward to the launch!

I am always thinking of my family.

Love,
Johnny



Simpson Bay Lagoon
October 30, 1973

The pace of life has increased another few increments since October first. I am so excited I could pop. I sure appreciate that birthday present. We are down to our last few dollars, and every penny counts. I'm down to \$300 here and am debating whether to sell my Volkswagen bus now or wait until after the launch. I might add that both Bill and Hugh had to borrow heavily from their parents because everything we have bought has doubled in price since we started. How long will it last? We feel that we will be barely able to finish with the dwindling accounts. Beans and rice have sustained us for a long time. We fish and pick local fruit. I am as healthy as I ever have been, so don't worry. I am sorry to hear about the lost film. I'm going to ask at the post office what to do. It's the second lost roll. Please send the finished photos because I want to put them in a book for launch day, which we hope will be December ninth. That may change but looks definite now. I know it's soon, but we are really working hard, making excellent progress, and have all our gear in storage, waiting to be put on.

Each day here, everything costs more. I'm excited about having you here, and I want to show you many important things, like my land. Our catamaran may be named trauma, *Taruma*, an Arawak Caribbean Indian tribe name, and the sixty-foot, *Maho*, which Lanseair has been building and will be launched the same day. It will be a big event! Oh, Bill's and Hugh's parents will be coming too. I suggest you contact them about coming down if not just to get to know them. I especially want my father to be here; in all my life, his business has kept him from coming along, and now I hope he has that in hand enough to take time out. He would enjoy Mr. McCoy very much; I wish he would call him up, and here's the phone number. Mr. McCoy may have us build him a boat like ours in the future. He is an exceptional person and worth a phone call. At least we know a couple who own Lagoon Inn, near here, and we will ask them about a group rate for all the visitors. They have very nice apartments close by. I will confirm this later.

Now for the big news. I have not spent much time telling you all about the difficulties we have experienced in getting along. Personal relationships on this intense level are complicated, and I have filled a book with my observations about our behavior. I've not enjoyed living with Bill's wife and have been at odds with her, no matter how I have treated her. Nothing I do is right with her, and I believe it stems from jealousy over Bill and my intimate and long relationship. She felt that she could not stand to live with me, and every day, she lets everyone know in one hundred small ways that she didn't intend to put up with me any longer. I have suffered deeply under her suppression and belittling and have tried everything from hating her in return to turning the other cheek. The pressure has been hard on all of us, particularly Bill who doesn't want to lose either of us but cannot change Evelyn's mind.

She is stubborn and selfish and feel that I stand in the way of their lives and their every plan. She likes Hugh, so he's okay as long as he does not disagree with her too much. He has not lived with her as long as I have and is easygoing and affable, more than I am. We spent many hours discussing the problem and concluded that things would be better, and we could salvage our most valuable friendships if I was not an owner. We agreed that Evelyn would like me more if I was not in the way and the boat will always be mine to sail and live aboard. Bill went home last week. After many hours of painful

bargaining, I agreed to sell my share for a low \$10,000, even after Peter told me it was worth \$16,000. I felt that Bill would not be expected to get together more money than that. It gives me my original investment, plus \$4,000; the education I have gotten, one could never get a more intensive course in high-quality light displacement sailing craft construction. I have learned an exceptional amount, and my career is just beginning.

I felt that if I could have my cake and eat it too, it would be best. I knew I could hold out and ring more money out of Bill, but he would hate me for the rest of my life. I agreed to \$10,000 cash, hardly believing he could raise it. He went home, and his family lent him \$9,000; exactly two weeks later, he was back with that and all the additional equipment we needed. The tension is gone, and our friendship will continue. I'll sail on the boat whenever I want, will enjoy our lives, and I'm sure I made the best possible decision that has ensured the success of the project. Without me, it could not have been done. I don't want this change to alter your enthusiasm for it because it was necessary and does not make a real difference in what I have done.

Hopefully, it will improve what I will do now with the owners of the *Maho*, who were being forced into a nasty relationship with a group of people who would lend them the necessary funds to finish their craft, which you will sail aboard, if it is possible, as well as ours, of course. They offered me 20 percent ownership in the \$60,000 boat, which will be one of the fastest in the world. It is a unique opportunity. I have become friends of theirs; they own the land across from mine and run the water sports at Mullet Bay Beach Hotel, which you will see. They're extremely competent, and along with Peter Spronk and his partner Malcolm Maidwell, who you'll meet, along with the directors of Mullet Bay, have determined that the boat will earn enough in its first season, beginning December, to pay for itself in the first season. It will carry a maximum of twenty people, and two half-day trips around the island for \$15 per person. It will be the most exciting boat ride in the world with the best scenery available, and the boat will definitely be able to go twenty-two knots.

Under racing conditions, we hope to race her in the offseason. It may hit twenty-six to twenty-eight knots and gain great recognition. It will be featured in a magazine for sure. It's the most exciting business deal I have ever known. Jeff Klein and I have spent several days discussing his books, incorporation, and the many aspects of running the boat. His uncle is a bookkeeper, and tonight we discussed how to set up the corporation taxes and insurance. We already have the insurance man from a Tortola-based British firm who was so impressed with the boat he said he wanted to handle it at 2 percent. That includes \$60,000 hull insurance and liability up to \$100,000. Mullet Bay also covers all guests, and that will be included in the *Maho* agreement.

It looks like my future will be interesting. I am positive of not losing the \$10,000. I have the land, the school bus workshop on Smith Farm, two matching Volkswagen buses in new condition, the antique 1954 MG TF from Edith, a Renault, and a VW bus here, my backpack, camping gear, ten-speed bike, skiing and diving equipment, a loving family with many loving friends. I have good health and an interesting, active, fulfilling life ahead.

How can I possibly be any better off? Am I happy? You bet!

Many thanks for all your love and support.

See you soon,
Johnny

Well, I decided to show you what they *actually* looked like. So now here are copies of how they actually looked in 1974.

Thanks to everyone who share my many stories, and don't forget that I hope that there will be a *part 2*, starting with more letters telling the details of 1975 and 1976 and my return to the USA and the adventure of all the years from then on.

Love,
Howard and Cheryl Johnson

April 19, 1974

Dear Folks,

April 19, 1974

B

I have missed writing you and I think of all of you.

It's hard to describe how busy I've been, how depressing things are at times and the hassles I've had. I have moved away from the Catamaran Centre and the woods back there entirely and am now living at the newly constructed and as yet unorganized Johnson estate. I have had to work hard and adjust to many changes all at once and under the burden of being down to my last \$4 and unable to earn because of the need for my time in organizing the charter business and getting the Mako in operation. These first sails aboard her have been exhilarating, the boat is exceptional in every sense. Everything works extremely well, Doug Brooke is a fine captain and even though the crew we had hired up let us down we have gotten by so far, Paul Parisi the friend with whom I ate my meals aboard Satica Baco in the lagoon is working with us temporarily and I stand in when I can. The boat is beautiful, striking, everyone is impressed. It sails easily, handles well and nothing about it is awkward or ill designed and it's fast. For the first 4 sails we went faster each time and on the last we hit 20 knots under #1, #2, staysail and full main. The sails are exceptionally well made and set beautifully the sheet leads are ideal, the winches work great and it's easy to come about every time. The steering via pre-stretched balyard line works beautifully and the rudder ^{blade} geometry and size is perfect almost needing modification, the inflatable ^{white} Hutchinson dingy & 9HP engine is ideal. We have to get fenders before I can use mine. We are thinking about curtains & interior finishing work, and setting up the necessary accounts, bank, charge & all arranging transport.

We have a poster, (she was photographed from the air off the beach for next years Mullet Bay brochure. Tomorrow the photographers are going for a sail & do a feature on the boat. & picks for a ^{donegal} professional poster. Today we took out all the Mullet Bay VIP's, bank pres & manager & head of Caravanai. We take 8-18 people sometimes twice a day, last week we took many of the people who watched her being built. Peter sailed her twice & turned her over to Doug who helped to build her & is Peter's brother in law. Peter is suffering from extreme disillusionment after having built the boat of his dreams & turned it over to others, lost 7000. and only owns 2%. His business is extremely shaky & he has only 2 men working for him. He took a lot of his malice out on me in these last days and told me to not come back, even for a shower, after giving me a letter indicating that our relationship is over and that he is notifying ^(and time) the head of immigration (Domey) of this. I had to go to the governor and he said he would personally see to it that I have a work permit thru St Maarten Sailing Assoc. NV. if I submit a resume. Everyone has had a hard time getting along with Pete lately so it's not me and I am glad to be away from that whole scene, Evelyn especially Bill has gone back to the States to beg or borrow more money, Hugh is working in St Croix and the Taruma sits unfinished & unsailed. Bill is absolutely broke and disgusted they can't get along with Hugh now and he wishes he had sold out to me. Everyone on the island is broke & it's slack season for tourists and I have had no luck at selling my bus or anything even a Honda 90 I fixed up. But we think we can make money with the Mako anyway and next year - look out we should be able to make a fortune absolutely everyone here agrees. I am sick of St Maarten and want to come home badly.

but I don't want to come, in fact can't come here, until I ^B make some money and get everything organized. I have spent many hours with the lawyer and the Williams family trying to get the title to this land squared away. Tomorrow 5 heirs sign the deed and then in May they have to appear in court to OK the guardianship for 2 dumb children who live in Ayuba & we have to get the brother there to take them to court ^{get him} & signed, then hopefully I will have clear title after which I hope to sell because I don't want a house here there are just too many hassles and I am tired of living here. Jeff & Ann can run the Trako business once everything is set up and running smoothly. The generator arrived finally and I must say it's powerfull. I thank you sincerely How, for your generosity, and prompt effort it makes all the jobs go better and although it's all I can do to carry it I am glad I have it. There are so many small finishing jobs where power is needed and we have to sand & paint the entire interior before it's really finished. I used it last night to vacuum the entire interior for the VIP said today those shake down cruises sure shook the sawdust down from everywhere. I've not organized a place to eat yet but I plan to eat on board since I have no frig or stove up here on the hill. I take showers at Jeff & Ann's house now and I am lucky the boat is at her new permanent mooring, a 350 lb Danforth anchor bought from the owner of the Black Swan which burned New Years eve. I stay on board almost every night to protect her from that & vandals and I can walk down that steep rocky hill to the dingy since the boat's home is here in Simpson Bay where it's calm & nearby. During the day as often as possible will anchor at Mullet Bay as we did today. It looks so good from the shore, everyone wants to go. That's a quick summary
- sorry for my haste

it in a nutshell, you can see from the quality of my penmanship how tired I am and I have to go out to the boat yet tonight. So I'll write more soon. - Mike is fine, busy on Blue Crane and I don't see him much he's busy busy like me but were productive generally enjoying ourselves. Whenever I feel swamped and start to get depressed I remember what Barbie said and it lifts me up.

Share my love with Joe & Sharon, Lloyd & Eileen (I never get a chance to write them darnit) Olga, my sister and my friends at M. & N. Tell me about Papa Henry. I write to him but I don't know if he can even know what I am anymore. How is everyone & what's happening? I miss you all a lot & I feel dreamy when I walk around the Concord or visit Le Boucaneer. Hey do you have any pictures of mine? Edy sent some but I don't have all the ones I want to finish my album and it would be nice to show it around to our guests. She hears some bad news, I got violently sea sick one day on our calmest sail. It really depressed me I don't think I can ever become a sailor because of that. No pills work so far. I won't give up.

Keep smiling, I'll bet spring is nice I wish I could see it, it's dry & dusty here but the sun always shines and the sky is blue and the clouds float merrily by.

Love,
Johnny





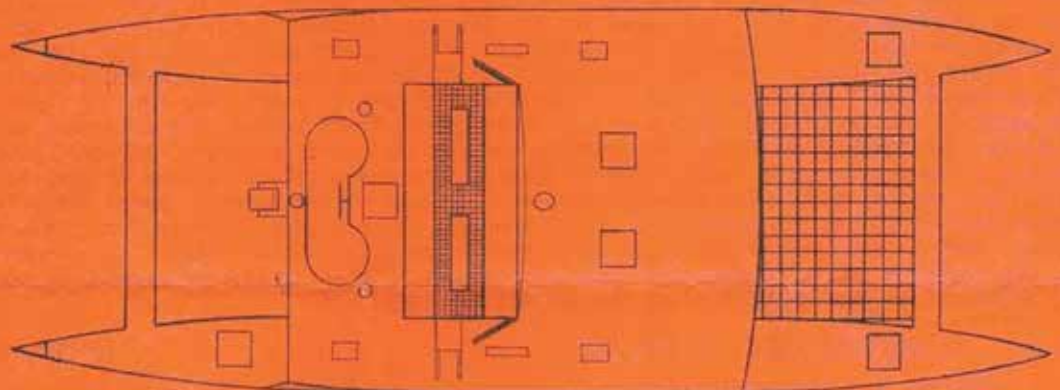


Howard Johnson, Ann Klein, and Doug Brooks sailing *Maho* about 1975. Ann tried to employ Duggie as skipper, but he was not willing to make as much effort to learn and improve everything as needed, and we saw that. He did not engage the guests in a charming way. Our day charter business needed devoted efforts, and I was put in charge. Two years revealed repetitive daily experiences, uncooperative weather, economic decline, physical breakdowns, too many expenses, and in spite of the beauty and glamor, I decided it was time to return to the USA and give up all of Sint Maarten and my possessions, land, and friends, and *fly home!* Along with some fabulous memories, this picture above and the one to the right is most of what is left of my ten thousand dollars! I guarantee, personally, that we did all this stuff, and we took these pictures.

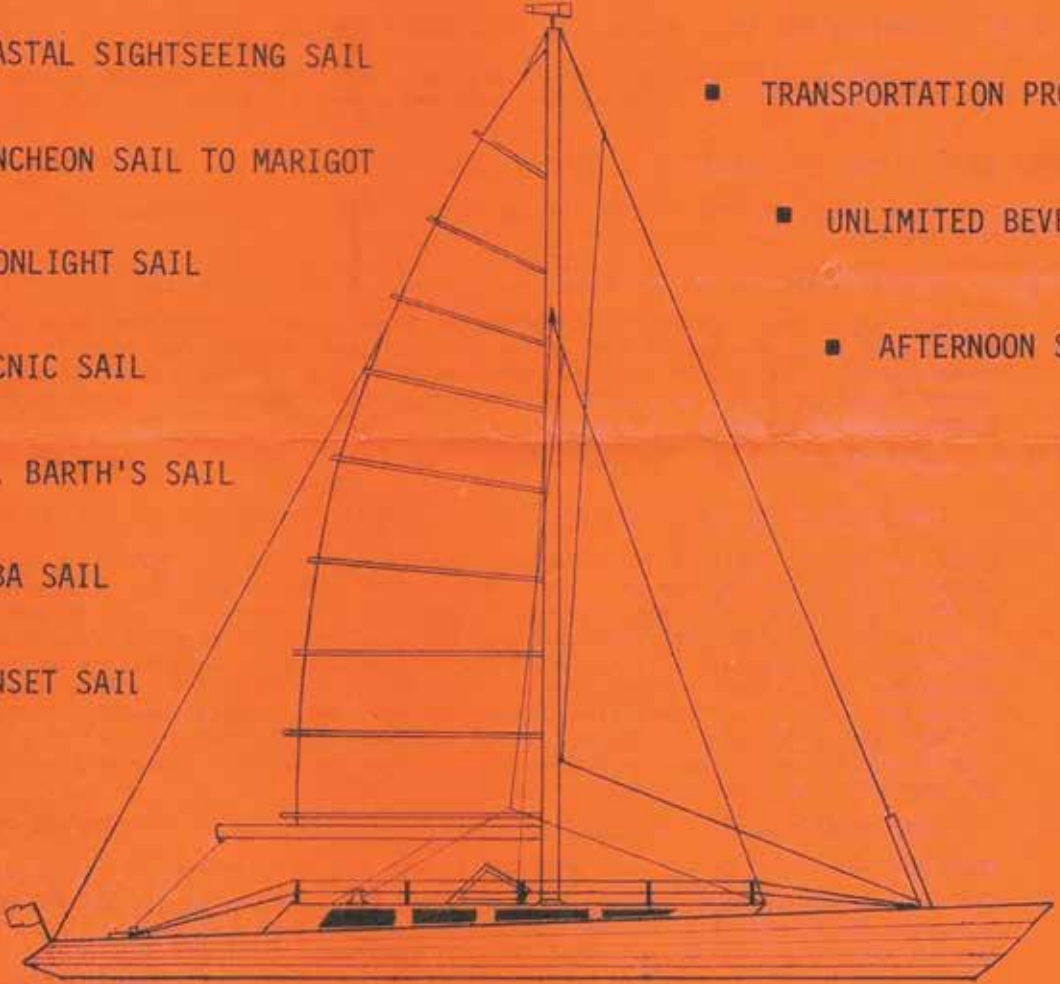
For years, working together in underwater conditions, we helped each other gain confidence in our consideration and skills.

MAHO

61-FOOT HIGH PERFORMANCE CATAMARAN YACHT



- COASTAL SIGHTSEEING SAIL
- LUNCHEON SAIL TO MARIGOT
- MOONLIGHT SAIL
- PICNIC SAIL
- ST. BARTH'S SAIL
- SABA SAIL
- SUNSET SAIL
- TRANSPORTATION PROVIDED
- UNLIMITED BEVERAGES
- AFTERNOON SNACKS



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The Taruma: A Big Cat Built to Prowl the West Indies

By: Jack Dawson

In its short life, the Taruma, of St. Martin in the Dutch West Indies, has won two international yacht races, sailed 900 miles in four days to eclipse sailing records between its home port and Bermuda, and outdistanced numerous tropical storms. It has even pulled water skiers, accelerating “like a sports car,” on the blue Caribbean. It can usually out-run any other sailboat, including millionaires’,” said Howard (John) Johnson, Jr., of Annapolis, a former co-owner and one of the builders.

Speed and comfort

Co-owner Hugh McCoy, 29, of Severna Park, added, “It came out better than we could have imagined. It has speed and comfort and is completely seaworthy.”

The Polynesians used catamarans thousands of years ago. Probably because the islands were so far apart and speed was necessary to outrun storms. The twin-hulled construction of the first “cats” were no doubt formed by lashing two logs together and setting up a crude sail.

The 47-foot-long Taruma incorporates those principles but in such a sophisticated way that much of its design is still considered revolutionary. McCoy observed that most catamarans are built for a consumer market with an emphasis on comfort and convenience whereas the Taruma was built for racing. Johnson, an antique restorer, noted that its twin hulls are aerodynamically designed to “cut through the water like a knife.” Its hull speed would theoretically allow the craft to sail at over 30 knots in optimum conditions, although its top speed thus far about 25 knots.

“You’d need shrieking winds on calm water but that’s not unusual on the lee side of the islands,” Johnson said. “When the wind comes whistling around the island or down out of the mountains it’s the thrill of a lifetime.”

The designer has coined the expression, *sea kindly*, to describe it,” he added of the craft’s sailing characteristics. While keel boats roll from side to side as well as forward, Johnson described Taruma’s motion as

more like that of a train, lurching forward but not sideways through the waves. The designer, a Dutchman, named Peter Spronk, launched his first catamaran 13 years ago and is now building a 75 footer.

Taruma was built by Johnson, McCoy and Bill Dyson, a Coast Guard ship fitter, who discovered Spronk building two 47-footers simultaneously. It took two years of exhausting labor and about \$20,000 before it was ready for launching in March, 1974. The sleek vessel will be exhibited at the upcoming Annapolis Sailboat Show before returning to St. Martin for chartering.

“The name is a story in itself,” said McCoy, a former Navy pilot. “I wrote to National Geographic for a Arawak or Carib name [Indian tribes indigenous to the islands] for strong and fast in keeping with the boat’s character. The research department sent back the words *dumi* and *quaiki* but they sounded awkward. Both words came from the Taruma tribe. That was more pleasing and powerful sounding so that’s what we called her.”

The idea of building such an unconventional craft was Dyson’s, who met Spronk in 1970 and was so impressed that he made drawings and studied building techniques used by the Dutchman.

After returning to Annapolis as Johnson’s house guest, Dyson talked each day “about costs, material, availability, tools required, construction methods and Mr. Spronk’s outstanding design,” Johnson recalled. “I was secure in my home and small business restoring antiques so I was not easily convinced that we could afford to build the boat, much less do all the labor ourselves.” It took a month of convincing but Johnson entered the pact with the feeling that the project needed a third partner. They chose McCoy, who knew sailing, had family financial backing and was dependable.

“Sailing requires harmonious temperaments,” Johnson said. “The three of us had been boyhood friends and we knew we could get along together.”

Thus, “without as much as a contract between us and only a preliminary drawing from Spronk,” the trio packed up 17 footlockers of tools and equipment and left for St. Maarten. The idea was that while Spronk was working on a 61-foot boat, Maho, the “amateurs” would work alongside him and copy and consult.

Ribs and frames

In December, of 1972, they explored and built their shed. From January to March they set up the building jig and made ribs and frames. During the long hours for the dusty sawing and planning under the hot, tropical sun they came to know the designer and his family and the greater St. Martin community. They lived frugally in tents near the boat shed.

Johnson recalled many 12-hour days in an attempt to keep up with the progress of Spronk’s “professional” crew “we would watch them work and then go imitate what they did. If it didn’t work, we would ask questions and learn from their mistakes, or make mistakes of our own,” he noted. In July they had a party and friends helped carry their first hull out of the shed. Two months later they had finished the second hull and had another party.

By October of 1973, they had set up a giant tent over the two hulls and began to join them together. “The work went on into Christmas and we thought we could soon launch but the more we did the more we found to do,” McCoy continued. The project had become a cause célèbre on both Dutch and French sides of the island and some days it was difficult to accomplish much with all the visitors.

Finally, on March 10, 1974, everyone was ready for an island-style launch. Stretchers were laid out under the hulls of the boats, a combination of pipes and ropes organized in such a way that people standing in a line could lift and carry the boats into the water 175 feet away. Four hundred persons gathered as Spronk organized the launching crews.

“Never was the air so filled with harmonious emotion as Taruma was slowly, gently lifted and carried down to the waterfront,” Johnson continued. “No backs were strained; everyone thought it was a miracle that it could be so large and yet so light.”

After Maho was similarly placed, each boat was christened with a brief speech and bottle of champagne, leis of flowers were placed on the bows, and the boats were lifted into the water. “Moments later the boats were floating as they were intended amid the cheers and tears of all,” Johnson added. “Then the beer flowed.”

Better workmanship

Although they were amateurs, Johnson feels Taruma’s workmanship is superior to Spronk’s boats. “We’re perfectionists,” he reasoned. “If something wasn’t perfect we’d do it over even though it meant staying up late many nights.” Although Spronk has trained native laborers in construction methods, Johnson said they present some tricky problems.

“They’re friendly people and I love them all,” he said. “But they’re uneducated and the tool concepts we used were beyond their comprehension.” Much of the construction involved fine scarfing so that the shape of the boat developed as they progressed.

“I was exposed to tools as a child,” Johnson said of this craftsmanship. “My father did everything around the house and I was his slave. I couldn’t help but learn.” Dyson is also a skilled craftsman while McCoy, who works as a shipwright in Florida during the off-season, is quite handy.

The craft’s vital statistics make it ideal for island hopping. The overall construction is of half-inch, lapstraked (overlapping) Dutch plywood swathed in Dynel and Epoxy resin to keep the wood dry. It has a 20-foot beam, 46-foot gold anodized aluminum mast with a capacity of over 800 square feet of working dacron sail, and a 2-foot draft which allows it to enter harbor areas that are inaccessible to single-hulled boats her size.

Cutter rigged, Taruma normally cruises with main and double jibs. “We usually start to reef when the winds hit 15 to 18 knots,” McCoy said.

There are bunks for 10, with visitors in one hull and crew and galley facilities in the other. The hulls resemble the interior of an aircraft fuselage. Because there is no pollution problem in the Caribbean, there is no need for chemical toilets. Showers are taken in the cockpit area next to the deck house. Fresh water is warmed in the sun and used for a final washdown.

McCoy and Dyson alternate taking charters during the busy winter season. McCoy sails with his companion, Sharon Greene, a former secretary with extensive sailing experience including a trans-Atlantic trip. “She’s a great first mate,” McCoy said. “We sailed the West Indies for four months and there were never any orders. She takes full watches and can take the helm at any time.”

Additionally, Miss Greene is a gourmet cook although charter guests are encouraged to eat on the various islands instead of the Taruma. Rates are \$40 per person a day without meals and \$50 with meals. Visitors must supply their own liquor and other refreshments.

Experienced sailors

“We cater mostly to experienced sailors,” McCoy said. “There’s nothing more disappointing than somebody getting seasick the first day out.”

During a cruise, everyone spends most of his time on the spacious decks in front of the surrounding the deck house. “Taruma was designed for the tropics so we spend a lot of time outside,” McCoy said. “The deckhouse is our main dining and inside recreational area.” Passengers and crew spend their time snorkeling, spearfishing for their evening meal, reading and drinking, making love... “We don’t have any tennis courts or anything,” he quipped.

Because of the coral reefs, uncharted coastlines and darkness (there are no lights, buoys or other markers), there is little night sailing except on long open runs. The passenger either spend evenings on the island or inside playing cards, listening to the stereo-tape deck, building models (ships naturally), or watching the stars.

Profile of a Member

Profile of a Member

Howard Percival Johnson Jr.

Howard Percival Johnson Jr. is the owner/operator of the Antique Boat Center, Co-editor of the newsletter of the Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society and is the self-proclaimed "Antique Doctor". None of this diminishes the important fact that he restores, refinishes and owns Chris Crafts and is a long-time Chris Craft Antique Boat Club enthusiast.

Howard was born in Baltimore, Maryland, 3 months after WWII, in 1945. He says he was the only child of demanding and highly skilled parents, who insisted he learn everything. Early years included swimming, fishing and boating of all kinds, with weekend cruising aboard "Nona", a 22' Maine-built all weather skiff. In 1952, the family's purchase of a 1929 ACF 32' SportCruiser from his grandfather, made for many weekends of cruising on the labyrinth of rivers around the Chesapeake Bay. His first recollection of Chris Crafts was watching his dad aquaplaning behind friend Bill Smith's.

Howard received his first boat as a reward in 1954 for helping his parents with a summer home on the Severn River, near



Howard in 1963 while attending Baltimore Polytechnic High School Annapolis, Maryland. As a result of helping jack-up the house, pouring a concrete foundation, installing plumbing and heating, redecorating the interior and landscaping the grounds, he was rewarded with a 12' plywood flat bottom rowboat, with a Wards Sea King 5hp engine. He stained the sides mahogany and varnished it while his mother made a full snap-on cover. The

boat would actually plane-off which allowed for much exploration to take place.

While attending Baltimore Polytechnic High School where his grandfather taught steam engineering for 33 years, Howard restored a 1947, 17' Special Runabout Chris Craft that had sides painted white. He also restored a Century, several outboards and began repairing furniture in his father's basement workshop.

After attending Potomac State College in Keiser, West Virginia, and the University of Baltimore he worked several jobs,



Howard with his god-daughter Sophie King in the summer of 2000. Car is his 1950 Chrysler Royal at Washington Times Car Show

including an insurance claims adjuster, truck repairman and lab technician. In 1969, he began doing restoration and historic preservation on antique furniture as "The Antique Doctor".

In 1972 he joined with two friends in the two-year construction of a 47' lapstrake catamaran sailboat, in St. Maarten, Netherlands Antilles. The vessel was used to run a day charter sailboat service out of the Mullet Bay Beach Hotel. He and his friends won two international sailboat races with it. In 1976 he sailed to Bermuda where he was invited aboard each of the "Tall Ships" that were on their way to the United States to take part in "Op Sail '76", which was the "Tall Ship" celebration of the Bicentennial. On his lapstrake catamaran he followed the "Tall Ships" back to the United States and put the boat in the Chesapeake Bay Sail-

boat Show. He sold his interest in the catamaran, which was later destroyed by Hurricane Hugo in the Caribbean.

Howard returned to being "The Antique Doctor" and enjoyed working on the finest mahogany furniture ever made in Baltimore, Washington and Annapolis. He also began to restore antique automobiles. His weekend activities still involved a selection of mahogany boats used on the Severn River.

When Howard discovered the existence of The Antique and Classic Boat Society he was refreshed to find others with similar passions and interests. Since 1994, he has been Co-editor of The Stuffing Box, the newsletter of the Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the Society. (Howard reports that approximately half of the members are

Chris Craft owners). Working with his friend Jeffery Beard, he has written many entertaining articles and stories for club members.

Howard has also been published in Messing About In Boats and Chesapeake Bay Magazine. He has written articles on such diverse topics as Wedding Boat Rides to the History of Whirlwind Boats. He is currently working on an article about Multi-generational Restoration that describes the refurbishing of a 1961 SkiCraft Daycruiser by a whole family.

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He has also lectured at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, the Mariners Museum and at the National Boating History Symposium in Cincinnati 2001. He has been invited to speak at the Chesapeake Bay Boat Show in June 2002, and the 2003 National Boating History Symposium to be held in Seattle, Washington.

Howard owns and operates The Antique Boat Center that is part of his 7-acre farm including 900 Dogwood trees. It is located approximately 1/2 mile from the scenic Patuxent River, in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, near the little town of Croom, not far from the Nation's Capital. The Antique Boat Center includes a heated workshop in a 3-story barn where, among other things, 10 different Chris Crafts have been restored/refinished. Currently eight boats are under restoration (3 are Chris Crafts). Howard restores with emphasis on teaching the owner and has become aware of the fact that the restoration of boats can be used to stimulate post-illness recuperation. His success in wooden boat restoration for recuperative therapy is a whole 'nuther story.

The Center also includes a 25' x 80' shed that houses 2 big cruisers and 8 other

boats. One of the cruisers is a 1951, 34' Enclosed Chris Craft. A 140' x 40' pole barn is under construction for 45 restorable boats that are parked at the property. Of these 45 boats, perhaps sadly, only 7 are Chris Crafts. A 40' x 60' metal building has 13 antique cars on display. These cars range from a 1940 Buick to a 1960 Comet. The Comet as well as a 1950 Chrysler and a 1956 Cadillac Sedan de Ville are used to tow boats with outboards to shows (Howard reports he tries to attend as many as 6 shows a year).

Howard's residence at The Antique Boat Center includes models, a research library and a boating video studio. The facility has a basement workshop that has 35 outboards exhibited along with antique boating literature and magazines.

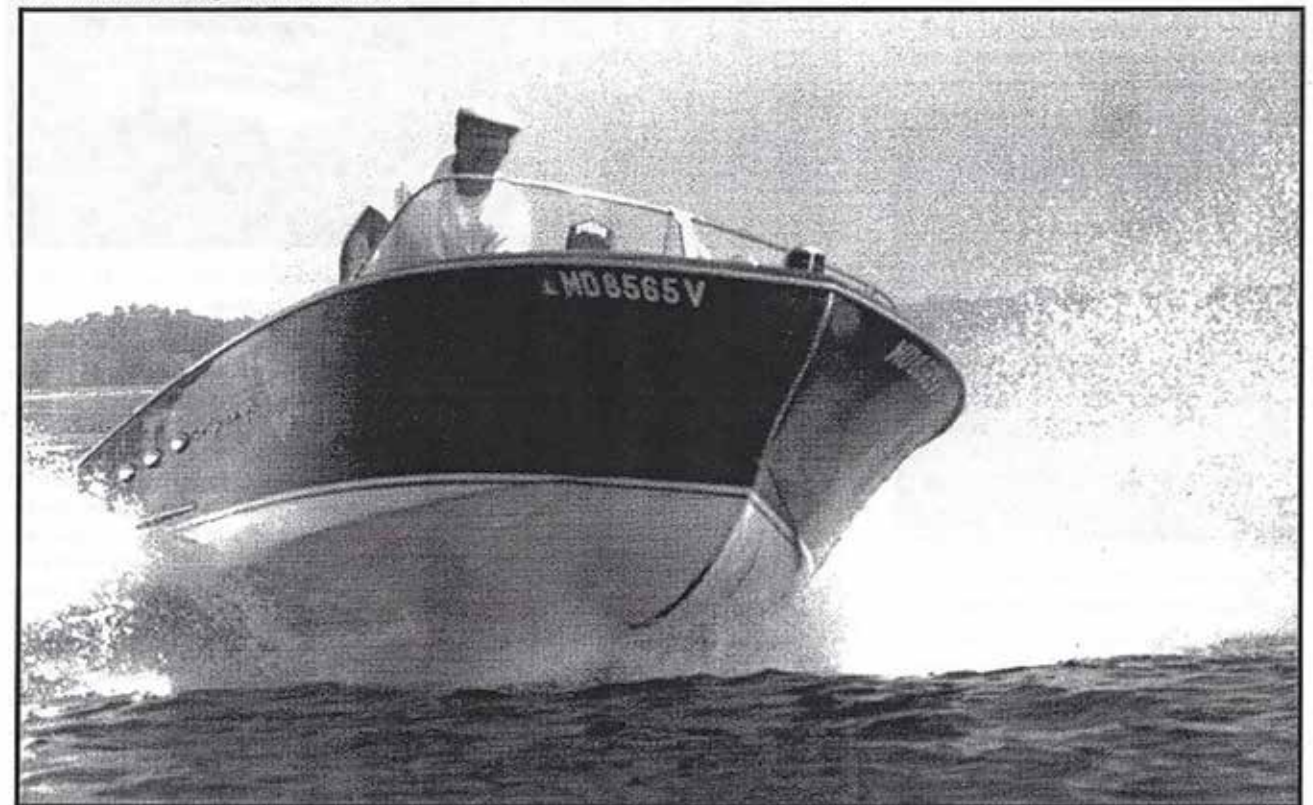
The Antique Boat Center is also home of the Whirlwind Boat Company archives. Located in Cockeysville, Maryland, the Whirlwind Boat Company produced about 15,000 molded mahogany plywood boats between 1946 and 1962. Howard claims that most of these boats still exist because they are so restorable.

Howard is now working with Jeffery Beard, to establish the National Boating

Museum. This facility will use recreational and commercial boating history from around the nation as a tool for education, rehabilitation and inspiration. Since March 2001, Howard has served as Executive Director. The tentative location of the National Boating Museum is Mattapeake, Kent Island, Maryland, in the old Chesapeake Bay Hydraulic Model Building. This structure includes 14 acres under one roof, where three acres will be dedicated to the museum and the remaining 11 acres will be used for indoor boat storage. The National Boating Museum is projected to open in 2005.

By helping to create the National Boating Museum, Howard hopes to bring together his lifetime love of boats and cars, the WWII generation, the fabulous fifties restoration, boat construction and design, fishing environmental understanding and water sports. He wants to follow by teaching the history of our fabulous country and to stimulate and share with others, the love for all these things.

Howard says he was honored to have many antique boat enthusiasts visit his restoration facility and keeps the welcome mat out for more.



Howard on his 1957 Chris Craft Continental he restored in 1994

Boats in My Blood

Boats In My Blood

By Howard P. Johnson

My parents grew up in Baltimore City, Dad, (Howard), went to Baltimore Polytechnic, and Mother, (Micky), Forrest Park High School. Due to the depression, their families were not well off.



Somehow in 1932, they were able to ride the WB&A train down to Camp Linstead, in Severna Park, where they met and spent a week crabbing, canoeing and swimming. They told me they swam all the way across Round Bay, to St Helina's Island and back. They admired each other so much they fell in love. The good times led to buying a flat stern canoe with a Caille Red Head engine; they each chipped in \$50.00. My father said the engine was junk and threw a rod; he got an Elto which allowed them to explore the entire Severn River.

They dated, worked hard, saved money and married in '39. My father studied engineering at John's Hopkins Night School, which led to a job at Edgewood Arsenal making munitions. During the War, sometimes, they had enough gas ration cards to go to Clayton's Boat Yard and do some boating. After 5 years of 24 - 7 production, at Edgewood, in February of '45 they had produced sufficient volume to win the war in all six theatres. So they decided to have child. November of '45, my grandmother and great aunt were taking turns on the weekends so Howard and Micky could use their new, used boat, my father had found.



When we looked at the pictures, years later, he said, You were too young to remember, when we had that one.

I remembered the Dodge, all varnish, nice cabin, with a head; my mother made a curtain out of a sheet.



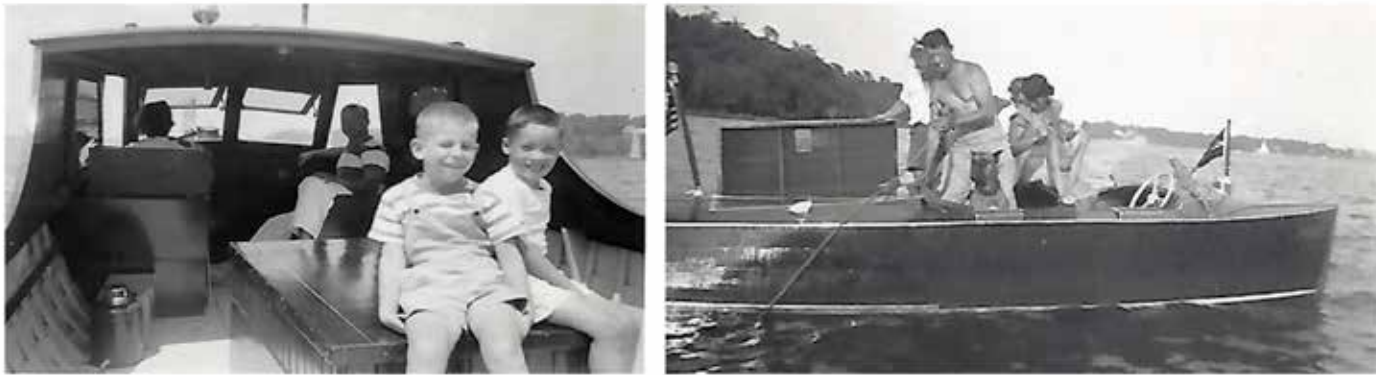
My father took the spotlight off for repair; when it would rain, it would drip on me.

We always went somewhere, swam, and then had a picnic lunch.



Dad was the only one who didn't smoke. Our favorite place was the beach outside of Sappington's Yacht Yard. Sometimes our friend Bill Smith would be there with his boxer dog and Chris Craft. They enjoyed using his Aqua Plane behind the boat. My father was driving when he fell off, then the board dove down, getting stuck in the mud. Soon he began to holler, Howard, I can't swim! My mother grabbed a life jacket and swam it out to him. Then later, on the beach, they lit some cigarettes and laughed.





The beach was where they dug the sand to build The Naval Academy, in Annapolis. It was at the end of the narrows and beginning of Round Bay; lots of white sand, cliffs to climb, and an artesian well pouring out delicious ice cold water.



So every year or so, dad would find a better used boat. The NONA was built in Maine, a lapstrake day boat with a cabin and bunks up forward, a Gray Marine 6, which took us on hundreds of outings with never a problem.



Then my mother's father, Henry Rodgers, who taught Steam Engineering at Polytechnic, offered my father his 1929 American Car Foundry, 32ft Cruiser, so he could buy a 42 ft. Mathews, he found at Oxford, MD.



We kept the ACF, - Leda, at Sappington's, it had an aft cabin with 2 bunks, a center cabinet and 3 portholes, but was still 90 degrees in there in the summer. We cruised all the coves and many rivers of the Western Shore; the Magothy, Severn, South, West River, Rhodes River and the Patapsco. My parents liked staying overnight in coves or going to Yacht Clubs for orchestra music, dinner and dancing. They left me with books to read and instructions to take care of myself. Sometimes I could hear my mother's laughter above the music. One night I heard my father vomiting in the head, and pumping it overboard. They had great times.

I was used as a slave, I used to say, to get the cakes of ice with wheelbarrow and tongs, to carry my fathers "portable" radio, pump the bilge, sweep the decks and cabins, polish the brass, sand and varnish with my mother, and drag the basket of crabs while dad scooped them up in the seaweed. We had a wooden boarding ladder that dad would hang over the side; it could really pinch your finger. The Leda had a Penn Yan dingy in the davits, aft, that dad would sometimes tow when cruising. I could ride in it for hours while towing my model whaleboat hull.



One day the string came off and I called and called for dad to go back. He yelled we're NOT going back, yet, a while later, to my relief, we DID go back. He told me later, our mother made me go back! Another time, while at anchor in a long forgotten cove, the sky turned black and a big hurricane hit, all day and night. My father put a second anchor out and we dropped the canvas curtains around the deckhouse, which soon were torn by lashing rains and buffeting winds, we sat in the rolling cabin and sewed the tears by the light of the kerosene lanterns.

After 5 years of boatyard fun and travel adventure, my folks decided they wanted a waterfront property. They had found the servant's cottage of the Mathews Estate off of Benfield Road, in a small community, Lakeland, for \$2,500.00. It was on a high hill overlooking the river, the bluff, another place where sand was dug for the Naval Academy.



Down on the water was a swamp which dad wanted to turn into a beach, so after school I had to dig sand from along the water and throw it into the low areas of mush. Gradually we built a beautiful beach and a pier, working on weekends. We put the pilings in with a jet pump. He took me to get the 17ft Chris Craft utility with a fiberglass bottom. We were going along at around 1,200 RPM when suddenly we were thrown forward, then the water began to pour in. He said, let's put on our preservers, minutes later we were swimming. The boat would barely float, the 95hp six was so heavy. Luckily we were close to Sappington's and they came out to give us a tow which had to be very slow, the fiberglass had all come off. At home, on the trailer, my job was to use broken hack saw blades with a hook ground into one end, and tar tape around the teeth to make a handle to clean out the seams, then force Kuhls caulking compound into the seams with a putty knife.



Then paint the whole bottom with copper racing bottom paint running down the brush handle. All this was before the advent of masks or gloves. We would just run down the hill and dive into the river, spit a lot and use sand to scrub our hands.



Dad bought me a twelve foot rowboat made of 3/8 plywood, by a local builder. It was my first finishing job, mahogany topsides with varnish, light green inside; my mother and I made a canvas cover on her Wilcox and Gibbs treadle sewing machine. With the Wards, Sea King, 5 1/2 hp engine and later the McCulloch – Scott, - with an eighty pound skipper, it would fly. They never knew all the places I went!

So we built a rickety pier with the neighbor's help and had the Chris Craft and my boat tied up there. To start the engine dad used 2 batteries and to get it to spin fast enough, he would switch the polarity to 12 volts (big sparks) and I would push the button, it would roar into life and I would lower the throttle on the wheel. Soon we would be sliding along across the silky smooth water bathed in sweet summer air, with the thunder of the engine behind us. The kids spent whole days out on the water, I had a rotting rowboat, The HJ, which we painted, would bail out, paddle out, sink by rocking, then turn it over, jump up and down on the bottom while some kids were underneath, King of the boat, pushing each other off, paddling home sitting in it, up to our chests in water.



Somehow my mother always knew when to bring the sodas and sandwiches. We spent hours catching crabs with chicken legs. One time we laid an extension cord all the way down to the beach, set up tables and we had all the neighbors and friends over for an evening crab feast with Christmas lights, in the summer; - it was like a dream.

We all had model airplanes; we bolted airplane engines into model boats and they would fly! We would chase them with our boats and they were faster than us!

My friend Rick had a 13 ft plywood runabout with a Mercury Hurricane 10. It was hard to start so after we both had blisters we could water ski behind it, for hours.

My boat was not that fast but his next door neighbor, Mr. Kittinger had a boat he wasn't using. One day I asked him why, He said he just didn't have time to get it all fixed up and running. I said well I do, I could get it running for you. Wow, that would be great, he said, come up to my house and get the engine. So Rick's mother drove us up there in her '50 Dodge that day. He gave me the Evinrude 15, a full tank of gas, and a big WWII tarp to keep it under. Rick and I turned the boat over and it was a lot like his, mostly ¼ inch plywood and varnished decks. The engine ran great, and our boats were almost exactly the same speed. Now we could explore every cove on the river and take our friends along.

We used innertubes a lot. Ricks dad got us a huge bus innertube, we would sit opposite and rock until we would flip over, come up laughing; we spent more time underwater than on top.

Dad bought a 19 ft. Century Resorter with a big red engine and lots of varnish.



Sitting in the back you couldn't even hear the parents talking way up front. When we would go to Sappington's to get gas, they would give us money for a soda; We would get Yoo Hoo, chocolate drinks, in a bottle, loved it. We also collected bottles to return for money; our neighbors would give us bottles just to get rid of them.

I knew my mother was sick sometimes, in August my father had to take her to the hospital. Then she was in or out, we still had the Cub Scouts to our house but in December she was in the hospital again. My father came to pick me up at school. He said, "How, - Mother died, today". We walked out of school with tears streaming down our faces.

Things were never the same after that. He said he couldn't stand me because I reminded him of mother. He bought fiberglass boats; once I found out about the itchy fiberglass I didn't like them; I got it on me every time I was on board.



So I kept the old wooden ones, Lyman, Cruisers Inc., Thompson, Whirlwind, outboards, - inboards were too expensive and too hard to fix. But I did learn about them too; the Severn River, in the sixties, offered kids with their father's boats that didn't run and I could do the points, adjust the carburetor or tell if there was fuel.

So I got to help others and to ride in their boats! This one old Chris-Craft had a modern engine in there, an Olds V8 with a leaking transmission with a pan and a power-steering pump rigged to put the leaking oil back in the reservoir. It worked so well that the leaking trans seal never had to be fixed. Years later, I came upon the now derelict boat in a junk boatyard and saw it all—now old and filthy. We had moments of thrill and excitement in that old thing. Somehow, the wood aspect of it all made it unique and special to us and also somehow more fun! We had to deal with our cranky old boats, but they made heaven when going right. You see the joy and all the treasures of Mother Nature and God. Nothing could explain how it all could be possible, God and nature making millions of miles of earth that men can love and enjoy, and no other planets have it. These are all the blessings we found, and now, years later, they are all still out there, the beauty, the sounds, the scenery, sweet air, rich aroma of the wooden hull, and power of buoyant water, on each outing, all enrich our heart, soul, and mind, until the next time.

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IN THE HOME:

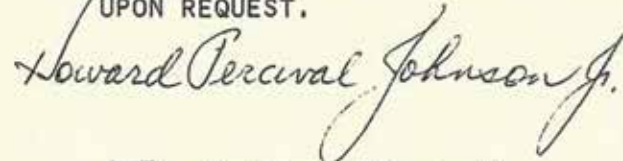
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A Deal with God

A DEAL WITH GOD

By Howard Johnson

In 1996 my friendly divorce was final. I helped my X move to her new place. Now I would be responsible for all the bills on the farm. Sometimes things did not always go well, my income could not keep up. One particular month, due dates had come but not the money to pay.

As a child, I walked to St John's Church with my family many Sundays; in winter we drove. My mother insisted that I attend until confirmed. I served as an acolyte, yet as I got older I drifted away and had doubts about faith and God.



Now, years later, I needed help with no one to call upon. Desperate, before bed, I prayed to God for help. I asked Him to help me with my money problems and that I was embarrassed to ask Him for this help; that I would always believe in him from now on, - if he would help me.

The phone woke me at eight. It was Russell Watson from Robin Hill Nursery. Mr. Johnson, he said, you told me at one of our dances that you had grown 600 Kousa Chinese Dogwoods that are for sale. I need some of those for a project. Could I take a look at your trees this morning? He was there before I could fix

breakfast. "I like these trees," he said, "May I put markers on the ones I want?" "Oh, yes Sir!"

He put orange tape on 60 trees. "Now follow me down to my office and I'll cut you a check," he said. I did, and drove home with one thousand dollars, before noon. Later, eating breakfast, I wept. Only GOD could do this. My belief in Him has been strong ever since. He blesses me now, and I feel it, every day.



Howard Johnson's Special Collection

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Howard Johnson's Special Collection

May 13, 2016

Howard Johnson and Whirlwind boats have several things in common. Johnson was born in the immediate aftermath of World War II, as were Whirlwind Boats. They both have beginnings in the furniture business. And now, both Johnson and roughly 30 Whirlwind boats have found a home in Upper Marlboro, MD, where Johnson is lovingly restoring the old woodies.



Not all of the boats belong to Johnson. Some have been left by friends and clients who trust his steady hand with the boat's restoration. Johnson takes on projects himself, but also acts as a consultant for those who want to do it themselves.

"I ask them to send me \$25 in good faith," he says, "and then I help them through their own restorations, step by step." Johnson has been professionally restoring boats since 1969, and over the last 47 years he's learned that things need to be done in order. "If you don't do things exactly in order, you have to turn right around and start from the beginning."

Drone footage of Sputnik, one of the boats in Johnson's collection, on the water in St. Michaels.

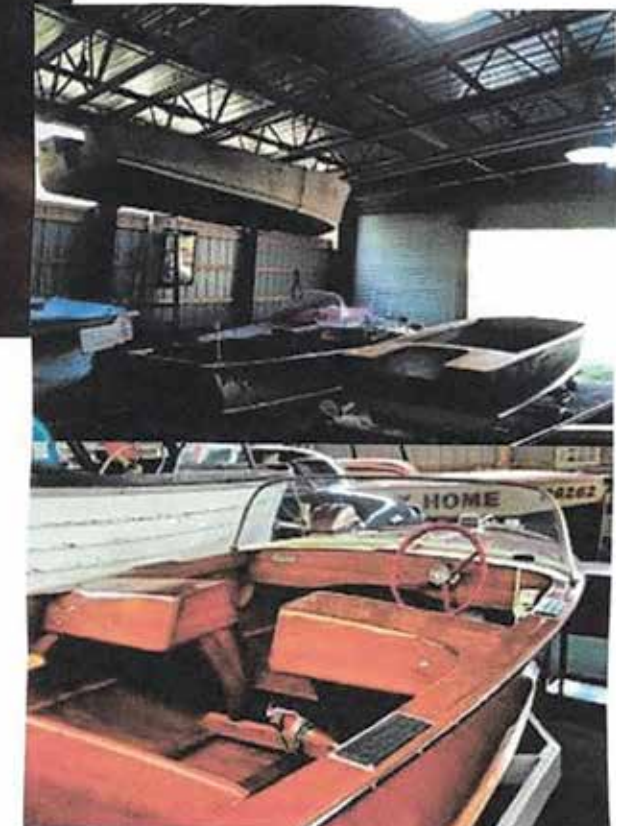
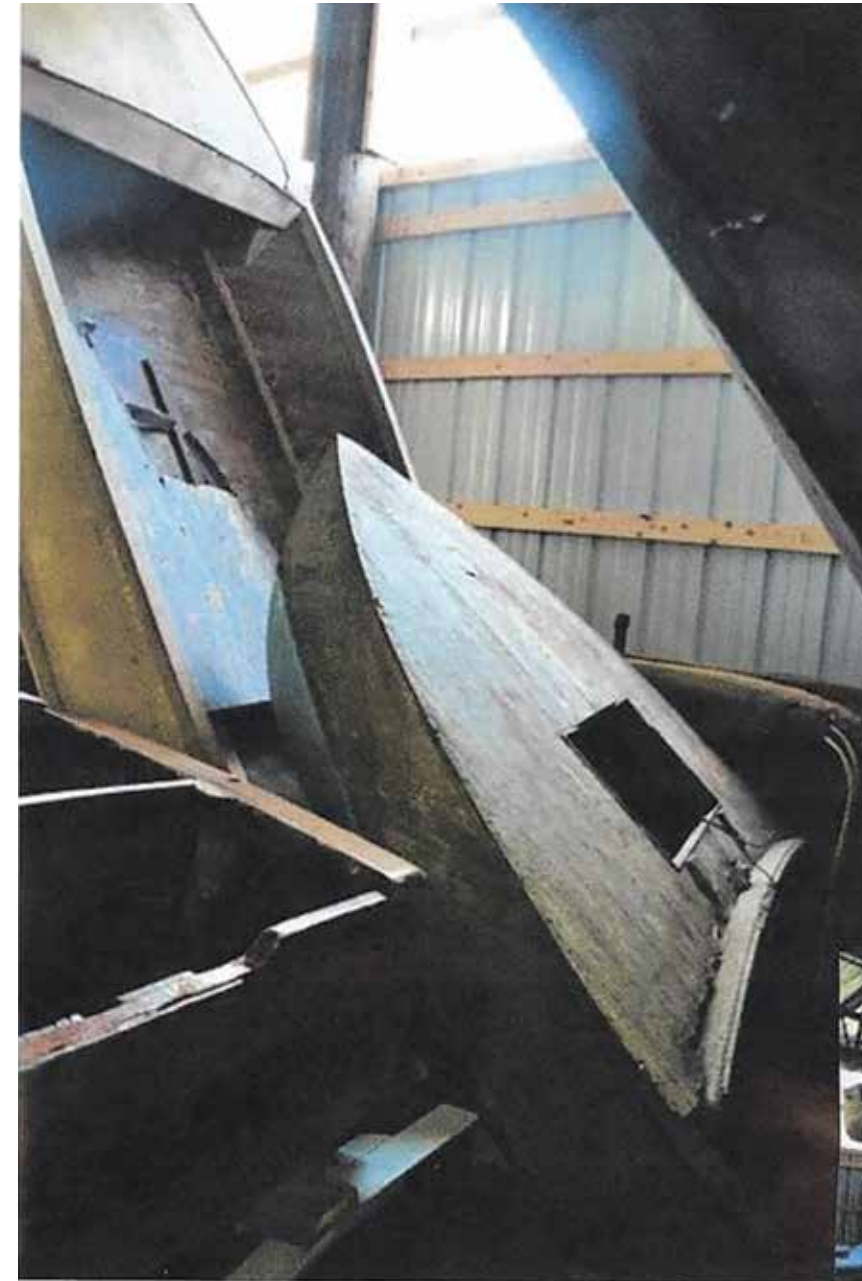
Johnson is sticking true to the heart of Whirlwind Boats' mission. The boats were either fully finished for customers or sent as DIY kits for home builders. They show up in Upper Marlboro in all conditions; there are the shiny boats that have bleach blond decks and shiny steering consoles, and there are the DIY projects that are customized with hidden drawers and more legroom.

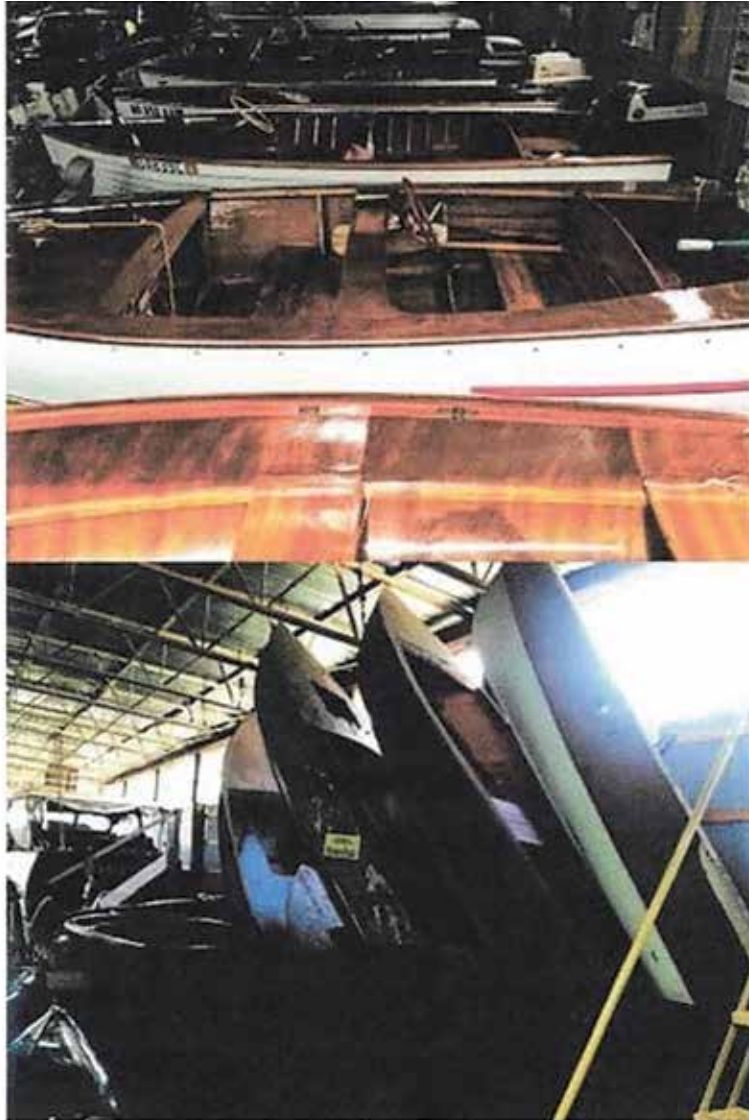
For Johnson, the boats will never truly belong to him, just as their memories will never fully be his. He respects that, and makes his collection open to owners to come and reclaim their boats, reclaim their time on the water, should they want to.

Johnson hopes that they want to. "These boats bring families together," he says. "There is something very special about a Whirlwind."

To learn more about Howard Johnson and his collection, visit oldtimeworld.com.

For more on Whirlwinds, read this great article in [Woodyboater Magazine](#), written by Johnson.





The original Whirlwind factory was located in Cockeysville, MD. when workers at Allied Aviation found themselves out of work and with a surplus of veneer, glue, and plywood that was originally intended for molded plywood glider airplanes. Turning their attention to the construction of pleasure boats, hulls were shaped by stacking five thin layers of mahogany and gluing them together at sharp angles. The boats were baked in a long oven called an "autoclave" for one hour at 375 degrees. After the boat was cooled, final fittings were installed and the whole thing was expertly varnished. At their most productive, the Cockeysville factory was turning out three Whirlwinds a day. In 15 years, the company built 15,000 hulls.

Today, Johnson finds the boats in a variety of conditions. Some are pristine and shiny; others have peeling varnish, missing windshields, and holes in their hulls. They rest on trailers and hang from the ceiling in Johnson's warehouse. Four and a half boats are stacked against one wall, mostly from the early 1950s. Having half a boat lying around doesn't ruffle Johnson in the least. "I'll use that deck to patch another boat that's deteriorating," he says. But under Johnson's care, not many boats seem to be neglected. The warehouse is pristine.

My Mother

My mother, Margaret Rodgers Johnson started feeling ill in August of 1960. Several trips to the doctor revealed she had cancer, She had been smoking Raleigh Cork tip cigarettes ever since the thirties when she was 16, two or 3 packs a day. Cancer was such a severe diagnosis the doctor made sign of a C to my father. He would not say the word aloud. She came home from the hospital very thin, twice. In december it was back to the hospital. I was in English class at Baltimore Polytechnic High School when my teacher surprised me by calling my name - your father is here for you, he said! There was my father at the door, I grabbed my stuff and in the hall he put his arm around me and said, Johnny, Mother dies today. We both wept and walled side by side we saw the other students saw we were crying. I still weep, today, thinking of this. The next time I saw her was at the funeral home. I touched her forehead, she was cold and hard, I didn't have to do it again. It was great to see all our friends we ever knew, sad to see the coffin at the cemetery. So we didn't get to say goodbye. My mother loved me so much that she filled two picture albums of my baby pictures of how much she loved me when I was just a newborn, for me to read as I grew up. Looking back a few years later I realized that I was have ing VERY goo luck with some things that happened for me.

Newlywed Game

Reader Rendezvous

AMAZING TALES AND EVERYDAY ESCAPADES

Newlywed Game

Wherein our narrator's classic wooden boat becomes the star of the show—but very nearly sinks it.

by Howard Percival Johnson

MY GREAT OLD HIGH SCHOOL FRIEND, SCOTT JAY, CALLED: "Hey, Johnny Johnson, I need a favor. Some friends are getting married—a big wedding—and they have their hearts set on a ride in a classic speedboat. I thought of you and your '61 Century Resorter right off the bat."

What could I say?

As it turned out, I said, "No problem, Scott."

The groom-to-be, Patrick Sweeny, would call shortly thereafter and introduce himself. Sounded nice, said it was a dream he'd always had, for Kristin and him to ride from the wedding to the reception in a beautiful mahogany boat. The ceremony was to be at St. Mary's Church on Spa Creek in Annapolis. The reception was to be held at the Annapolis Yacht Club (where I would also pick up my fee of 200 samolians). Patrick called back several times in the months leading up to their spring wedding to confirm that everything was being handled. It was

And for more people than Patrick might have imagined. I restore antique boats for a living. In the spring, all my customers want their done. When Patrick's call came, I was near collapse from overwork. Every bone in my body ached and every day it was getting worse. I needed rest. I told him, "I don't think I'm going to be able to make the wedding." He said he was counting on me (the big lug) and that Scott had assured him that I wouldn't let him down. The wedding just wouldn't be complete without the boat, Patrick said.

Well, my name would have been mudd forever. "I'll be there," I told him.

The boat was still covered for the winter. I dragged it out and opened it up. It was filthy. All the remnants of last year's fun, plus the usual winter yuck, had taken over. I had to put the batteries in and charge them, hook up the water and start her up, tighten the generator belts, change the fuel filter, adjust the neutral switch, fill the tires on the trailer, vacuum everything, wash it all down, inside and out, towel it off, polish the

chrome, scour the decks and cockpit accents, wax, detail and polish the windshield and hook the trailer to the truck. There was just time to get my white shirt and black bow tie dry-cleaned and ready to go.

I thought about getting someone to help me put her in the water, but there was no time. It was after 4 p.m. on the wedding day, and I had to be tied up at the church by

5 p.m.! Thankfully, the traffic was light and the line at Truxton Park was short. Friendly boaters waited



CHESAPEAKE BAY MAGAZINE, October 2000 109

Reader Rendezvous

with *Water Lincoln* while I parked the truck and ran back to the dock, praying that the engine would start (the batteries weren't fully charged). It did start. Never has a running engine sounded so good. I pulled away, accompanied by a throaty idle, and frantically changed to the white shirt and bow tie with one hand.

The day was dazzling and for a moment I took a deep breath and forgot my pain and exhaustion. I was going to make it. Maybe I'd even enjoy the afternoon toot.

Admiring hands accepted the lines at the tiny church dock. A beautiful wedding was taking place just across the lawn and many attendees looked *Water Lincoln's* way. When the wedding was over, several folks strolled down to check out the boat. They kept saying how lucky Bill and Janice were to have this spot.

Bill and Janice? I was there to pick up Patrick and Kristin. I was sure I had my instructions correct. Or was I?

Finally, I figured out that there was another, bigger wedding up at the church, which was going on simultaneously. A few minutes later, Kristin's pop strolled down the hill and con-

firmed that I was at the right place. He also dropped off a bottle of champagne: Dom '90. He said the boat looked nice and that the loving couple would be down soon. All the guests from the other wedding drifted away.

I used the moment to check the boat's bilge pump. It didn't come on. I had forgotten that the backup pump hadn't worked last year, either, although the main pump had been very reliable. It said Lovett, right there on the pump, but it was not being lovable at that moment.

Trying not to be *too* obvious, I lifted the front seat and, hanging down into the bilge, wiggled all the various wires and hoses, to no avail. It was running, just not pumping. Again, I lifted the seat, jiggled the pump, shook the hose and nothing happened.

God, why me?

I could see the headline: "Wedding Couple Drowns in Antique Boat." Maybe I should go put the boat back on the trailer *right now*. Tell them I just couldn't make it. Once they found me, I wouldn't be able to tell them, "Don't worry. We're just sinking. Feel free to do that I'm-king-of-the-world thing." So the minutes ticked away and the water

slowly rose in the bilge. So much was in there, I was sweating just looking at it.

Finally, I decided that if the water was over the floorboards when they came aboard, they'd know they couldn't proceed. But what if the water came over the floorboards later, while we were out in the harbor? They'd be screaming, "We're sinking!" Instead of applauding the newlyweds, people would be throwing orange life vests. The wedding would be ruined.

Before I could decide or bug out, down the hill came Patrick and Kristin, he in his family kilt, she in a magnificent gown. Never have two young people looked more radiant to me. He deftly scooped her up in his arms and they came aboard.

I forced a grin, we took in the lines and the engine roared to life. The bilge pump maintained its silence. So did I, mentally counting life jackets and working on a plan should the water start lapping our ankles. The photographer began snapping pictures as we did a few figure eights. Finally, the couple signaled that we'd done enough posing and we idled away as they popped the bubbly.

What a lustrous sunny day. The wa-

Reader Rendezvous

ter was like glass. Well-wishers showered congratulations down from the Spa Creek bridge as we passed beneath. Boats blew their horns or turned around to get another look. I idled along, confident that my guests were happy and relaxed, even if I wasn't. So far, so good. When the water got a little choppy, I slowly turned toward the Naval Academy seawall and ran parallel to the shore. People sitting on the benches there were shouting out their congratulations. Near the Annapolis City Dock, everyone there did the same. As we turned into Ego Alley, people actually began to clap. We glided around in a big circle beside the dinghy dock at the head of the finger of water. I suggested that they raise their glasses and toast their adoring public, and so they did. Everyone cheered as we made our triumphant exit. It was my first standing ovation.

The putt to the yacht club docks was a short one, but everywhere we looked, people were hanging over their hotel balconies and boat decks, gawking and applauding. The AYC decks were crowded, too, and they clapped and cheered while the groomsmen took our lines. Moments later, these

two living treasures were swept away into the crowd.

I was quite a hit at the reception. Everyone loved the boat (no one seemed to notice she was a little low in the water, or at least they didn't say so) and said how nice the couple looked onboard. My friends Scott and Dona were there and thrilled we'd pulled it off so smoothly. They introduced me to their lovely friends. I met the happy parents, who seemed delighted and slipped me the check. Somehow, the drink seemed very powerful. I felt exhaustion catching up with me. It was time to go. Several guests walked down to the dock with me, admired the boat, helped with the lines.

I had pulled it off.

As I drove away in the postcard-perfect sunset, I had to turn the boat and it rolled sharply. I knew the water was deeper than before, to the critical stage. Back at the ramp, the waterline was so far under the water that it couldn't be seen. Fortunately, I managed to get the trailer under, essentially by backing into the creek. The tailpipe was underwater, making the truck sound like the boat. A huge effort was required to pull all that water out of

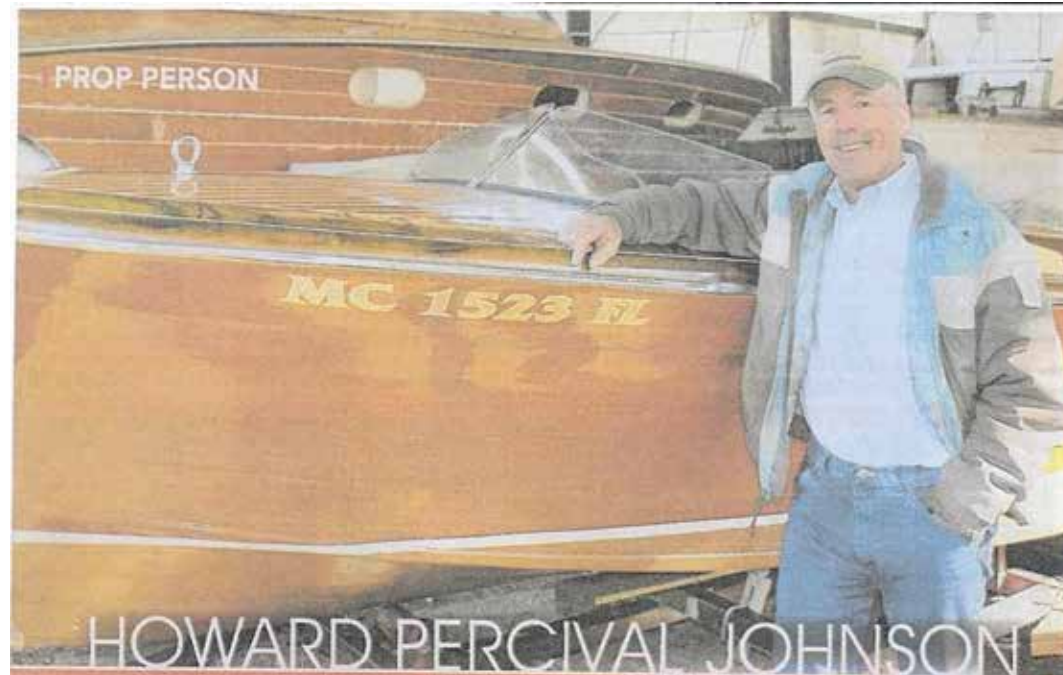
the water. Everything was straining, especially me.

When the plug was pulled, water blasted out everywhere. Off came the clean white shirt, out came the seat. I pulled the pump out, pulled off the hose and blew into it—a huge breath—and *puff!* Out came some kind of bug nest. Again, the pump worked like a champ. I headed home, elated at what a wonderful wedding it had been. And then I went to bed for three days. ■

Howard Johnson lives in Upper Marlboro, Md. He is an active member of the Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, owns a handful of beautiful and soon-to-be-beautiful wooden motorboats and hasn't been the same since the above incident.



Prop Talk Person



HOWARD PERCIVAL JOHNSON

By Allison Blake and His Old Time World

Howard Percival Johnson Jr. stood at the end of his stunningly well-organized workbench holding a Chock Full of Nuts coffee can labeled "knobs." Knobs of every description spilled forth: an old MG stick shift knob, a chrome button of indeterminate origin, and a white plastic knob scavenged from an old fan. After all, when you restore old mechanical stuff for a living, you never know when a spare knob might come in handy.

Attention to detail is one skill Johnson brings to his 40-year career as the self-styled Antique Doctor. What began as a furniture restoration business in 1969 evolved in the early 1990s to focus on Johnson's first two loves, boats and cars. Furniture's not entirely out of the picture, but, as Johnson puts it, "the boats have taken over." No mystery there. Johnson spent his childhood weekends on the Chesapeake and her rivers with his parents, and by the age of seven was helping his dad restore a boat. Now he harbors a special love for rescuing pleasure craft hailing from his post-World War II childhood, such as Chris Craft classics and

the Cockeysville-built Whirlwinds.

"I was held prisoner on an antique boat as a child," he joked, describing long weekend afternoons he spent with his parents aboard the 22-foot Maine-built skiff *Nona*, then, later, a 32-foot 1929 American Car & Foundry ACF Sport Cruiser called *The Leda*.

Johnson's mechanical expertise seems almost pre-ordained. His grandfather taught steam engineering at Baltimore Polytechnic High School, and his father ran a large truck repair business in Baltimore where Johnson worked off and on until he was 25. But there's another reason he gravitated toward using his hands—childhood polio.

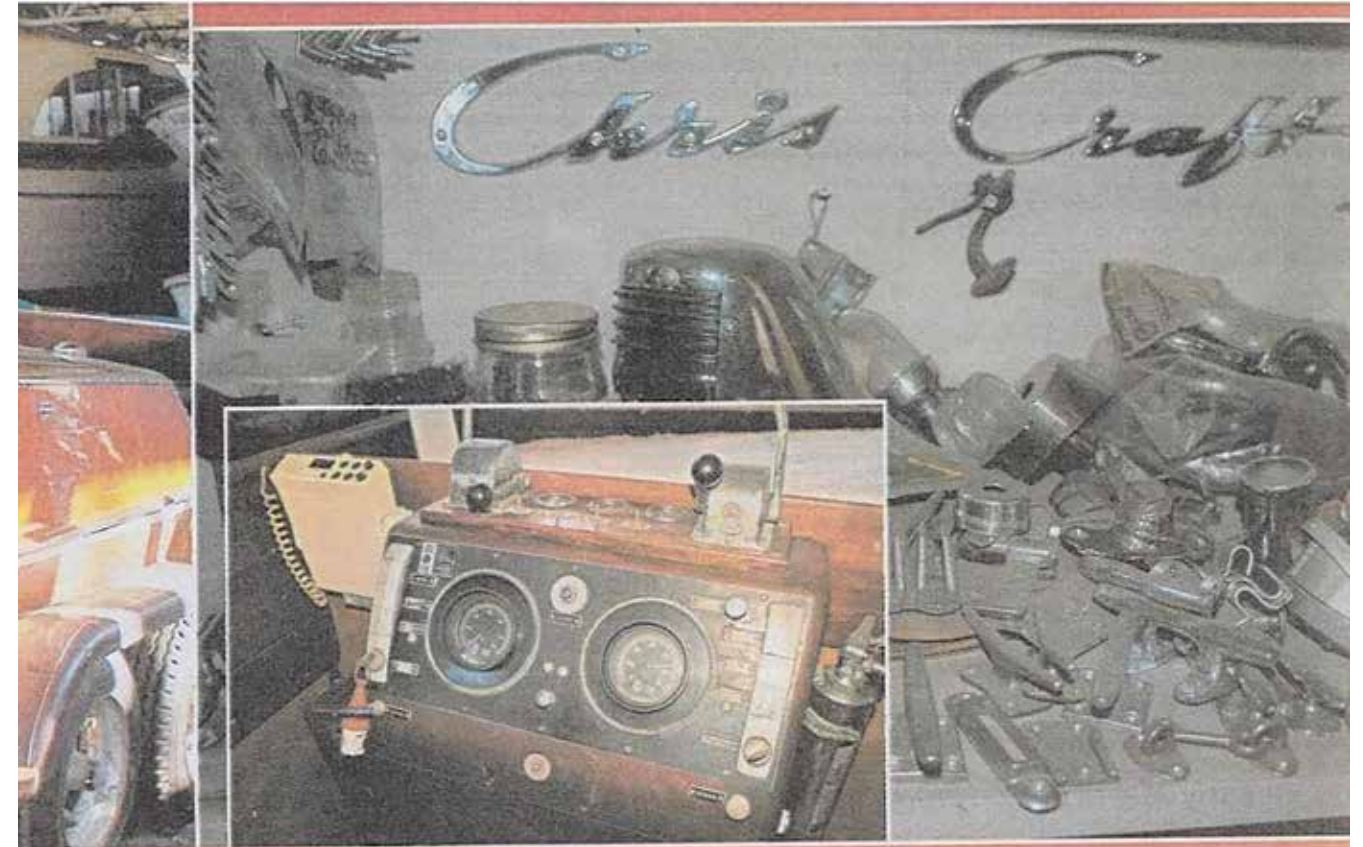
"I couldn't play ball," he says. "Dad had a workbench. I was good with my hands. I made a motorbike in my basement. One day, I went by the baseball game on the motorbike I had built—and it stopped the game."

His clients find themselves caught up in his passion, since Johnson prefers they work along with him during their boat restorations at his sprawling hillside operation just

south of Annapolis where boats and cars are stored in two barns and in a large building he calls "The Arena."

"He's got an insatiable appetite for knowledge," said client Jim Holler, a fellow member of the Antique & Classic Boat Society's Chesapeake Bay Chapter. "When you talk about that in reference to restoring old boats and old cars, he has a real appreciation of those yesteryear kinds of things and is just keenly interested in preserving them."

Client Tracy Coleman, a mechanically-minded soulmate, certainly relates. Some years ago, his father-in-law gave up his old Whirlwind, a boat similar to the one Coleman spent many happy days cruising on the 1950s and '60s Severn River. He took it to his shop, where it sat for a long time. "Finally," Coleman said, "it dawned on me I needed inside help. I contacted Howard, and we just seemed to hit it off. Then the true danger in restoring boats developed. I wanted a nice-looking boat. I didn't want a show queen. But once you get into it, you're in."



As the restoration progressed, the pair took the Whirlwind out on test drives, would make little adjustments, and fix them. "You're always liable to get some dribble here and there," said Coleman. "Howard ended up keeping it, what, six months? We went riding and had fun, came back, and wanted to do something else." The duo had so much fun that they are now working on another boat, a 16-foot 1928 Welsh Brothers Gentleman's Racer, a classic that Coleman bought from Johnson. That's because the Antique Doctor also buys, sells and rescues old boats—often phoned in from a friend, perhaps a fellow member of the Antique & Classic Boat Society.

Take a tour through The Arena and climb aboard a 42-foot, triple stateroom Owens, built in 1948 in Baltimore. She's a good-looking relic with a dubious past. Having sunk in one night in 2000, the boat lounged nearly gunnel-deep in Middle River. Once she was raised, it took a year for the boat to find a home with Johnson. She's a beauty, but it's taken time and much labor to make her so.

Cleaning a boat, says Johnson, is step number one in a successful restoration. To say that was a challenge in this particular case would be an understatement. "I threw out 15 trash can loads of things, including the refrigerator," he says. "But I was still thrilled with the design of the boat."

Leading a tour through the boat, Johnson pointed out the details. "Look at the quality of the materials," he says. Beautifully varnished, large mahogany panels line the main cabin. All of the plate-glass windows slide open. "It has a lot of curves," he says, pointing to the wooden edges of the front windshield frame. "Only a skilled person can make a curve."

The rounded shapes came in after World War II, he explained. Chris Craft led the way with this type of design emphasis. "Everybody copied them," said Johnson.

That's just one typical snippet of boat history that fills Johnson's head.

"His insatiable appetite for knowledge lends itself to his research on these old cars and old boats," said Holler. "It helps him to know how they were made or built so he can duplicate that."

As a result, you will find a few more classic Chris Crafts or Whirlwinds cruising the Chesapeake and her rivers. Or, better yet, check out the 20th annual Antique and Classic Boat Festival in St. Michaels at the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum June 15, 16, and 17. Johnson and others from the 250-member Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the Antique & Classic Boat Society have long been involved with putting on this excellent event—www.cbmm.org. Or go to Johnson's website—www.olddimeworld.com.

About the Author: Allison Blake is a freelance writer with credits for submissions to *National Geographic Traveler*, *The Boston Globe*, *The Washington Post*, *Baltimore Magazine*, and others. She is the author of *The Chesapeake Bay Book*, a *Great Destinations* guidebook now in its sixth edition. For information on the Chesapeake Bay Book—www.countrymanpress.com.

Hang Those Tools

Hang Those Tools

Every work bench has to have many tools within easy reach; the more the better. Here is a system that can accommodate a vast array of tools, is simple and inexpensive to put in place.

First, build a sturdy bench 42 inches or waist high, glued to the wall or otherwise rock solid. Cover the wall behind this with $\frac{3}{4}$ " or $\frac{5}{8}$ " plywood, glued, screwed or nailed well. Paint white. Then make a tool board to hold all your pliers and screwdrivers. A $\frac{3}{4}$ " or 1" board works best, 10 or 12" wide. Lay out rows of staggered holes and drill fully with a spade bit. The more holes the better. All sizes of drills should be used as screwdrivers come in all sizes. The front row holes should be $\frac{5}{8}$ " or $\frac{3}{4}$ " in diameter because many pliers have thick handles. Sand and paint well. Mount this, 12 inches up above the rear of the workbench, with 4 strong brackets.

You will be surprised how many tools this board will hold. The blank area is for a small box made of cove molding that holds pencils and markers.

At the top of the plywood on the wall, also painted white, should be two shelves mounted so that you can reach up there, standing in front of the bench. In this case the shelves had to be rearranged for better reach convenience. In the picture below, the upper shelf was too high and had to be lowered to underneath the upper one.

Buy a large quantity of 3 inch finishing nails, - for the tool hanging. Start with the most often used, like the hammer. Imagine where you would like it to be when you need it. Hold it against the wall and mark the spots for the nails, move the tool, drive the nails and then hang the tool there. If you like where it is, draw around it with the marker, and move on to the

Drawers under the workbench are a big advantage. Many bench related items like wires, tubing and string lend themselves well to drawer storage.

Locating outlets along the lower front edge of the bench makes plugging in power tools convenient. I keep all of these with their cords coiled on 2 big shelves under the bench so they are easy to reach as well. Make a place for each new tool right away. If you put them in the same spot every time you will know where to look. Keep companion parts in a marked small box or tray near the tool. Use plastic bag ties bought from a garden center in 6 inch lengths to tie up everything. Put a bag tie on each tool near the cord so that the coiled cord can be retained. This preserves the life of the cord and prevents tangling. There are many benefits to be had from a happy workbench space, these tips plus a dose of self discipline can make maintenance and repair an adventure, rather than a chore. Soon your bench will look like this. Millions of tools are now available in an instant and all ready to remove or put back. This is 20 years accumulation. Virtually any kind of repair or service can be done at this bench.

This is what a similar layout with a full length tool board looks like after 20 years use. Every imaginable kind of service or repair can be done here, from model building, to clock and radio repair. The secret of making your bench layout work for you is always putting the tools back as you use them, this way the work space is clear and you can concentrate on the project, then you don't have to clean up as often. Cleaning up is aided by having a thick layer of newspapers on the bench top. Once dirty, slide off two layers. Bright lights above the bench are important. Fluorescent run parallel to the bench work well, with clip on spots placed where extra light is needed. Keep things neat and you will find yourself looking forward to more time at your bench!

Name That Boat

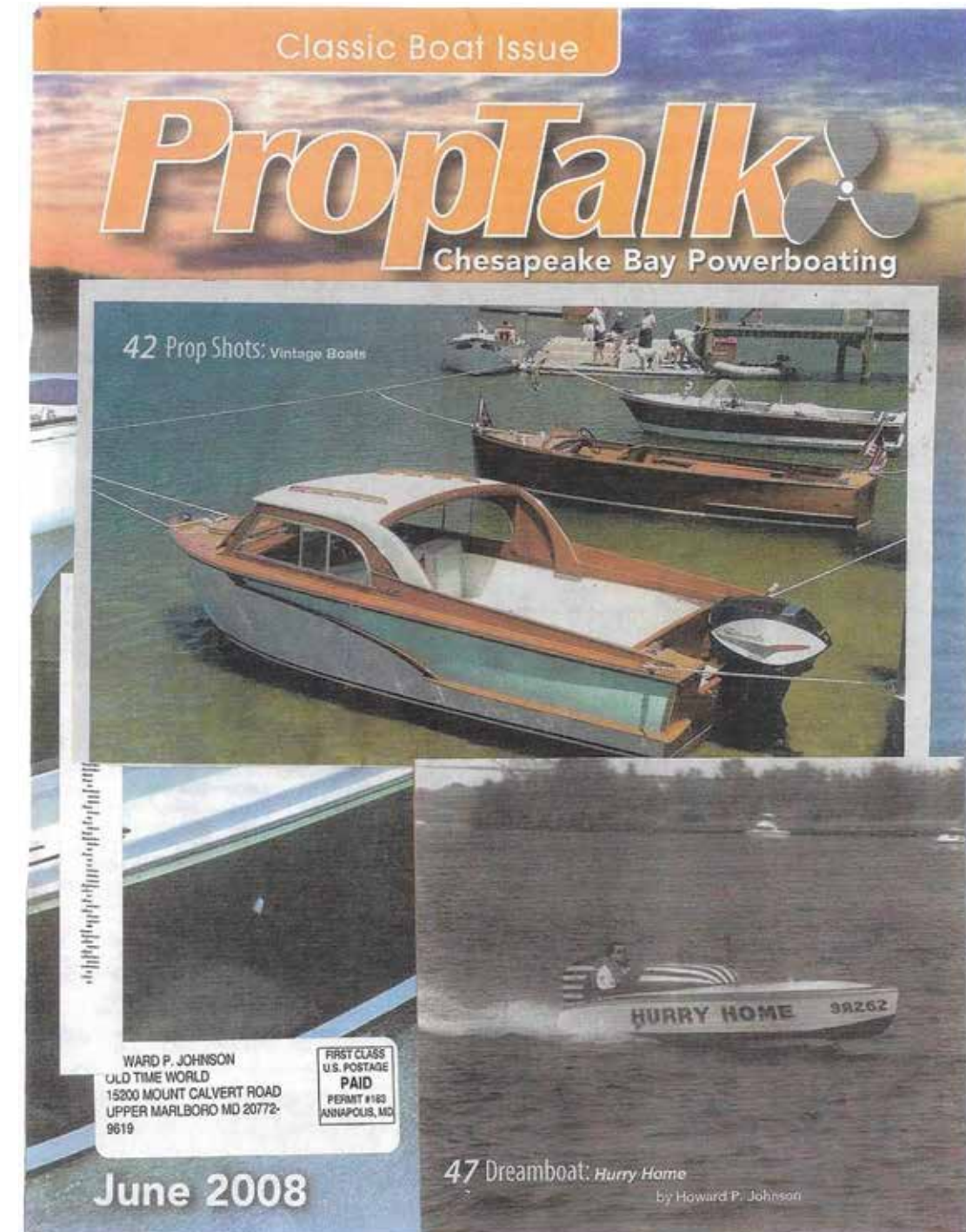
Name That Boat

by Howard P. Johnson Jr.

As a kid I helped my Dad refinish and maintain his boats, by the time I was a teenager he was letting me handle the bottom and the varnish but never use the boat. I finished my first more recent Chris Craft restoration in '94 and couldn't come up with a good name. The transom was huge and finally I settled on GIFT FROM OUR PAST. Later I admired PASTIMES, on another person's transom. Naming a boat well is an acquired skill. With practice I have gotten better at picking them. When I see a newly restored boat with no name on the transom, I know why it's not there. It can be tough coming up with one you like.

Our fabulous ACBS Directory has an excellent alphabetized boat name listing. The amazing variety ranges as far and wide as the imagination of very creative people. These names tell the story of marriages and love affairs with people and boats, sentimental, historical, and financial. Admiration, desperation, perspiration, dismay and double entendre, all are characterized. There are trick names, famous names, dirty names and familiar names; people use song names, movie names, women's names, drink names, foreign names, ship names and the stars and constellations. How about 4-CRUZIN or AHH-AHH, ALL SCREWED UP or BARREL 'N BY. BLOOD SWEAT + YEARS, is catchy, BOATJOLAIS, is tricky, CHAOS, says much about the project; CHUGALUG 2 is refreshing. CLASSIC BLUNDER, tells a story while DEJA VROOM goes flashing by; EGGSTROIDINAIRE is gastronomic while EL STINKO might happen later. FIN-TASTIC

Prop Talk Hurry Home



Hurry Home

by Howard P. Johnson

Holler fell in love with the dusty relic in spite of her peeling paint and her ragged bottom...



regular talks with the owner, and within a couple of months, they made a deal.

Holler shined her up and tweaked the Gray Marine triple-carburetor engine back to life. As a member of the Antique and Classic Boat Society (ACBS) he enjoyed showing her at events around the North East and Canada.

In 1989, his work moved him to Annapolis. He joined the Chesapeake Bay Chapter of the ACBS and participated in the society's classic boat show in St. Michaels over Father's Day weekend each year.

The leaking bottom and peeling paint were issues that Weldon Ferguson, a boat restorer in Chestertown, MD, took on. He also recovered the jaunty fin with aircraft cloth, dope, and paint; and he transferred the graphics onto tissue paper before sanding and repainting the hull and deck exactly to her original design and colors.

Holler displayed the boat in many shows and participated in the Race Boat Regatta in Clayton, NY in 1992, '94, '96, and '98. The boat was featured on a national race boat calendar and a boat show poster.

Ventnor Boat Works was started in Ventnor, NJ by Adolf Apel in 1902. The company built a wide variety of work boats, speed boats, and race boats. During the thirties, Apel designed and patented the first hydroplane with sponsons. Some of the greatest racing boats came out of their shops, including *Tempo*, Guy Lombardo's

famous race winner and, *Slo-mo-shun*, a boat that set many speed records. Post WWII Ventnors featured the distinctive tailfins behind their engine cowlings. *Hurry Home* may have been the boat that launched this trend.

Hurry Home is lightly built mostly of quarter-inch plywood. Holler gave her new fastenings and a paint job in 1998 to mitigate the wear from years of high-speed running in the water and on the road to and from shows. This most recent restoration took place at the Old Time World Boat Yard.

Holler and his baby will be on display over the June 14 weekend at the Classic Boat Festival in St. Michaels on the grounds of the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum.

About the Author: Howard P. Johnson restores and collects classic boats in Maryland—www.oldtimeworld.com.

"Would you like to see a barn full of antique boats?"

This was the question from Bill Morscheimer to Jim Holler in 1982. Morscheimer, a vintage race boat enthusiast in upstate New York, showed Holler his collection of classics. Holler had to ask for the story behind the one with the engine hood and tailfin under a cover in the back of the barn. Morscheimer explained that she was a one of a kind built by Ventnor Boat Works in 1947 for racing at the Buffalo Launch Club on the Niagara River. The original owners bought her for their son who was serving in the Army in occupied Germany after the war. They had the name painted on her hull, took pictures of her, and sent them to him to encourage him to be safe and to make a speedy return.

Holler fell in love with the dusty relic in spite of her peeling paint and her ragged bottom, which had a failing layer of fiberglass. She had been altered a few times with different exhaust pipes to get more speed, which was okay, but some of the work was suspicious and inconsistent. Holler had

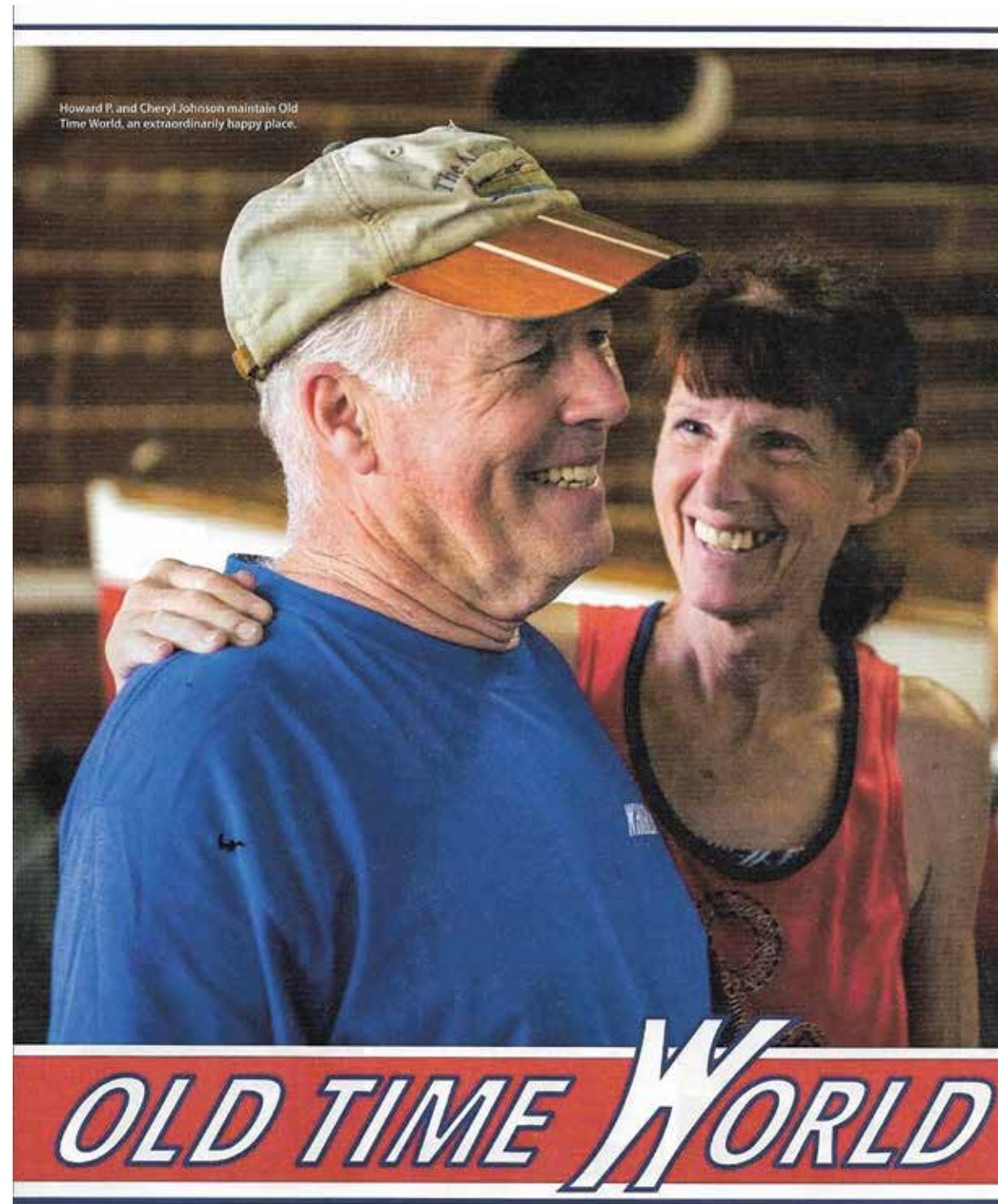
Chesapeake Classic

Chesapeake Classic

Don't Forget Your Valentine
Howard and Cheryl Ann Johnson enjoy quality boat time at the 2008 Lyman Rendezvous in Galesville, MD. Photo by Al Schreitmueller

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When the phone rings at Howard Percival Johnson Jr.'s house, somebody with an orphaned wooden runabout, a classic cruising powerboat, or a vintage automobile might be on the line. If you're a guy like Johnson, your heart sinks a little every time you hear about one of these treasures in need of repair or salvation. If you're Howard Johnson, you want to take it home and restore it back to life. Because you love these boats so much, you want to share them.

That's how you end up living at Old Time World, a one-of-a-kind compound spread over seven acres near Upper Marlboro, Maryland. With his wife Cheryl, he collects, refinishes, and deals in relics from his favorite moment in time—post-World War II recreational boats and the cars of his childhood.

Five buildings of varying size and overlapping purpose are scattered across the property and house about 100 boats and 37 vintage cars from the '40s, '50s and '60s. The Arena, The Workshop, The Cheryl Shop, The Museum, and The Shed feature workbenches, as well as Whirlwind skiffs, Chris-Craft cruisers, and rows of Chryslers, Buicks, and Chevys.

"He probably has the largest classic boat collection I know of," says John Into, former president of the Antique and Classic Boat Society's Chesapeake Chapter. "He's just trying to save them all, and it's not an easy thing to do.

"The love people have for these boats, it's kind of hard to describe. It's a passion. Howard's dedication is probably as great as it gets."

Raised an only child, Johnson's fond memories of exploring the Severn River and the Chesapeake Bay with his parents, first aboard a 22-foot Maine-built lapstrake day boat, then aboard a 32-foot 1929 American Car & Foundry (ACF) Sport Cruiser called *The Leda*, anchor his lifelong devotion.

With their sleek lines and mahogany planks and trim, these are examples of individual craftsmanship and design from around the country, says Johnson, 74. After all, it's been nearly 60 years since mass-produced wooden boats were replaced by fiberglass.

"And they're family-related. Almost every single boat came from an individual family to begin with. These are a piece of the country's history," he says. "So, it's about the stories."

STORY BY ALLISON BLAKE // PHOTOS BY JOE EVANS

Howard P. & Cheryl Johnson maintain a working museum of treasured boats and cars, just because.

A WHIRLWIND ROMANCE

Johnson's father ran a large truck repair business in Baltimore and knew his way around an engine. His mother refinished furniture. Johnson worked alongside both of them from a young age. The first boat Johnson ever refinished was during his childhood, a 12-foot rowboat with a 5½-horsepower engine and a canvas cover he made with his mom. The first boat he fell in love with was a Whirlwind.

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The infatuation continued. "It is fast, light, easy to handle and puts you right next to the water for a thrilling ride," says Johnson.

He so loves the cheerful runabouts that he authored *Wild About Whirlwinds*, a self-published book you can buy on his website.

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stacked along one side of Old Time World's largest building, called The Arena. The deck on one boat, under restoration, is currently held in place by 140 clamps; three others were restored over recent winters. Built in Cockeysville up until 1962, Whirlwinds emerged from Allied Aviation, a company that started out making molded plywood gliders for combat in World War II, then, after the war orders dried up, the company shifted the unique building techniques to boat production. "The Navy decided the gliders were too dangerous to use," says Johnson. "The hulls were molded out of mahogany veneer."

Tim DiGennaro met Johnson years ago over one of the 14-foot runabouts.

"I grew up on the Chesapeake Bay and had a Whirlwind when I was a younger man, and I wanted another one," says DiGennaro, an antique motor mechanic. "I heard he was

selling them, so I went to Upper Marlboro to purchase one.

"We both like nostalgia. Old cars, old boats, old airplanes. You name it."

Just this winter, the two buddies were collaborating. DiGennaro had passed along a 1976, 85-horsepower Mercury some years back.

"I said, 'Hey, you need to put this on a boat.' Six or seven years later, he comes up with the boat—a wooden lapstrake Lyman, early '60s vintage. We brought the motor to my shop and I replaced the carburetor, fuel pump, hoses, wiring, and water pump. I took it up to his shop and we rigged it on the boat," DiGennaro recalls.

DOES IT WORK?

"It runs great on a hose," DiGennaro laughs. "We'll see in the spring how it runs in the water."

Something like 150 outboards reside in Johnson's workshop or around the



A bird's-eye view of the Old Time World Arena collection.



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: 1941 Model 65 Oldsmobile restoration; tools of the trade; Howard P. Johnson welcomes us onboard a restored 33-foot, 1940 Chris-Craft Sport Cruiser; a fleet of perfect Whirlwind runabouts in the Old Time World Museum building.

property. Twelve orphaned outboard cowlings sit across from one of Johnson's five workbenches, which are testaments to his careful attention to detail, organization, and craft. Endless rows of labeled drawers hold cabinet latches, molly bolts, rubber grommets. "Look at these nails from England," he says. "They're pin nails, made of galvanized steel. I got them in Bermuda. Not an easy thing to come by."

One hundred nine—count 'em, 109—screwdrivers line a single workbench.

"We're just trying to keep the past alive," he says.

In addition to working on boats, Johnson started repairing cars in Severna Park when he was in high school. In the 1960s, he restored the old clock in the Chase-Lloyd House on Maryland Avenue in Annapolis. Eventually, he became the self-styled Antique Doctor, devoted to refinishing antique furniture. Then the boats and cars elbowed in. He moved to his spread, a former tobacco farm, in the 1980s.





For a while, this 1947 Ventnor race boat was the mascot of the Chesapeake Chapter of the Antique & Classic Boat Society.

THE BUILDINGS

The buildings at Old Time World came along as circumstances required.

First came Johnson's workshop, a converted tobacco barn. Step one: clearing out the tobacco. Step two? Replacing the mud floor.

The Cheryl Shop houses Cheryl's workbench. "My father taught me to be a mechanic," she says. It was built with money Johnson earned restoring a Chris-Craft.

The Arena was built over the course of two years, after a guy called up Johnson one day and said, "Hey—want some trusses?" Johnson spent a winter welding the trusses into a grid. Five guys spent a Sunday putting up the 60-by-160-foot sheet metal roof. The next day, Johnson got a call from the Alexandria Seaport Foundation.

"They said, 'We have a cruiser. Would you like it?' I went down to Fort Washington; it was a wonderful vessel and I had to get it under a roof. It had been owned by a family in Annapolis who donated it. A 1940 Chris-Craft, 33 feet, in original condition."

The Chris-Craft is one of seven cruisers here, all accessible via planked steps and ladders so you can climb aboard.

There's also the 1948 Owens, (built in Annapolis and later Dundalk, Maryland), a 42-footer that sank in the

Middle River. The boatyard where it lived raised it and helped pay to bring it to Old Time World. Today, strung with festive colored lights, you can hang out and enjoy its three-stateroom comfort and perfectly restored mahogany. As a young man, Johnson knew Charles Owens, an owner of the company, and occasionally did work on his personal yacht.

Old Time World's other two buildings come with their own distinct personalities.

The Museum is a 40-by-100-foot monument to post-war pop culture. The shelves and tables feature antique radios such as a Zenith Philco, an RCA Victor, and a GE transistor in its own leather carrying case. On the classic jukebox you'll find Jackie Wilson, Jerry Lee Lewis, Del Shannon. Boats and cars pack the place, including a spectacular 1947 Ventnor race boat, *Hurry Home*, which for a while served as the mascot for the Chesapeake Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society (ACBS).

"It was a test boat that wasn't successful," says Johnson. "It lived in an upstate (New York) barn where a friend found it."

In this Shed stand six cars, including a 1948 Dodge with 17,000 miles on it, identical to the one Johnson had in high school. Until recently, the car collection included a breakout star: a Packard that's now central the Baltimore Museum of Industry's

permanent *Fueling the Automobile Age* exhibit, which opened in 2018.

The car was modified for exhibition purposes by the exhibit's fabricator, says Jane Woltereck, the BMI's Director of Collections & Exhibitions. Painted pale green, its driver's side door is modified to stay permanently open and its trunk is cabled shut.

"Howard was very generous in offering the car at a very low price that fit our fabrication budget," she said.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The collection continues to grow. Last summer, Howard and Cheryl traveled to Upstate New York to the ACBS International Boat Show. There it was—a mystery boat, well preserved and well-constructed with bronze ring nails. Johnson couldn't resist. They brought it home.

"It's an unusual design—the bow is so pointed, but there's this twist in the hull and again at the stern. The bottom is flat. It would be hard to steer. We're not going to race it; we're just going to finish it and run it around."

The mystery, by the way, has since been solved: it's a needle-nosed race boat used by American Powerboat Association members back in the '60s.

On deck for this restoration are Cheryl's 10-year-old twin

granddaughters Allison and Madison, who have already scraped off the finish. Johnson will add a keel. He's also planning to add strakes to throw water off the stern, instead of into the boat.

"The twins are helping rehab the boat," Johnson says. "My father taught me to work, and we'll help them along. Maybe we can take it to the Antique and Classic Boat Show in St. Michaels over Father's Day weekend."

Their mother, Meagan Wharton, sees the twins finding a new love for boats. The race boat is the first one "they've actually put elbow grease into."

"The biggest thing for them is working with Howard and my mom," she said. "They're learning how to be hands-on. They're learning to take ownership of something."

It's a lesson worth learning. "We're hoping," says Johnson, "there's new blood in the Old Time World." ↓

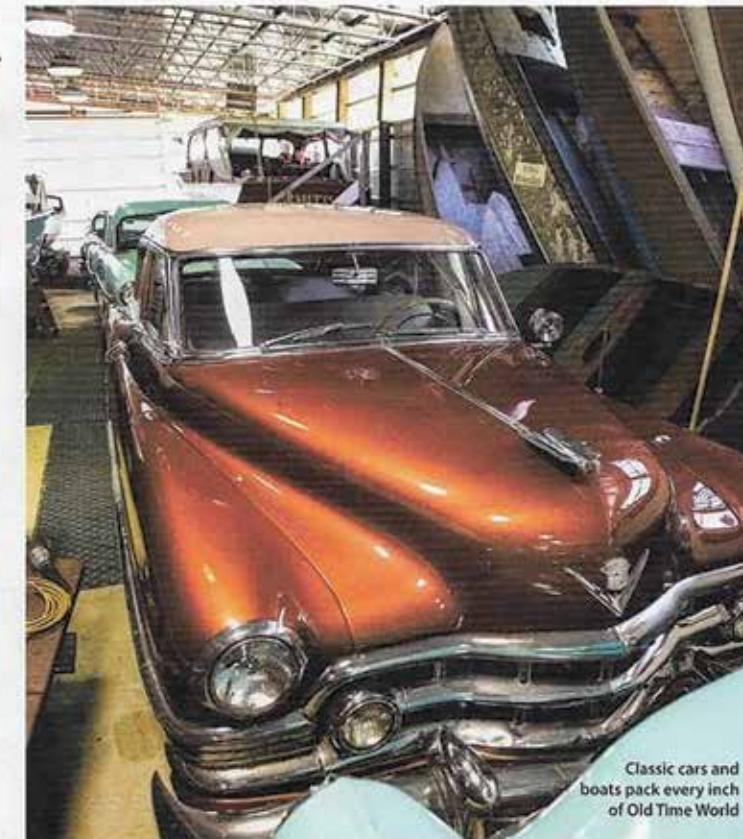
TELL ME MORE!

The Johnsons occasionally offer private tours of their unique collection. Contact them through oldtimeworld.com or 301-627-2114.

Look for them and their boats in St. Michaels, June 19 & 20 at the Antique & Classic Boat Festival on the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum campus—cbm.org.

And May 2 & 3 at the 20th Chesapeake Antique Boat & Engine Show at the Calvert Marine Museum, Solomons, Md.

Allison Blake's credits include *National Geographic Traveler*, *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, and *Baltimore Magazine*. She is the author of *The Chesapeake Bay Book* and *Maryland Curiosities*.



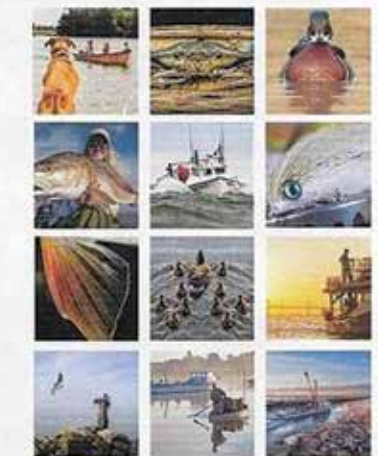
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Rudder: Oldtimeworld 1&2



Old Time World

Part 1 of 2

BY ALISON BLAKE, CHESAPEAKE BAY MAGAZINE

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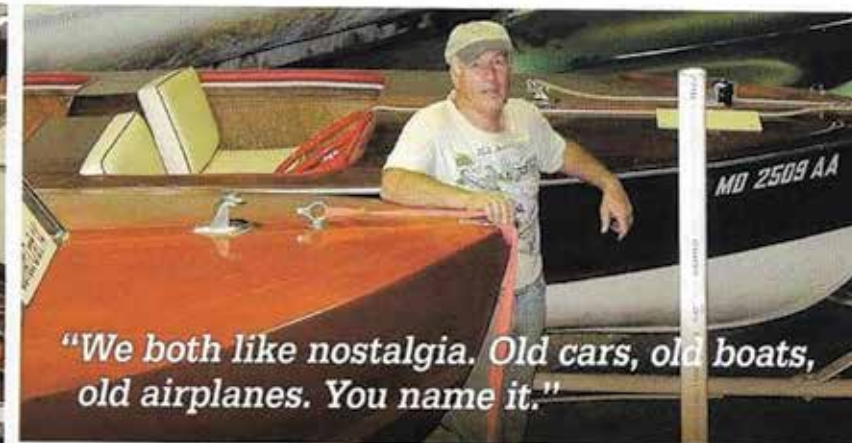
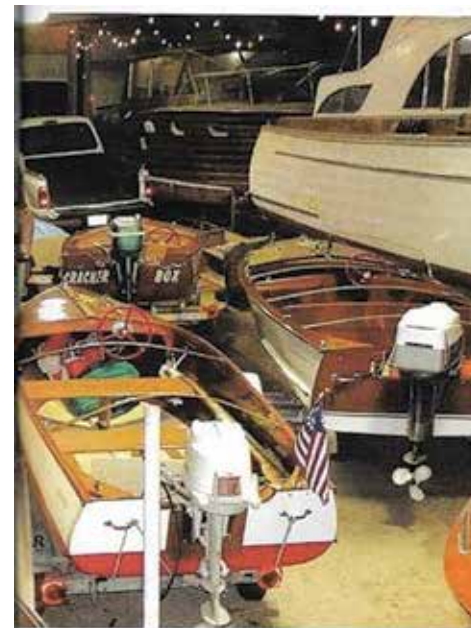
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shop and I replaced the carburetor, fuel pump, hoses, wiring and water pump. I took it up to his shop and we rigged it on the boat," DiGennaro recalls.

DOES IT WORK?

"It runs great on a hose," DiGennaro laughs. "We'll see in the spring how it runs in the water."

Something like 150 outboards reside in Johnson's workshop or around the property. Twelve orphaned outboard cowlings sit across from one of Johnson's five workbenches, which are testaments to his careful attention to detail, organization, and craft. Endless rows of labeled drawers hold cabinet latches, molly bolts, rubber grommets. "Look at these nails from England," he says. "They're pin nails, made of galvanized steel. I got them in Bermuda. Not an easy thing to come by."

One hundred nine-count 'em, 109-screwdrivers line a single workbench.

"We're just trying to keep the past alive," he says.

In addition to working on boats, Johnson started repairing cars in Severna Park when he was in high school. In the 1960s, he restored the old clock in the Chase-Lloyd House on Maryland Avenue in Annapolis. Eventually, he became the self-styled Antique Doctor, devoted to refinishing antique furniture. Then the boats and cars elbowed in. He moved to his spread, a former tobacco farm, in the 1980s.

You'll find Part 2 of the story in the spring 2021 issue of your ACBS Rudder Magazine.

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Old Time World

Part 2 of 2

BY ALISON BLAKE, CHESAPEAKE BAY MAGAZINE

Old Time World houses a collection of boats, cars, radios, you name it in Howard Johnson and Cheryl Beveridge's many barns and sheds not far from the Patuxent River Park in Severna Park, Maryland. For Part 1 of old Time World, see the winter 2021 issue of the ACBS Rudder magazine. To continue with the story, read on...

THE BUILDINGS

The buildings at Old Time World came along as circumstances required.

First came Johnson's workshop, a converted tobacco barn. Step one: clearing out the tobacco. Step two? Replacing the mud floor.

The Cheryl Shop houses Cheryl's workbench. "My father taught me to be a mechanic," she says. It was built with money Johnson earned restoring a Chris-Craft.

The Arena was built over the course of two years, after a guy called up John-

son one day and said, "Hey- want some trusses?" Johnson spent a winter welding the trusses into a grid. Five guys spent a Sunday putting up the 60-by-160-foot sheet metal roof. The next day, Johnson got a call from the Alexandria Seaport Foundation.

"They said, 'We have a cruiser. Would you like it?' I went down to Fort Washington; it was a wonderful vessel and I had to get it under a roof. It had been owned by a family in Annapolis who donated it. A 1940 Chris-Craft, 33-feet, in original condition."

The Chris-Craft is one of seven cruisers here, all accessible via planked steps and ladders so you can climb aboard. There's also the 1948 Owens, (built in Annapolis and later Dundalk, Maryland), a 42-footer that sank in the Middle River. The boatyard where it lived raised it and helped pay to bring it to Old Time World. Today, strung with festive colored lights, you can hang out and enjoy its three-stateroom comfort

and perfectly restored mahogany. As a young man, Johnson knew Charles Owens, an owner of the company, and occasionally did work on his personal yacht.

Old Time World's other two buildings come with their own distinct personalities.

The Museum is a 40-by-100-foot monument to post-war pop culture. The shelves and tables feature antique radios, such as a Zenith Philco, an RCA Victor, and a GE transistor in its worn leather carrying case. On the classic jukebox you'll find Jackie Wilson, Jerry Lee Lewis, Del Shannon. Boats and cars pack the place, including a spectacular 1947 Ventnor race boat, *Hurry Home*, which for a while served as the mascot for the Chesapeake Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society. "It was a test boat that wasn't successful," says Johnson. "It lived in an upstate (New York) barn where a friend found it."



Left to right, Many brands of boats and cars fill the Museum at Old Time World. Club member Steve Mosher brought this to the ACBS International Show in September 2019. Old Time World has more than 35 Whirlwind boats waiting for attention. Each child learned how to start the engine before they could use the boat. The whole family worked together to paint the Whirlwind Tugboat. We call our story of their work, the Grand Girls Race Boat. Jim Holler's Ventnor Race Boat, is everyone's favorite; can you guess the name?



Today, 1948 Owens is strung with festive colored lights, you can hang out and enjoy its three-stateroom comfort and perfectly restored mahogany.

In this Shed stand six cars, including a 1948 Dodge with 17,000 miles on it, identical to the one Johnson had in high school. Until recently, the car collection included a breakout star: a Packard that's now central to the permanent Fueling the Automobile Age exhibit, which opened in 2018.

The car was modified for exhibition purposes by the exhibit's fabricator, says Jane Wolterek, the BMI's Director of Collections and Exhibitions. Painted pale green, its driver's side door is modified to stay permanently open and its trunk is cabled shut.

"Howard was very generous in offering the car at a very low price that fit our fabrication budget," she said.

WHAT'S NEXT?

The collection continues to grow. Last summer, Howard and Cheryl traveled to upstate New York to the ACBS International Boat Show. There it was—a mystery

boat, well preserved and well-constructed with bronze ring nails. Johnson couldn't resist. They brought it home.

"It's an unusual design—the bow is so pointed, but there's this twist in the hull and again at the stern. The bottom is flat. It would be hard to steer. We're not going to race it; we're just going to finish it and run it around."

The mystery, by the way, has since been solved: it's a needle-nosed race boat used by American Powerboat Association members back in the '60s.

On deck for this restoration are Cheryl's 10-year-old twin granddaughters Allison and Madison, who have already scraped off the finish. Johnson will add a keel. He's also planning to add strakes to throw water off the stern, instead of into the boat.

"The twins are helping rehab the boat," Johnson says. "My father taught me to

work, and we'll help them along. Maybe we can take it to the Antique and Classic Boat Show in St. Michaels over Father's Day weekend."

Their mother, Meagan Wharton, sees the twins finding a new love for boats. The race boat is the first one "they've actually put elbow grease into."

The biggest thing for them is working with Howard and my mom," she said. "They're learning how to be hands-on. They're learning to take ownership of something."

It's a lesson worth learning. "We're hoping there's new blood in the Old Time World." ❧

To learn more or connect with Howard and Cheryl, visit www.oldtimeworld.com.

Grand Girls Raceboat

Grandgirl's Raceboat

The Antique and Classic Boat Society has been a great blessing for me, for the last 29 years! So many wonderful people sharing beautiful boats. Doctor Michael Epstein said, - If you would tow my boat up to the 2019 International Show, I will pay for you and Cheryl, for the week. That sounded great to me and instantly we were going up to Clayton and Alexandria Bay for the show. During the summer we spent the day with him working on the boat so everything was ready to go. We enjoyed his guest cottage, then tested the boat on the river and it ran great. In September, the trip up through New York went well and we enjoyed every second of adventure, with St Lawrence River beauty before us, tours, visits to The Antique Boat Museum and other boat related opportunities. On Friday I noticed a pickup with a race boat sticking out of the back. Later I met Steve Mosher, he said his friend bought a new home, and it was underneath the front porch. - We settled on \$300.00.

A month later I showed it to our ten year old granddaughters. - Girls, if you want to work on this, it could be yours. - REALLY? They said. Do you really mean it Granddaddy? YES, we would love to work on this, they said. We looked it all over real well, together, and no rot or damage, just peeling finishes. So their mother and Granny began getting them every week for work sessions. Granddaddy began teaching them all the millions of things he learned, on his father's boat, and many others, starting in 1954. They took pride in every accomplishment. The boat got better and better, every month. By summer we tried out some engines to see if they would run. I told Allison and Madison, if you can't start the engine by yourself, you might get stranded out on the water. So they followed my every instruction and the engine ran great. A week later we went down to the Patuxent River, nearby, and put in 2 boats at the same time, with lunch and drinks in the cooler. Now we were really out there. They both took turns driving before lunch. Then we were together, drifting along enjoying the river, Granny gave out the sandwiches and drinks. Now I told them it's one at a time! Each one watched the other doing everything by themselves. Would the 5 and a half Johnson, run and then go fast? YES! Granny made videos, while they went fast! Both got a chance, - Rooster Tail! - Zooming along until late. WOW - This is fun, and we are going to do it again!



As Found, no numbers or identification, no water damage or rot, light weight, nice design.



Madison Wharton



Allison Wharton



Progress scraping



Their grandfather likes scraping.



No messy remover.



They didn't miss a spot!



The family visits.



Turning the boat.



The bottom looks great.



Grandad sands outside in the cold.



Premium 1/4" plywood.



Very few dark areas, tight joints.



Stainless steel Anchorfast nails. Anchors on every one.



Granddaddy Howard adds a keel for good control.



Then he used epoxy sealer, both sand. Madison, vacuums.



Allison does her side.



The girls choose the color.



The paint goes on well.



Satisfying progress.



Preparing the outside for stain.



Inside is readied for varnish.



They both worked carefully.



Inside of the bow was her idea.



Many nooks and crannies.



They seemed to enjoy each step.



The varnish makes the inside gleam.



Several coats were used.



There were sticky spots on all four arms.



Surprising color of the stain. Each step was their first time ever. It really looks like something now!



The varnish made the stain darker. Granddaddy showed them how to clean the brushes.



They actually applied four coats. They are fraternal twins, ten years old.



Cousin Chloe visits. She helps test the boat. The engine looks good, but quit.



Granddaddy told them that they must be able to start it.



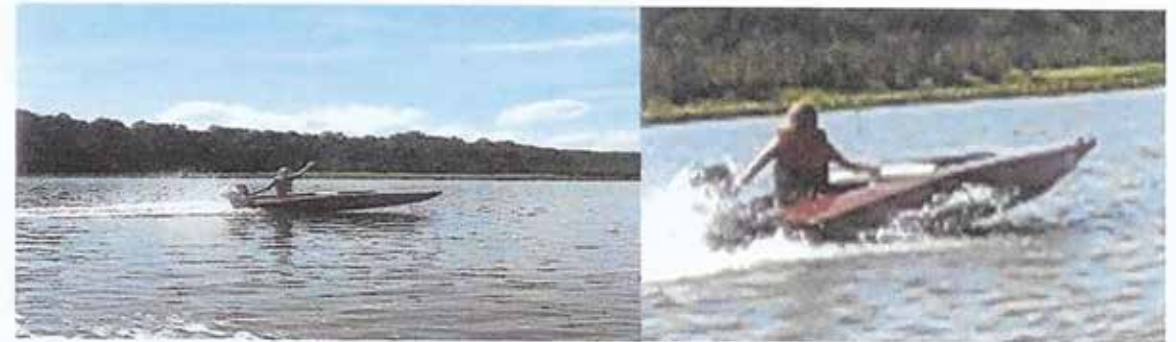
Each one took a turn at pulling it over, using the choke and throttle.



Allison and Madison take turns running the boat, while Grandparents follow along in their Whirlwind boat.



After practicing, we all drifted along together, with sandwiches and drinks, on the Patuxent River.



Now one at a time, zooming along with 5 horsepower. Each girl tried different speeds.



Just about a perfect combination.



Calm water, rooster tail and almost no wake.



The MAD ALLIGATOR, on display at the Antique and Classic Boat show in St Michaels, MD June 20, 2021.

Old-Time Fishing Trip

The Old Time Fishing Trip

by Howard Johnson Jr.

The Old Bay Chapter of the Antique Outboard Club of America has a yearly show at Flying Point Park on the Bush River. This year two well known members, Scott Whalberg and Tim DiGennaro offered to demonstrate an old time fishing trip. Properly atired, they show off the old time engine.



Working together they prepare to start her up.



DiGennaro, who knows everything there is, about outboards, gets whacked by the starter rope!



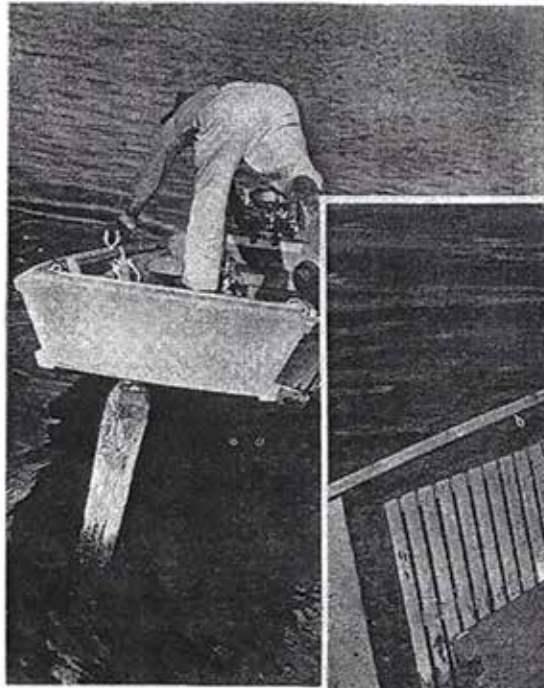
On the second pull, Scott loses the starter rope overboard.



With a major team effort, they fish it out.



Starting all over again,...



Somehow, the boat gets hung-up on a piling... And dumps them out!



Scott shows how a running engine engine will backfire.



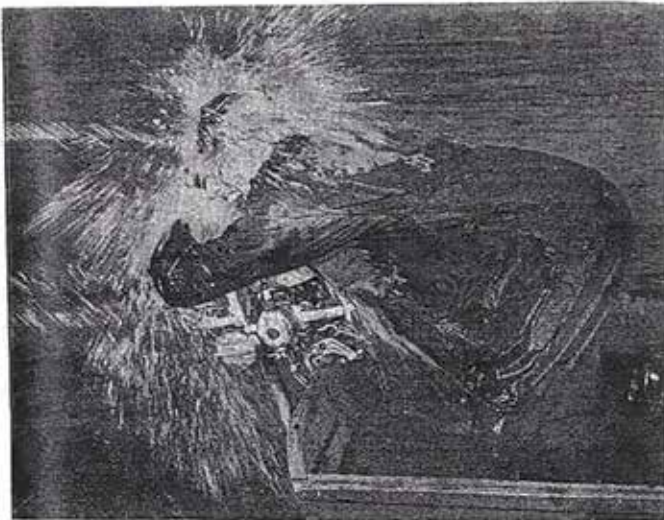
This gives Tim quite a start!



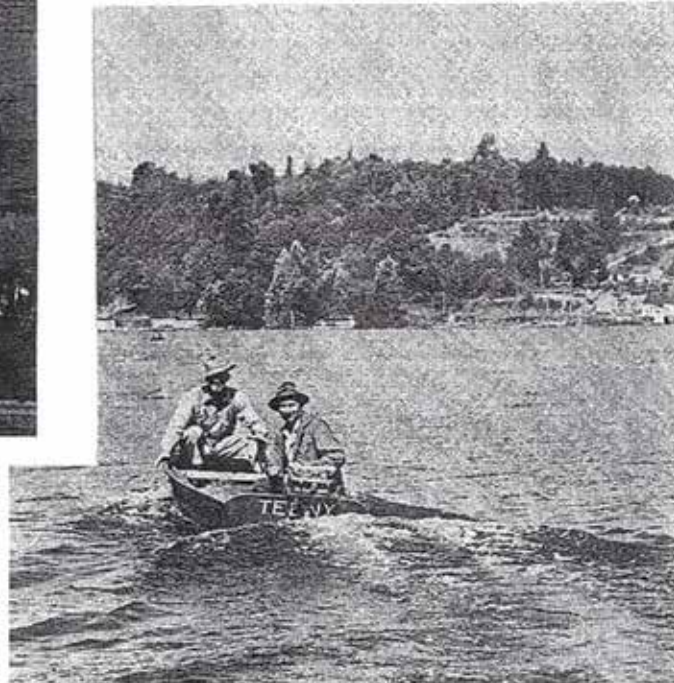
Later, idling along, Scott reaches back and...



Gets the shock of his life by accidentally touching one of the sparkplugs!



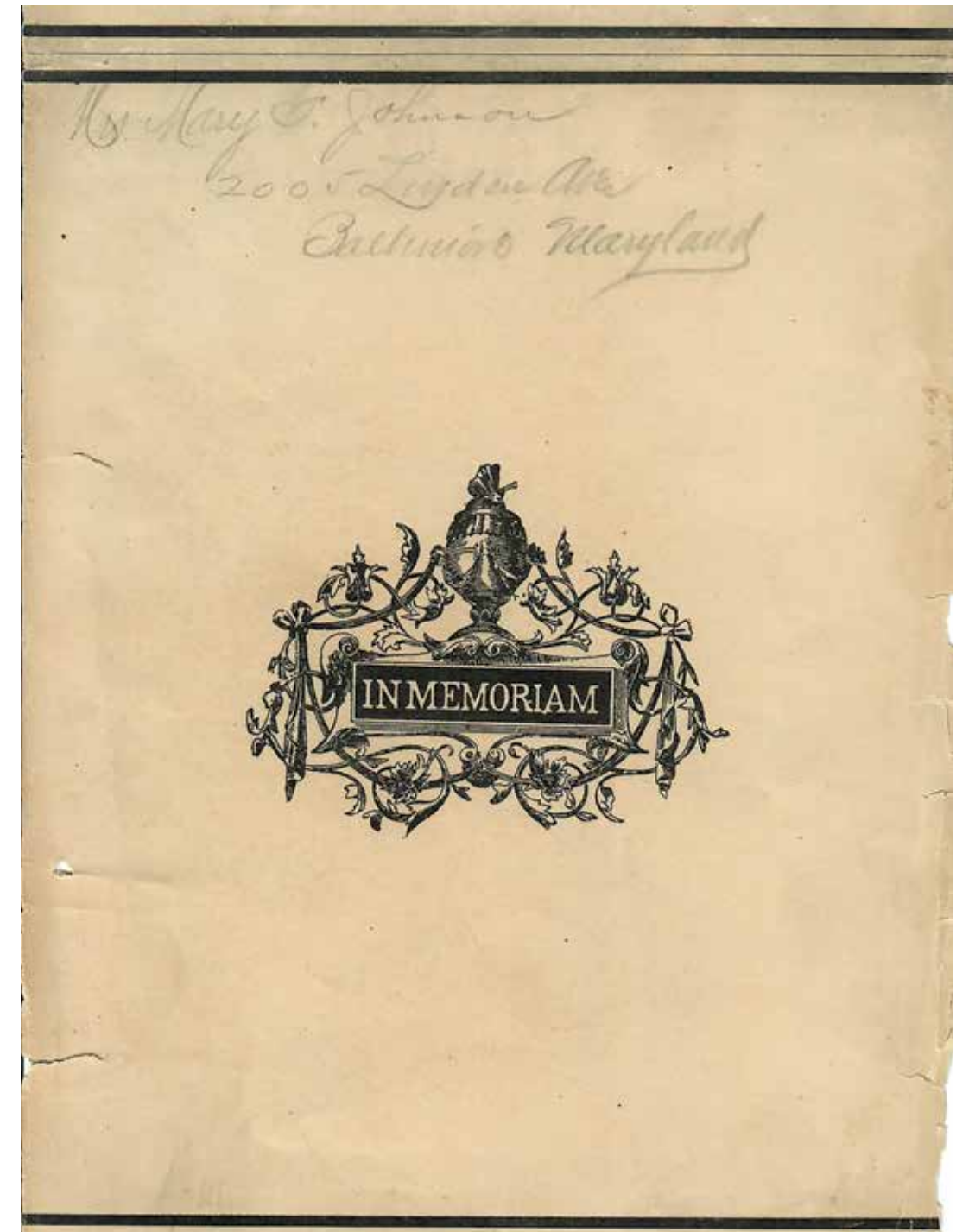
Suddenly Scott has to protect his baby from a wise guy personal water craft, nut.



Finally, they head off to the secret fishing spot. All's well that ends well!

By ERIC WAHLEEN
SPEED and SPRAY, JANUARY, 1956

Abraham's Family Story



The original ABRAHAMS family trace their genealogy back to Joseph Abrahams, who emigrated from England to Massachusetts about the middle of the sixteenth century, transplanting into the new country the sturdy virtues of a good Christian morality.

His son William, born in Charlestown, Massachusetts, in 1694, was married, in 1719, to Martha Boylston. He died in 1763, aged 69 years. She died at Andover in 1783, aged 85 years. Their son Woodward was born in 1727, and was married in 1751, to Tabitha Smithurst. She died in 1793, aged 64 years, leaving a large family of children. In 1757 he removed to Marblehead, where he continued to reside until his death, in 1813, aged 86 years. For many years he was postmaster and collector of the customs for the port of Marblehead, besides filling other public offices of trust. He was a lay-reader in the Protestant Episcopal Church of that town.

His son Woodward, the father of Joseph W., was born at Marblehead, July 14th, 1762. On June the 4th, 1790, he

married Miss Gallison, by whom he had one son, William, born June 10th, 1792. Mrs. Gallison Abrahams died November 16th, 1800, aged 38 years.

Captain Abrahams continued in his profession of mariner, and his voyages to different parts of the world were usually prosperous and profitable, until the year 1815. In that year it was his misfortune to lose his ship, the Adrianna, and her entire cargo, of which he was sole owner.

The writer has often heard his father relate the particulars of that sad disaster. The ship having sprung a leak, as it is termed in sailor phrase, and in spite of all that could be done by the most indefatigable labor at the pumps, by men who, in their own estimation, were working for their lives, the ship was steadily settling down. The man at the masthead, with his glass, scanning the sea from horizon to horizon, with the hope of needed succor, but no white sail was visible. The captain had well nigh given up all hope of succor; he went down into the cabin, and on his bended knees, pleading with God, in whom he had always depended for help in

all times of trouble and danger. While thus pleading with the Father of mercies, who had never forsaken him, there came from the lookout at the masthead the welcome sound, "Sail, ho!" which means, a vessel in sight. Instantly the flag of distress was hoisted, and their vessel was headed towards the welcome comer. Immediately the ship upon whom their hopes were now centered, changed her course, and the two ships were fast approaching each other. The captain's God, who is also the God of the storm and the sea, sent prosperous winds, that the ships proceeding toward each other might not be delayed in rescuing the Lord's servant, who was all the while wrestling in mighty prayer. The vessels approach, the captain and crew of the sinking ship were hurriedly transferred on board of the other; not even time to save anything but the clothing they had on. In a few moments, comparatively, Captain Abrahams, saw his ship, the pride of the ocean, go down, down, never again to be seen. Falling on his knees, he fervently thanked God for his delivery, thanked God as He who giveth and He who taketh away.

The ship that so opportunely rescued Captain Abrahams and his crew, proceeded on her way to Liverpool, where she arrived in safety. In the following letter, he immediately notified his wife of the loss of his ship, and his miraculous escape from death.

LIVERPOOL, ENGLAND, Nov. 3d, 1815.

MY DEAR WIFE :

With gratitude to Almighty God for deliverance from a watery grave, I am privileged with this opportunity of once more putting my pen to paper, that you may know, that through the goodness of God, I am once more brought to land. And now I am in hopes, that through his continual watchfulness, care and protection, I shall reach you and my dear children in safety, where we can together thank our Divine Master for all his goodness and mercy. For seemingly a long time, I saw nothing before me but death. On Saturday night, before I went to bed, I prayed most fervently to the Lord to moderate the roaring wind and the raging sea, and send us some relief. The Lord heard and answered my

prayers. At daylight on the blessed Sabbath morning, there was a ship in sight. In reply to our signal of distress, the vessels were soon close together, and in the last hour of the life of our ship, we were safely transferred to the rescuing ship. Who would not be thankful to God for such goodness and loving kindness. I called unto the Lord in my trouble and distress. He heard my supplications and delivered me out of my difficulties. Oh! for a heart of gratitude, of thankfulness, of praise and love to my Heavenly Father, that has done so much for me, in saving me from the very jaws of death. There is none but God and myself can know what I have gone through, since I left my dear home, but I felt that you were praying for me, so I was enabled to bear it all with Christian fortitude and humble resignation, knowing it was the will of my Heavenly Father, to whom I daily and hourly pray, that He may give me grace to say, in the fulness of faith, not my will, Oh! Lord, but thine, be done.

You must make yourself as comfortable as possible, by remembering that God has promised that He will never forsake

them that put their trust in Him. It has pleased Divine Providence to place me in this trying situation, it is, I hope, for some great good, and therefore, I will not murmur, but bear it with patient resignation to the will of God. Kiss my darling children a thousand times for me. I shall come home with Captain Nowell, and expect to leave in about three weeks. You must try and bear our loss with Christian fortitude, and accept the decree in the fulness of faith in Divine Providence. Affectionately,

WOOD. ABRAHAMS.

Captain Abrahams came to Baltimore, Md., in the year 1801, where he met and became acquainted with Miss Hannah Wooley of Harford County, whom he subsequently married. They continued to reside in Baltimore until June 1st, 1817. After the loss of his ship, he determined to abandon a seafaring life; he purchased and removed to a farm in Cecil County, on the Susquehanna river, known as "Lucky Mistake," where he resided with his family until 1820, at which date he removed to the then small village of Port Deposit,

Stuffing Box Stories

SHOP TALK

Summer is that wonderful time of year when we are busiest and get all kinds of things done. Thanks to Skip Gillam and the Double Trouble twins we all had fun riding in Jersey Speed Skiffs at our show. Chuck Warner took such a liking to them that when Skip mentioned one for sale; he said, "Lets do it". So now Chuck and friends are zooming around in the wild riding, Hot Tub, 351 Ford powered plumb colored bomber. It has hand and foot holders for the passenger and you need them; be sure and get Chuck to take you for a ride.

Charley Quimby had such a great time showing his Brooks-Hacker runabout at our show that he went right to work on his 1947 Chris Craft 16' racing runabout, Miss Miami, which had a successful racing career. The restored frame is upside down and has new Douglas fir engine frames installed. The challenge now is to find a marinized flathead ford engine, like the one it used. Meanwhile the Brooks is carefully covered next to his newest find, a 1972 Auburn Speedster Replica. What a beauty! He's having fun now!

Club co-founder Paul Warner found a new owner for his treasured speedboat, "Together", that was re-varnished and repaired by Greg Howell, last spring. The boat will live on the Youghiogheny Lake in Western Maryland. Paul spent 10 years on the restoration and owned the boat for 25. It was the subject of several heartwarming stories and will continue to give pleasure in its new home.

Dominic Fiachetti found a Prywing boat for sale

and discovered a world of local history. This light, fast plywood boats were built by the brothers of the men that built Whirlwind boats and were successfully raced. Dominic has talked to the owners and is collecting the history.

Former club president Linda Nagle works with Jim Shotwell in Nescopeck, Pa. and Jim is helping with the restoration of their '40 Chris Craft cruiser. The boat has been out of the water at Smiths Marine on the Severn River and has had the bottom re-screwed, the bilge completely cleaned and painted and a new foredeck built. This has been a challenging group effort involving family members and they are all looking forward to fall cruising.

Things continue to stay hopping over at Jerry LeComptes' Dockside Boat Works. Jerry has finished and launched the 44' Midnight Lace "Black Magic"; maybe next year we can get it to our show as it's such a beautiful boat. They are almost finished with a 1948 20' Chris Craft Custom and are getting ready to start another 1947 20' Custom that will be strictly a show-boat.

They are also restoring a 1932 15-1/2 Model 300 Chris Craft runabout with a fore and aft cockpit, definitely a very neat looking boat. Over in the Do it Yourself Shop Darryl Maples is putting on the finishing touches on his 1962 18' Chris Craft Holiday. Darryl has recently purchased a 1940? Garwood 17' Utility that he will tackle next. Jackie Collins' 1941 20'6 Garwood Utility is coming along nicely. It has been turned over for easy access to strip the paint off the bottom and repair some modestly damaged planks. Anyone looking

for space to work contact Jerry soon as space is limited.

Rick and Sue Sharpe have been busy boating aboard "Pearl" this summer. They can be seen heading south down I-95 to Lake Anna just south of Fredricksburg, Va., or north on I-81 to Lake Wallenpaupack, Pa. Rick has small children who like to swim and the calm, clean, fresh water the lakes provide suit their needs perfectly. Greg Howell has been very busy lately with the need for additional security aboard the Amtrak trains he is responsible for, but that's not to say he hasn't been playing around with boats. Greg and his son David have feverishly been working on a 1981 Correct Craft Ski-Tique. The boat has been a complete restoration including carpet, seats, steering, re-wiring, and a re-built Ford 302 engine. Even though it is not wood Greg will be the first to say it wasn't an easy task, even fiberglass has its' challenges.

Former president Tab and Nancy Miller put on a lovely party for club members at their new home.

The weather was perfect and there was a large turnout. Everyone brought a dish and enjoyed a tour of the beautifully rebuilt and redesigned home on 10 acres near Lothian, south of Annapolis. The big airy walkaround kitchen with custom built cabinetry and great room with high ceiling and nautical motif, lead to a private deck overlooking wooded areas. Although the full basement and 2 car garage seem large enough, Tab is looking forward to building a big barn on the rear of the property. Everyone had such a good time they stayed almost to sunset. Thank you, Tab and Nancy!

This writer was looking forward to driving his new

1950 Packard to the above party and spent several days painting and shining it up. You can imagine his dismay upon arriving to see a spectacular, gorgeous 1940 Lincoln Zephyr convertible, already parked there. This all original, award winning, beauty is one of 300 built that year and belongs to new member, Red Vaughn, from Davidsonville, M.D., who was willing to tell us all about it and later drove to Ocean City, Md. We look forward to seeing more of Red and the Lincoln.

Bill and Gabrielle Scott of Nottingham, Md. have been looking at boats for a year or so and recently found a very nice 1955 Chris Craft Capri, with the help of Jerry LeCompte, who got it ready to use. Jane made them a new cover and it's now ready to go on the Potomac River Cruise, October 12-14. This looks like it may be an experience not to miss. Why not consider coming along, if you don't have a boat, we will take you along or just enjoy all the many land events. For more information call 301-627-2114.



Fish Love My Boat

Fish Love My Boat

By H. Percival Johnson

Dave first contacted me by e-mail two years ago with some questions about restoring his 1954 Chris Craft Sea Skiff.



Gradually we became e-mail friends. I took pleasure in following the progress of his work. He was able to make it to our show last year, on Sunday, and toured the St. Michaels area with a shake down cruise. To my surprise he kept the boat in the water near Fenwick outside of Ocean City, Maryland, and used it for fishing.



Imagine, all those hours of paint and varnish and he's actually going fishing!

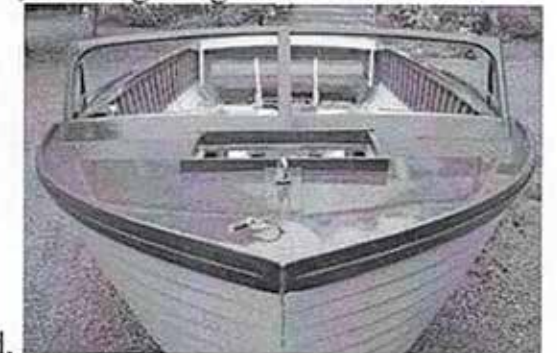
He sent pictures of big ones coming in over the side.



Late in the season he revealed an embarrassing problem. If a fiberglass boat was fishing nearby, they would notice that he was catching more fish than they were.



Again and again he would be approached about what his secret was, and he could not explain. Yet, fish would be around his boat and not around the other ones, every weekend. He took to finding lonely areas to fish, before getting out the rods.



What makes his boat different? Well, it's wood, and that is probably more harmonious with water than fiberglass.



Dave offered to bring the boat to our show this year but I told him I didn't think we wanted all those fish around our classic boats!

Wait a minute. Maybe they can just tell it's a Chris Craft!

Happy fishing, Dave!



At Dockside Boat Works Jerry and Robert LeCompte, have finished this '55 Chris Craft Capri with a new bottom and beautiful varnish finish. The upholstery has three layers now and will be duplicated in original materials by skilled wife and mother, Jane.

It's also lapstrake, and it has an old time shape underneath.



Are fish nostalgic? They only see the boat from the bottom. Do they like seeing the shape? Is there some kind of harmonic or sensory attraction to the wood? What kind of bottom paint is that? Fish oil base? - No. Well what about the lapstrake hull?



They make all kinds of trickling and brunching sounds other boats don't have. If you ever spend time on one, the sounds are very nice. The laps chop each wave with several edges, with every movement of the boat. Then little bubbles roll all along the laps and pop out somewhere else making for constant music that no other hulls have! The fish love it! They come for the clinker hull music. Dave said once a fish just jumped into the boat all by itself.



Classic wooden lapstrake boats may be the secret to rewarding fishing trips, but since over-fishing is such a world problem, please keep this to yourself!

Sharpening

Sharpening



Buy the largest double sided stone you can find. Hold the razor knife at a low angle similar to how it was sharpened originally. Push it TOWARD the edge – not away. 8 strokes are good if you can hold it exactly, each time. If you have oiled your stone waste will build up. Wipe this off and then do 8 strokes in the other direction(much harder) shown below. Then just one quarter stroke in the first direction to remove the wire edge that builds up.



Practice sharpening often until you can get good at it. If you are not getting results, use your best magnifier to look at the blade. Are you holding it at a low angle? Are you able to keep the angle the same? Has the wire edge come off with the last stroke? With this developed technique you can make your knife sharper than a new blade! Techniques are the same for your pen knives, and kitchen knives.



Nail a small stop block to the bench and put your stone against this. Carefully examine the bevel on your wood chisel. Hold the chisel against the stone at this angle. Push toward the edge, away from yourself, while slightly raising your elbows so the chisel lays flat for each stroke. Number of strokes is dependent upon how dull it was to start. If you are in a hurry you can press harder toward the edge, shortening the bevel slightly.



After 30 or so strokes flip it over and slide along flat several times to remove the hoped for, wire edge. Then it's sharp again. If not, flip over and do more carefully held bevel strokes. Look at the change with the magnifying glass. These skills come with practice but produce tools that work well and are ready to use.

Wipe surface of stone to remove accumulated grit and debris. Bottom of work pants leg is handy.



The bench grinder must be handy and screwed down. Scraper blades must often be trimmed up as well as straight screwdrivers which must have an exact flat working tip. Hold the scraper at a low angle and pass it smoothly across the wheel removing as tiny an amount of material as possible. A wire edge will be produced but scraping removes this.



Dull scissors can be renewed more easily if your grinder still has both wheels in place. First open fully, observe the angle of the previous edge. Then try to mimic this as you carefully draw them across the wheel. The way the sparks look on the edge will let you know if you are holding them right.



This angle looks a bit to steep. Hold the scissors firmly and make sure you will be able to make the entire pass smoothly before you start. Any lights or guards may have to be adjusted out of the way. Always use eye protection around the grinder.



Take the scissors to the stone and hold down flat. Slide forward and backward until you have removed any wire edge, on both blades. When you first try them do so very gently as the new sharp surfaces are against each other and you do not want the damage them. Examine the pivot joint for grit or too much play. Some are adjustable. Good luck with sharpening your new skills!

Gas Tank Restoration

Gas Tank Restoration

By Howard Percival Johnson

Upper Marlboro, MD...So you have a filthy rusty gas tank and you want to use it. Many people say throw it away; nothing is more obnoxious and dangerous than gas tank restoration. It ranks right up or down there with septic tank work. I have been astounded at the degree of vile filth that can grow inside an abandoned tank. Every deterioration situation is different so the quality of varnish (not the finishing kind) and oxide varies. Gasoline apparently breaks down both by fungus and bacteria. When any tank is allowed to sit with old gas for three years, it begins to rot and stink. To improve our air quality, the EPA has had the Petroleum Companies remove the stabilizers, which were poisons and were burned, now gasoline rots in 6 months. Today everything must be run dry before being put away. Over and over I come along and find my mower or chain saw with bad gas and now the carburetor needs cleaning.

Rusting of the interior of the gas tank can act as a catalyst and speeds up the fuel breakdown rate. Rust causes problems of its own. An unlimited supply of fine rust can quickly ruin a new fuel filter. So all the inside of the tank must be completely clean. Steam cleaning works. If you have a local radiator or truck repair place that will steam out a tank, searching the Yellow Pages and calling around may turn up a solution.

Depending on the size of the tank I first spray the strongest cleaner I have into it while wearing rubber gloves and a mask. I collect gravel between 1/2" and 3/4" in size and put in a good handful. Then I shake the tank a lot. The neighbors love this, I put on hearing protectors. Keep doing it much longer than you can stand.

Use the garden hose to rinse out. Many tanks are difficult to drain completely and have to be sucked clean with a snout on a wet dry vac. I cut up a transmission fill funnel and use it as an adapter along with some stiff plastic tubing. Usually it takes several efforts to get the tank completely clean. I like marine bilge cleaner because it softens the stuff without being flammable. I use acetone for the next rinse. I have had good luck with carburetor cleaner as well. Dump the waste on an old trash carpet, let it dry and roll it up and put it in the garbage. Many of the stones will come out with the waste or in the consecutive rinsings. If not, suck them up with your wet dry vac probe.

Next, dry the tank by placing it in the sun or running a reversed vacuum hose into it for an hour. Most old Electrolux vacs allow you to put the hose in the exhaust and blow. Once dry more loose particles will fall off; a complete blasting with compressed air helps dislodge them. Greater blasting power can be obtained by putting both the

blow end of the vac in one hole and the compressed air in the other. You can make a long snout for the air gun with brake line tubing. I put a sharp 90 degree curve near the end, it gets the air right to the surface. Make an inspection light by putting a long wire on a dashboard light socket with clips for a 12v battery. In a pinch a battery charger can be a power source. Vice Grips and spring clamps can hold a wire on a battery. You will be amazed how well you can see inside the tank, particularly if you wait until night to inspect. If you don't have to work on it further, spray Ospho brand rust converter on as many surfaces as you can reach. Add extra and roll it around, coating the hidden areas. If you used too much it will be slow to dry and leave puddles. I have sucked Ospho up with the vac, but I washed it out right away and wore gloves (always) and activated charcoal respirator. The Ospho does a great job and keeps the inside stable. Many tanks are made of bare steel.

When filled with gas very little rusting takes place, its when they are allowed to sit empty and collect condensation or the fuel is allowed to rot that they rust. Good luck to you and your new machine!

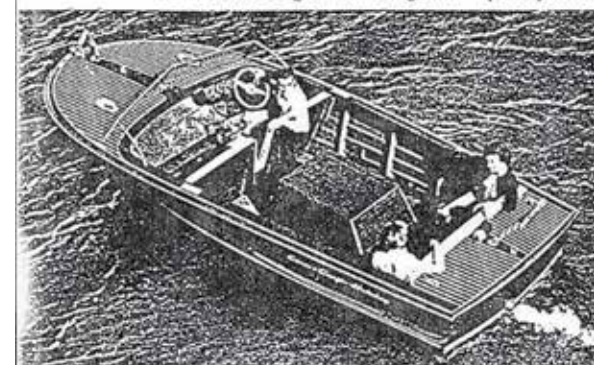
Varnishing Secrets

VARNISHING SECRETS

(from Century Expert Frank Miklos, with Howard Johnson at the Antique Boat Center)

Pittsburgh, PA...Frank Miklos, Century Club newsletter editor and lifelong mahogany boat owner recently related a few of his varnishing tips to club member Howard Johnson: Block sand the wood with 100 grit with the grain.

ready to sand. Brushing is important because varnish is not self-leveling and filling the low spots in the grain is extremely important. The job is not done until you have leveled the surface completely into a mirror smooth



surface. The surface must be sanded as smooth as possible before the next coat. Sand off all the high spots, each time and the low spots gradually fill in. If you sand through, the stain will be removed and you must restrain the spot before you put the

Wipe everything with water to check for swirl marks, sand again. Dry the boat a day, use Interlux 1579 Red Mahogany stain, thinned to the consistency of paint. Application works best with two guys. Apply in 2x3 areas, when you get to the third the first will be ready to wipe. Use burlap, wipe cross grain first, then along the grain. You'll know when the stain is ready when it has begun to flash or get dull looking on the surface.

Let the boat dry a week before laying on the first coat of varnish. Use a Scotch Bright pad to dull the first three coats, to get maximum build and avoid sanding through. All varnishes dry at different rates. Petit takes only a few days of 80 degree weather and its ready to sand. Z-Spar Captains varnish is slow drying and has to be out in full sun for a day to get

next coat on. Use your stain mix and a small brush. Blend the area carefully with a finger tip. If you don't like it, you can always wipe it off with turpentine and start again.

Frank Miklos says a 2-inch roller works great for applying varnish. Howard Johnson likes a spray gun because the varnish doesn't flow into the cracks and then squeeze out when the boat swells, making bumps on all the seams. To combat this one must swell the boat, bring it in and sand everything smooth and put on one top coat. Hank Conkey once wrote that he was putting the fifth final coat of varnish on a boat. Once all the ripples are filled in and the job looks super smooth and finely sanded, it's time for the last coat.

Linda Nagle told me about using a foam brush. At first this grossed

me out! What about my Chinese Badger hair brush? I could not believe what a great job foam will do. Get several of the big 60 cent ones. Blow out the whole shop, around all the lights and the ceiling and doors. Blow everything off with compressed air; the interior and every crack and cranny of the boat. Then vacuum everything including yourself. Wash the boat down with a damp sponge and dry immediately with a towel. Lay out the clean newspapers, open your cans and put on your special varnishing hat. Then vacuum the boat off, tack it down carefully and begin varnishing at the middle of the front cockpit. Plan ahead how you will keep your wet edge going. Do a several foot area on one side and go around to the other side, do that side and quickly go back. The wet edge is critical to a stroke free final coat. Use figure eight strokes with the foam brush. Dip exactly 3/8 inch deep and no more; no wiping the brush. Work fast but steady; keep the light on the job so you know you will never miss a spot. Once the varnish tacks you can't go back. If you see a spot you missed, this may not be the last coat!

With luck and no moths suddenly appearing and falling on the job, you may have a finished product worthy of your boat. More than likely there will be a few spots that don't please you. If its merely dirt, these areas can be lightly sanded with 600 grit wet, then polished with 3M Finesse polishing compound. Good Luck, and here's to first place!

The Hickman Sea Sleds

THE STUFFING BOX

NEWSLETTER OF THE CHESPEAKE BAY CHAPTER, ANTIQUE AND CLASSIC BOAT SOCIETY

1996 Spring Issue

Vol. II, Issue I

THE HICKMAN SEA SLEDS- ALL BUT FORGOTTEN

by Howard Percival Johnson

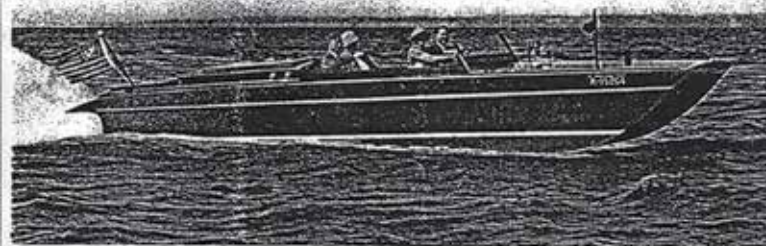
Severna Park, MD...The Severn River, 1946, Howard and Micky Johnson's son Johnny is now old enough to stay at Grandmothers; they

can resume their weekend boating aboard "Nona", a 23 ft lapstrake sedan cruiser with Graymarine 4 and head. By '49 Johnny is along every

weekend, playing in the sand while Dad aquaplanes behind his friend Bill Smith's Chris Craft. Boat watching becomes a pastime on the interminable cruises up the Severn and Magothy, always returning home, to Sappington's.

Above all others, one boat stands out, my favorite, Snooks. Riding fast and flat, Snooks had her name painted full height on the side. The huge 25 hp 4 cyl war surplus Johnson exhaust would come

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ARISTO CRAFT: Jet-Age Design in Postwar Outboard Boats

by Jeffrey Beard

Atlanta, GA...Among the vast numbers of manufactured products made for America's postwar consumer market, there are a few outstanding examples of timeless industrial design. In automobiles, the 1956 Ford Thunderbird and the 1962 Avanti by Studebaker are legendary. Among outboard motors, the Mercury Mark 55 and the Evinrude Lark/Johnson

Javelin are especially notable. Pleasure boat producers also participated in this marketplace styling competition, with manufacturers attempting to differentiate their boats from their competitors by combining contemporary styling and modern materials. In the 1950's, two wooden outboard manufacturers tried to eclipse

their rivals with daringly futuristic, yet tastefully integrated designs: Switzer Craft of Crystal Lake, Illinois and Aristo Craft of Atlanta, Georgia.

Aristo Craft was the badge name for boats produced by Atlanta Boat Works beginning in 1946. Young Claude Turner, who was a Lieutenant in the

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THE STUFFING BOX

HICKMAN SEA SLEDS

Continued from page 1

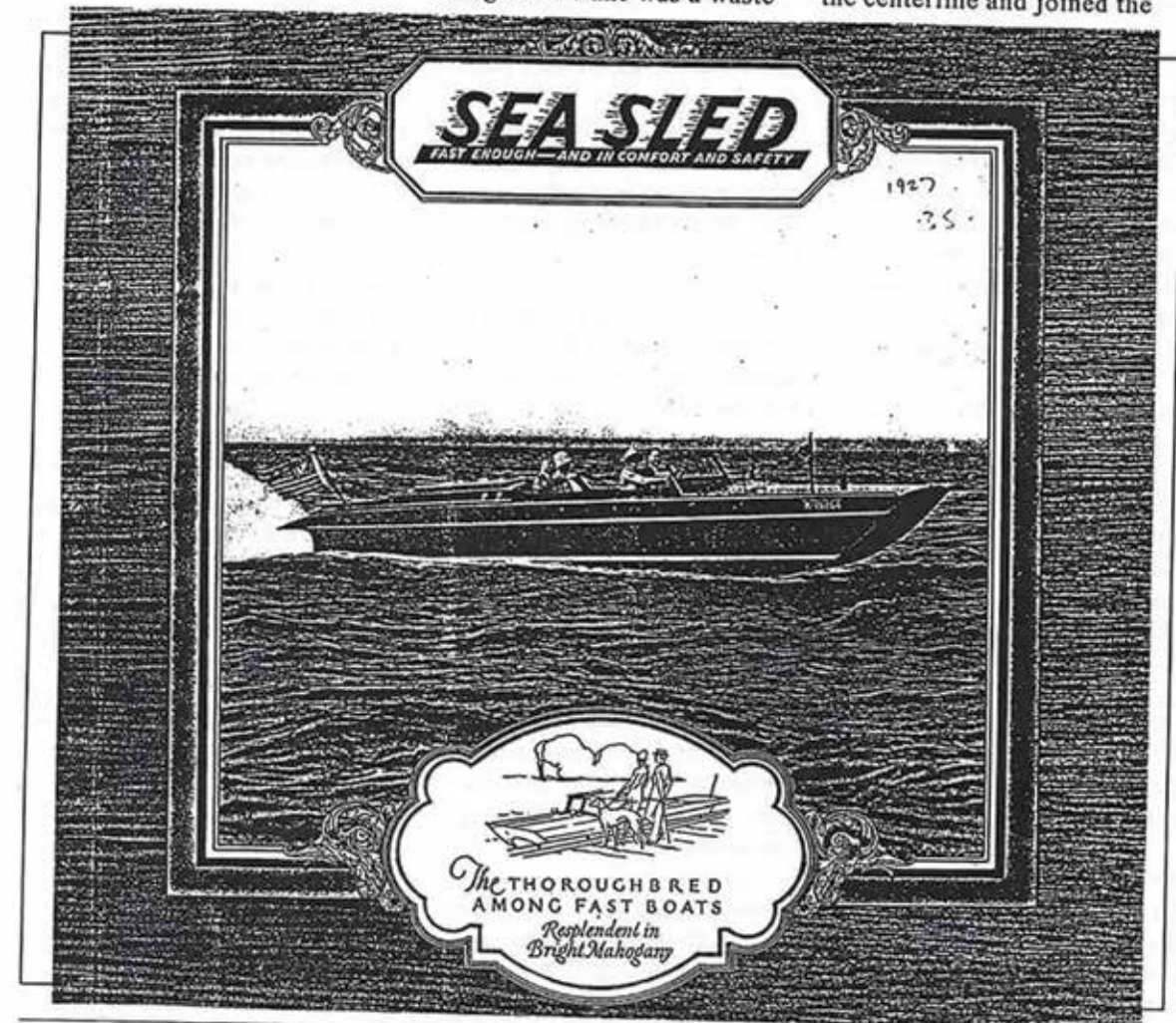
out of the water on waves, making a sound like no other. Buddy Brinkman and his friends were the first to water ski and soon were doing all the tricks behind Snooks. They had a ski jump at the head of the river; we loved to watch them fly. Once they even drove Snooks over the jump! All through the Fifties and Sixties, Snooks, a Hickman Sea Sled, was a regular on the river.

William Albert Hickman was

born in New Brunswick, Canada in 1877 to a wealthy shipbuilding family. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in engineering at Harvard in 1899 and later was able to write a romantic novel which became popular. He was given several political appointments, but loved experimenting with boats. He was one of the first to design a boat which would achieve high speeds without resorting to high power. His first boat, Viper, was flat bottomed, 7 hp and went 14.3 mph, a record in 1907. He thought the wake was a waste

of energy and added "runners" to his next boat to keep the wake underneath. It was faster. At the same time he wanted to eliminate the strut and shaft from under the boat. By 1911 he was offering for sale a boat driven by twin surfacing propellers, 25 hp, 20 mph. He was not happy with the wet ride or the pounding of the nearly flat bottom.

At the 1913 New York Boat Show he unveiled his startling new design. He had cut a normal v-bottomed boat down the centerline and joined the



THE STUFFING BOX

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HICKMAN SEA SLEDS

Continued from page 3

outsides together so the bottom was the opposite shape of a regular boat. It didn't even look like a boat.

Hickman called it a Sea Sled because the sides were straight and parallel. His contemporaries were horrified, his creation defied all accepted naval architectural theories. Worse yet, this ugly duckling had phenomenal seagoing capabilities. The tunnel formed by the twin outward turning bows, collected the bow wave and spray, funneling it under the boat. The rear rode up on this foam making it easily driven and no spray. The two sides acted as twin keels giving greater control and maximum stability. Even in heavy seas there was little pounding, no yawing and easy steering.

To test the boat, Charles F. Chapman, editor of Motor Boating, took five friends on a 260 mile trip from Boston to Maine in a 26' Runabout with surface drives. They hit gales, fogs and large seas but were able to average 35 mph. Hickman had made two extraordinary achievements in marine engineering. He then set up a company to mass produce Sea Sleds with surface drives.

The Army and Navy bought Sea Sleds up until WWI. Then pressure from conventional boat builders cut into Sea Sled orders. In 1918 Hickman built

a 55' steel framed Sea Sled with 1,800 hp, to carry a bomber on deck. It would go 55 mph and then the plane would take off! The government wouldn't buy them or the torpedo boats he designed, and then the war was over. A series of racing boats set new records of 47 and then 57 mph, in 1921. He built a twin Liberty engined racer that hit 70. None of his boats were able to win races because they couldn't turn well and they weren't liked. On many occasions, rules were made against them. Hickman was a pompous, somewhat arrogant, self promoting person who was not popular. He had done many things others could not and his boats were ugly. He felt that they weren't getting good press.

In the early twenties, Hickman offered 26 and 32 foot varnished mahogany pleasure models with twin engines up to 225 hp each, button tufted leather upholstery, twin cockpits, driven from the rear; they were dazzling. The giant surface drive propellers were hidden under a unique overhanging stern. They were imposing and striking with their speed and huge roostertails. When the factory was moved from Canada to Boston in 1920 more models were added. In 1925 Hickman leased the rights to Joseph Knapp, who built a massive manufacturing facility at West Mystic, Connecticut, and set up a National dealer network. They produced six thousand

boats from 11' to 26' until about 1934 when the depression caused business to fall off. Hickman took the plant over and went back to trying to sell his designs to the military. Models were kept the same, production reduced. The ultimate disaster was the 1943 - 78' prototype that was tested against the PT boat. It was run aground and struck a buoy and then put through the test. We never saw any Sea Sled PT boats!

All the same, Sea Sled models remained available until 1955 when Dick Fisher approached Mr. Hickman to buy the rights to build a foam core Sled. The negotiations must not have gone well as no agreement was ever reached. Albert Hickman died in 1957. In 1958 a very similar style boat was brought out - the Boston Whaler - and it has sold in far greater numbers than the wooden version. Sea Sleds are rare today. Only ten ACBS members own one. What became of them? They were used up, just like Snooks. They were so stable, they made great workboats. An old boat with great lines inspires the restorer, but one that looks like a box, well, who can tell how good it was? The depression strangled a great company and generations passed. Today, the Sea Sleds are almost forgotten.

Thanks to "Damned By Faint Praise", by David Seidman, *WoodenBoat* #100, June, 1991 and "Sea Sleds, '17 - '37", by Jim Peele.

Trailer Tips

Tech Corner

by Outboardman

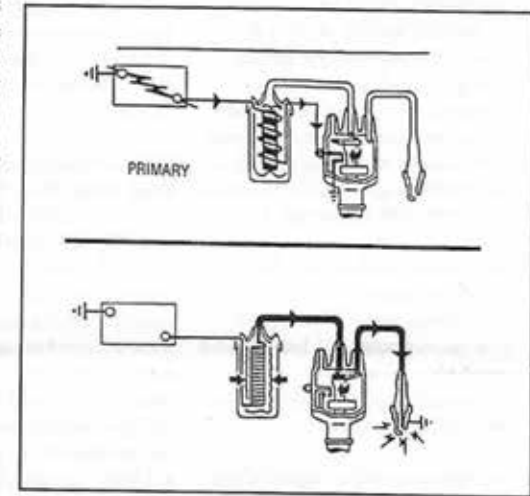
TRAILER TIPS: We had some long tows this year and learned a bit about trailering. First, always latch the ball! This seems obvious but in the excitement of getting ready, can be forgotten.

Adjust the tongue weight to at least 100 lbs on the ball. This way if you forget to latch, it may stay on! Second, get rid of the hooks and use anchor shackles. Why not have really safe, safety chains? I used to have to stop on the road, to put the chains back on. Third, adjust the latch clamp for a snug fit on the ball (look underneath hitch). This keeps it from rattling. Fourth, grease the ball. I could not believe how smooth this makes everything feel. The hitch/ball are moving the whole time the rig is in motion. Include extra rags, it's messy but worth while. Fifth, bolt up any hinge, a rattling trailer wears the nerves and we seldom use a trailer hinge today. Sixth, consider putting stalk lights on the guide posts. They are more visible by everyone. Tom Donley made a set this year. It puts the lights at eye level and makes the rig seem bigger. Aim the lenses correctly so the light intensity is magnified. Seven, unplug lights before going in the water! Good connections are fried immediately in salt water; hot bulbs sometimes burst. Eight, grease bearings when you arrive. Centrifugal force throws grease out. You don't want salt water in there do you? On the way home, they mix into a salt paste. No won-

der we're always replacing bearings. Nine, Before you leave take a small floor jack and listen to each bearing, before greasing, put the jack in the vehicle, along with the trailer spare and lug wrench. Ten, when you wash the boat, completely rinse the inside and outside of the trailer and the rear of the tow. Trailers rust out from the inside. All this effort adds to your peace of mind while towing and the chances of a trouble free trip. See you out on the lake!

IGNITION: I've been working on ignition systems ever since I was old enough to get a real bad shock, but I never really understood how the points cause the big spark at the plug. I knew that the points have to be clean and adjusted

a magnetic field around a wire. So electrons flowing in a wire can induce a flow in one right next to it by magnetic stimulation. The coil, a step up transformer, is a primary winding of a few hundred wraps of medium wire that connects to the points. They are right next to the secondary winding, thousands of wraps of fine wire connected to the sparkplug. When the points are shut, the coil is energized; when they open, the juice rushes out, inducing the electron flow in the secondary, sparkplug side. The difference in the number of windings multiplies the voltage. The coil



.016 apart. for a good blue one. A recent article in the Summer Toronto ACBS Classicboat Magazine explained how the coil works. Induction is a principle in which magnetic forces passing a wire cause electrons to flow and conversely, flowing electrons produce

actually has 200 turns next to 20,000! No wonder you can get such a bad shock! For the complete article, call 301-627-2114.

Quote of the year - Hey this boat doesn't need as much work as I thought it would!

Fall Run

FALL RUN

by Howard Johnson

Croom, MD — Whirlwind enthusiasts Robert Parks and Howard Johnson took a late November ride in Mr. Park's '58 14-foot Whirlwind, with a powerful 40 hp Johnson. Dazzling late fall weather and recent modifications to the engine stimulated the multiple Whirlwind owners to go out and enjoy sling-shot acceleration, near 40mph top speeds and high-G-force turns. Parks, a professional outboard mechanic, proudly showed the increased throat diameter on his carburetor while reeling off a long list of other performance tricks. The real performer was his rigid, lightweight, near-original Whirlwind with a five-ply hull, every part glued by the factory, providing structural strength and light weight. Forty years' storage and use have not distorted the perfect planing surfaces. Full rounded chines encourage safe, thrilling, high-speed turns, without fear of spinout. Blue skies, crisp fall air, and beautiful mahogany wood tones combined with smooth high speed runs, yielded a wonderful fall day and stimulating winter memories.

Last year Parks, also known as Buddy, worked at Johnson's Antique Boat Center, restoring his '53 Whirlwind Troller model 1406. The exterior was stripped to bare wood, the interior was sanded smooth, then both were stained mahogany and then given eight coats of varnish. With the bottom painted white and bottom stiffeners freshly bedded in 5200, new polished stainless rubrails and freshly chromed hardware were installed. The boat attracted compliments all summer, in tow or on the Patuxent River near Broomes Island. Buddy's '60 Evinrude 10 provided enough power to plane two adults. In September he invited Howard to help test a newly restored '53 Johnson 10 which ran well and seemed plenty for one, then they tried Howard's near-new '54 Evinrude 15. What a great combination! Light weight, rocket acceleration to 25+mph and perfect balance for one person. It was so much fun they went out again and again. Buddy is looking for a 15 or 18, right now!

On a rainy cold October day they went to north Baltimore together to look at a Whirlwind Parks had heard about. It was under cover in the backyard for years, the owner just never had time to use it and do the needed refinishing. After a thorough inspection, a deal was struck and the happy buyers headed home.



Once completely cleaned out, it was dried and covered for the winter. When Tim DeGenero, a hot Mercury mechanic, heard about it, he wanted to see it. One look, and he knew it was the boat for him. He remembered how much fun the Whirlwind owners were having out on the Bush River at the Old Bay Chapter Meet, last July. Now he's looking forward to being out on the river, the fastest one of all. We'll see you out there, Tim!

Whirlwind enthusiast Buddy Parks handling a tight turn



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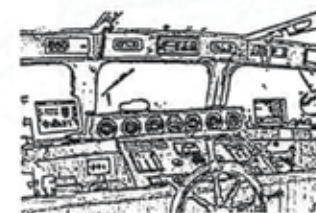
SPRING ISSUE 1999

Cruiser Crazy

CRUISER CRAZY

by Howard Percival Johnson

Annapolis, MD — Summer, 1998. El Nino must be to blame; former happy small boat owners are stricken with Cruiser Fever. Suddenly they fall in love with huge unmanageable behemoths and loose contact with anything besides paint, caulk and sawdust. Weeks or months later, all they want to do is go out on the boat! Keith Colonna of Richmond, VA, found a 1955 Chris Craft 42-foot Corvette powered by twin Chrysler Hemi-v8s. He's the third owner and keeps the boat under the same shed where it always has been. After Bill Bowman looked it over he said, "If you don't buy it, I will!" It is a twin cabin model that was never shown in a catalog, according to the Mariners Museum, and very beautiful anywhere you look. Keith is refinishing and rechroming everything. He worked non-stop for a week before the Tidewater Show and said, "When the sun began to come up, the day of the show, I knew I wasn't going to make it. But Bill came over, started the engines and drove her over there anyway." And a sight to see, she is, everything exactly



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the way the factory made it, every square inch shaped and sculpted as well as can humanly be done and now, irreplaceable. It's fast, too and probably wouldn't use much gas coming to our show next year, right Keith?

Then Chuck and Linda found this 1936 Chris Craft Express Cruiser on Valentine Creek near Herald Harbor, on the Severn River. During our show they found out that someone else bought their boat! Later, that deal fell through and they were able to buy the single screw beauty for themselves. They are the third owners and were thrilled with the smooth running Chrysler Crown engine. The month spent in Smith's Boat Yard may have been the greatest challenge to marriage and family ever, as brothers, sisters and even Linda's mother pitched in to restore hull, transom and bottom. Chuck said that when the sellers brought out everything for the boat there were piles of stuff and acres of stuff. Where could they put it all? Even two huge navy anchors, boxes of charts and a darling Pen Yan dinghy. They have plans for restoring the decks and meeting the original owner, who cruised to Atlantic City, NJ. "Hey, You want to see our cruiser?..."

Croom, MD. The phone rings. Hi, Howard, You probably don't remember me but I spent the

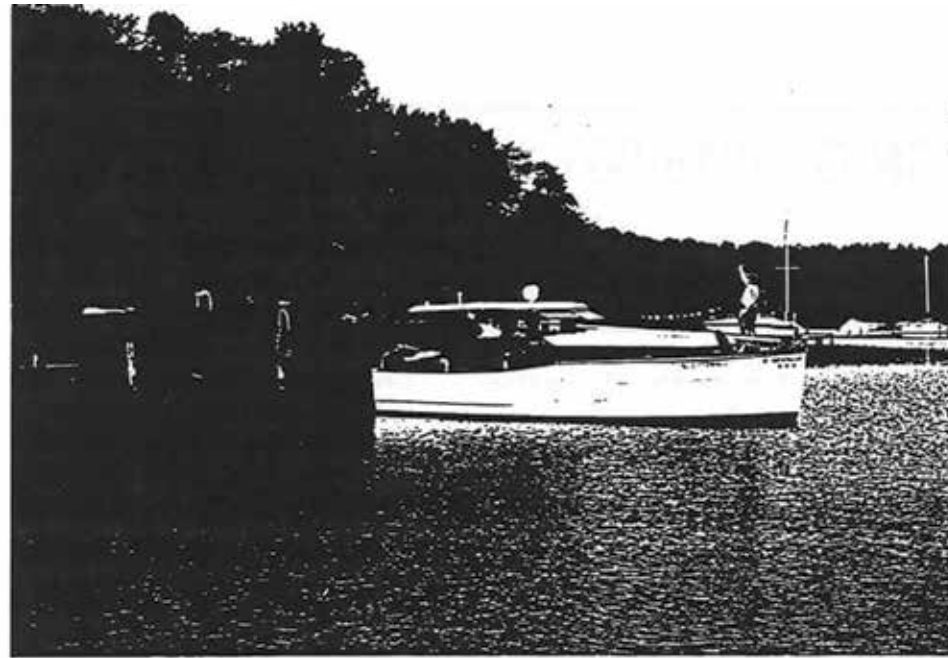
day at your shop some years ago and you taught me wood refinishing., Well Hi, Joe, I remember you. We made great progress on that boat but then I landed this great job in New Jersey, so now I commute up there every day, so I just bought a fiberglass boat. Would you like to have my old boat? Oh yes, Joe. Well, if you want it, there's a catch, you have to take the other boat I bought. What's that? It's a 1951 Chris Craft 34-foot Enclosed Cruiser. (silence) Oh, wow, Joe, Well I sort of went crazy and I thought I could fix it up. You better come look at it first.

He did. Then no sleep at night. Why would anyone want something so big, so much? Soon, genius, miracle worker, Frank Pinder of Kentech Marine, boat movers, has her rolling sweetly down the highway at 60 miles an hour! For 120 miles! It fit right under the shed with one inch to spare. After the boat was blocked and Frank drove off, Howard nearly passed out. It was too much excitement for one day! Now people see the boat and they say, "That will keep you busy for the rest of your life. We love it!"

Meanwhile, Charles Mark of Wrightsville, PA, is enjoying his 1962 Pacemaker 32-foot Express which he brought to our show. A vocational shop

continued on next page

FALL ISSUE 1998



Chuck and Linda found this 1936 Chris Craft Express Cruiser on Valentine Creek near Herald Harbor, on the Severn River.

CRUISER CRAZY

continued from previous page

teacher at York Co. Schools, he enjoys spending weekends aboard and taking outings with friends on Middle River. He found the boat five years ago stripped and about to be cut up. He retrieved all the parts, then replaced the keel, transom, frames, cabin sides, and engines. Every square inch of the interior and exterior was stripped and refinished in original factory colors. He has years of effort tied up in this comfortable, dependable, yacht; what is he dreaming about? Buying a 42-foot Mathews!

Jim Holler, who loves doing restoration work, has had his 1962 Richardson 37-foot Aluminum planked cruiser under covered storage for eight years. The boat represents the last great effort of his hometown boat company from Tonowanda, NY. The hull was

built of aluminum planks and frames by Avro of Canada, just across the border, and finished out by Richardson craftsmen. Powered by twin Gray Fireball v-8s and needing only cosmetic refinishing, perhaps now is the right time. Soon Frank Pinder was hauling this faded beauty down the highway to the Antique Boat Center, cruiser department. After struggling to park it in front of the Chris Craft, Frank said, "I used to brag about putting boats in tight places, I'm not going to do that anymore." Now she's right outside Howard's shop door ready for sanding, varnishing and paint. Anyone out there want to learn some refinishing?

Sometimes the very people who start a trend are the ones to return first. Joan and Greg Howell have sold their cruiser to a gentleman from St. Michaels who has joined our club. Then they bought a Chris Craft that helped thousands of Americans fall in love with

speedboating, it's a 1931 Chris Craft 22-foot triple Cockpit, that was the ride boat at Saronac Inn, in upstate New York, until 1946. Stripped to the bare wood, the engine removed, it was put away in a warehouse and forgotten after the Inn was lost to fire. Nearly identical to Herb Zorn's boat, it had blue upholstery and is complete except for the engine and spotlight. They are anxious to get to work on it but first they have to complete the 1952 Chris Craft 17-foot Special Runabout, Greg has stripped down to the frame. He's replaced the keel, bottom frames and had the "K" engine magnafluxed; he's going to rebuild that himself also. He wants to re-use as much of the original wood as he can, to keep the antique look and character of the boat. They built a shed on the garage to keep the new boat dry and right nearby. Perhaps cruisers are too much work. Two boats for one, now they can take it easy! ☼

Classic Flying Boats

CLASSIC FLYING BOATS

by Howard P. Johnson Jr.

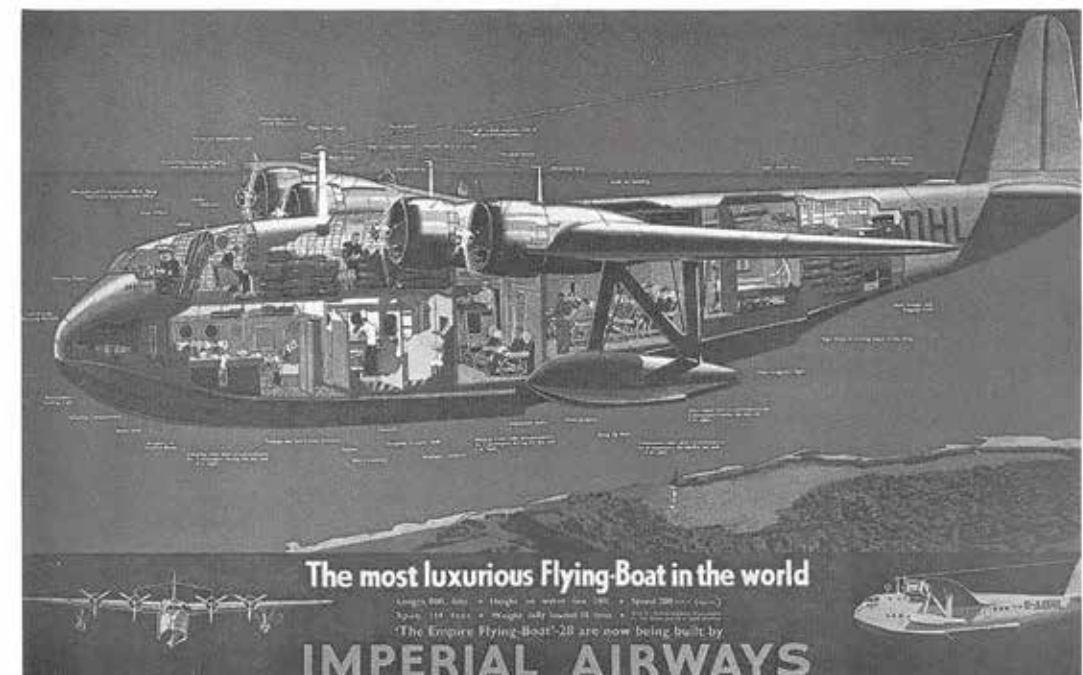
In 1969 my great friend William H. Dyson III, found a job as captain aboard Charles J. Owens, of Owens Yacht Corporations, personal yacht, Oceanus, a 50' Bill Tripp designed, carvel planked sloop. With Will's wife Evelyn as first mate, the job was to maintain the vessel and keep it ready for Chuck and Marge to go out on short notice. Berthed at Owens' recently acquired yard, Port Owens, on Stony Creek, Oceanus required constant upkeep and since I was a regular visitor, I would help out. In the fall, they traveled South to Christianstead, St. Croix to it's winter berth at Chandlers Yacht Yard. Will, a lifelong sailor, had earned college money delivering yachts to the Islands, and was familiar with the ICW and open ocean sailing. In 1971, he invited me to join them aboard Oceanus to stay for a month, while Chuck and Marge were in Europe.

What an exciting opportunity! Of course, I had heard all about the Islands from Will but never dreamed I'd be able to go. Even more exciting, Dick Newick and his crew were building an

ocean racing trimaran, which they hoped would better their previous record, winning the Single Handed Trans-Atlantic Race. I flew down on Eastern, the Wings of Man; at age 25, it was my first international flight.

The seventies was a time of dreary, rainy, cold winters in Maryland and when I landed, the world exploded into hot summer sunshine! The sun was so bright I had to squint, just to see.

Everything about St. Croix and Christianstead was so new it was a relief to see the familiar boat and get settled. Then in the distance there was the thundering of engines and roaring and spray. What is it? Antillies Air Boats, the Grumman Goose, taking off. It was the most exciting, most breathtaking thing I'd ever seen in my life. Like a giant twin engine speed boat, going faster and faster and then taking off and soaring along, higher and higher, until it disappeared in the distance. I couldn't wait until the evening, so I could see it again.





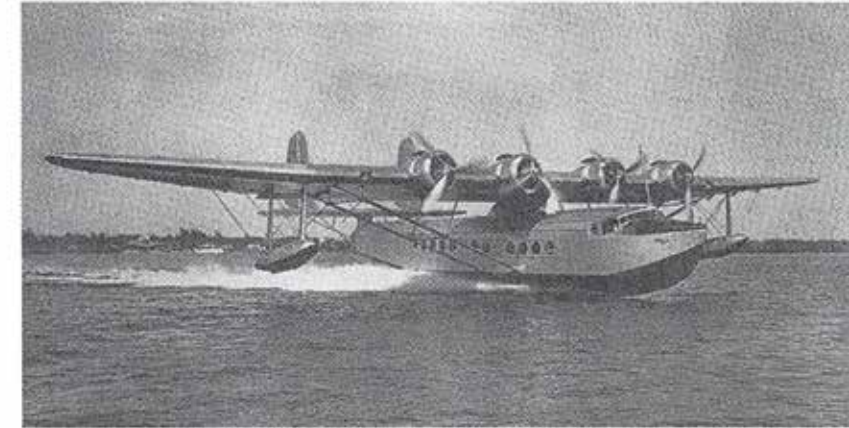
LEFT At the San Pedro seaplane terminal at Long Beach, California is the Air Catalina Grumman Goose in which the author first experienced the unique sensation of landing and taking off in an aircraft from water.

Every morning and evening was punctuated by these breathtaking takeoffs and landings. So magnetic were the thundering sounds and flashing silver reflections, that for a whole month, I would stop what I was doing, 4 times a day, to watch. When the plane would come to the ramp, the pilot would put down the wheels, hit the throttles and drive it up the ramp, to the ticket station. Up to twelve people and assorted cargo would be unloaded and in a half hour, they would start up, idle down to the water, put the wheels away, and give her the gas. As the plane built up speed, it gave off stereo thundering twin engine sounds and the most magnificent white wakes, on the blue water. First the hull and wing pods all made wakes, then just the hull, then if it was heavily laden it would kiss the water, for the longest way, finally breaking free and starting a great circle, as it headed off to a dreamy, unknown, destination. The air was so clear you could still see it until it was only a tiny dot, twenty miles away.

Out at the airport, off to one side, there was a run down seaplane with the Antilles Airboats name on it. We went out

there to have a look and asked a lot of questions. It was an old English, Sunderland from about 1945, the last of its breed and too costly to maintain or use. They didn't know what was going to become of it. Wow, it was so compelling to see that thing sitting there all dusty and dead looking, nearly abandoned.

Seaplanes and our favorite classic boats developed along similar lines. As more powerful engines became available they improved the designs for more speed. The Schneider Trophy encouraged record setting achievements after WWI, with 200 mph. bi-wing seaplanes increasing speeds each year, up to '34 when the Italians topped 400mph with a sleek mono-wing creation. Our U.S. Navy, 1919 Curtiss bi-wing flying boat made the first trans-oceanic flight powered by 4 400hp Liberty engines. So much fuel was required for these early long flights the runways were not long enough, so sea planes were used. German designer Claudius Dornier revolutionized air travel from 1922-30 with his Wal(whale), aluminum monoplane powered by 2 300hp Hispano-Suiza engines, in tandem. Made in Spain, Holland and Japan, they featured seaworthiness, reliability, and ease of maintenance; fourteen passengers could fly in comfort in two staterooms. Records were set for long flights all over the world, even Amundsen made an attempt to fly to the North Pole! A giant version was built in 1929 that carried 66 passengers, with twelve Curtiss- Wright engines



The 32-passenger four-engine Sikorsky S-42 was one of Pan Am's most famous flying boats, carrying out the first Pacific and North Atlantic survey flights in 1935 and 1937.

arranged in tandem along the wingtop, it took one year to fly around the world.

The thirties were the hey-day of seaplane travel. The British 1935 Imperial Airways Empire Boats, flew a nine day, twenty nine landing, first class, London to Sydney route, with many other routes linking the USA, Canada, India, Africa and Europe right up to WWII.

Pan American Airways began in 1927 with a Key West to Havana route. In a few years Pan American Clippers linked much of the Pacific and the Phillipines. Atlantic Clippers connected five US cities with five European cities, the Azores and Bermuda. In 1938 Pan Am's new Boeing 314, powered by 4 Wright Cyclone 1,600hp engines, cruised the North atlantic route with mail, 74 passengers and 10 crew at 188mph over a range of 3,685 miles. As the thirties came to a close the globe was criss-crossed with hundreds of regular seaplane service routes.

With the onset of world war II, flying boats provided critical transportation for government and military service personnel. Hundreds of different makes and models participated in sinking submarines, picking up downed flyers and convoy escort. Of the many that contributed so ably to the war effort the Consolidated Pby Catalina stands out. Designed in 1935, it was first configured to carry 4- 50 cal. machine guns and 4000 lbs of bombs; 3,290 were made by the USA, Canada and Russia. They were so reliable, seaworthy and tough, many saw

continued use in South America up until the late 80's.

In Maryland, Glen L. Martin Co., beginning in WWII, produced nine different models; The Mariner was the first seaplane to sink a German U boat; then later picked up 42 survivors of a ship, sunk by a U-boat. They saw service in Korea and then government contracts gradually diminished; the flying boats were replaced by a variety of other planes and the far more versatile, helicopters.

Yet, the old time sea plane remains in use all around the globe, where small "bush" airlines are needed. Antilles Airboats was established in 1962 and became the largest Downtown Seaplane Airline, in the world, until about 1989 when the majority of the planes were destroyed by Hurricane Hugo. The big seaplane we saw was too expensive even for the Puerto Rico route and was flown back to England, restored, and it is on display in the Southampton Aircraft Museum. Australia's Great Barrier Reef is accessible by Grumman Mallard seaplanes. In remote regions of the world, the west coast of Canada, the Bahamas, and South America,

small airlines are still using seaplanes. So if you travel and have a chance, take a flight in one. You are guaranteed to have the fastest, most exciting "boat" ride you ever had!



ABOVE One of three Pan Am Boeing Clippers that took over the Pacific route from the Martin 130s at the end of 1939, seen approaching the completed Golden Gate Bridge homeward-bound from Hawaii.

For you armchair travelers, read Wings Over Water - A chronicle of twentieth century flying boats, by David Oliver, 1999 Quintet Publishing Ltd. Available at Borders Books, it and Seaplanes At War, a magazine, provided the inspiration, information and pictures for this article.

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