



# Notes from the Bilge



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June 2021

Newsletter of the Lake Champlain Chapter of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, Inc.

Steve Pond, President

## President's Message

**Relief would be an understatement.** It has been a difficult fifteen months on many levels but with vaccination rates going up and case numbers going down, some sort of normalcy is starting to return. We're ready for summer to begin! Hopefully, the weather will improve and be more predictable in June. May's weather has been a bit fickle for boating; mid-week has been beautiful but as the weekends approach, temperatures drop and the wind picks up. Let's hope this trend changes as June arrives.

Looking ahead to the summer, we are excited about several boating events and lakeside venues opening again. The Old Dock House in Essex, New York and Indian Bay Marina in Willsboro, New York have already opened for the summer season. The Red Mill at Basin Harbor continues to be a special spot to stop for a meal.

For boating event, Spencer Boatworks is hosting their Runabout Rendezvous on Lake Flower in Saranac Lake, New York on July 10. We will be holding our 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Boat Show on July 31<sup>st</sup> in Burlington. We will be moving the show this year to the new Burlington Harbor Marina, just north of the Burlington Boathouse. Everyone at the new marina is very excited to host us.

We'll also be holding our awards presentation and dinner in an exciting new location. The Lake Champlain Community Sailing Center has opened their 3<sup>rd</sup> floor deck for our use to gather for cocktails and dinner. We hope many will decide to join us for an evening of camaraderie and relaxation with amazing views of the lake. The Sailing Center is only a short walk from the marina and launch ramp at the north end of the harbor. Both of these facilities are going to play major roles in September

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## Editor's Note ~



On page 3 of this issue, you will find an article reprinted from *Small Boat Monthly* 2007 about Kenney Bassett's famous design, now known as *Rascal*. Kenney's response follows.

*Another walk, or fast ride, down memory lane!  
In telling the rest of the story, "it would include mentioning that my passenger in the broadside running photo (1988) in the SBM article was responsible for naming RASCAL, and in an odd quirk of fate, he was also the first owner of BLACKBIRD.  
Through the years, that design has proved itself many times over. I have seen dozens of local newspaper articles from all over the country forwarded to me about fathers and sons building RASCAL in the family garage, as well as uncles and nieces, grandparents and grandchildren, too. On several occasions, it has been a high school woodworking project that was then raffled off. I have seen photos of RASCAL examples skimming the waters of New Zealand, the Netherlands, Lake Como, the San Juan Islands, and Lake Geneva. I even piloted one at WOT (wide-open-throttle) through the city of Paris on the River Seine (a peak experience!). One day a few summers ago, a pair of RASCALS built by two fellows in Montreal showed up at my dock in North Hero!  
I have sent plans to at least 44 countries; my best estimate for the total number of finished boats is 70-80.*

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# RASCAL

## A playful runabout

Written by DENNIS CAPRIO

*RASCAL* sped across the riffled waters of Long Island Sound. Her mahogany foredeck glowed from the depths of its varnish, and her stainless-steel cut-water sparkled through drops of water streamlining into mist. Driver and passenger sat low on a simple rolled leather seat, legs stretched out nearly parallel to the cockpit sole. A tall person could reach over the side and touch the water as it rushed aft at better than 50 mph. Memories of my first ride in *RASCAL* still raise goose bumps after 15 years.

At 15' in length and weighing about 1,000 lbs with a full fuel tank and cockpit, *RASCAL* is a cheeky little boat—“pleasantly mischievous” is one of the ways Merriam-Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary defines the name—powered by a 60-hp Mercury outboard. If Colin Chapman had designed and built boats instead of Lotus automobiles, a boat of *RASCAL*’s character surely would have been among them—the Lotus Super Seven of the waterways.

Designed and built by Kenny Bassett, Onion River Boat Works, *RASCAL* offers more bang for the buck than just about any other runabout a father and son could build over several hundred hours of nights and weekends. They will build her of plywood—4mm for the topsides and decks, 5mm for the bottom—ripped into strips 1" wide and laid diagonally over frames and stringers. That’s the easy part. If they want to capture the gloss and romance of traditional mahogany runabouts, they’ll plank the topsides with 1/4" solid mahogany, perfectly lined off and set in epoxy. Although this method taxes the skill and patience of an amateur builder, it’s far from impossible. In fact, Tom Donahue, an electrical engineer living in Connecticut, recently completed a Rascal. Before this project, he’d built nothing more demanding than a couple of birdhouses. Donahue knows, maybe better than anyone, that whoever builds a Rascal must let patience guide them throughout the project, especially during the varnishing. The finish work will likely require as much, or more, time than the construction.



Photo by Polly Brown

Rascal, a 14'10" outboard runabout that you can build in the backyard, strives to capture the cachet of big mahogany speedboats—without their mechanical complications and great expense.

The final result, though, is worth the wait. *RASCAL* rides atop a shallow-V bottom. Her steep entry warps into a flat run and ends at the transom in a deadrise of about 7 degrees. A delta-shape pad keel from station No. 2 aft to the transom provides a perfect planing surface, allowing *RASCAL* to make the transition from displacement speed to full plane in a single heave—absent the “hump” we associate with deep-V hulls and their slightly shallower modified-V sisters. Chine flats emerge from the waterline at station No. 4, which corresponds with the forward edge of the cockpit. They rise gracefully and embrace the stem about halfway up the bow, forming a line that plays with light and shadow to create visual interest forward of the cockpit. These chines also deflect spray.

*RASCAL*’s exceptional proportions mask her size when she stands alone in the slip or speeds across the water. Only when she’s parked next to a larger boat does she reveal her compact dimensions. The outboard’s power head, like a welt on the forehead of Julianne Moore, may diminish our first impressions from exquisite to merely beautiful, but familiarity ought to heal the wound. Bassett was aware of this possibility, so he painted the cowling of the outboard on hull No.1. A lustrous solid black accented by the name *RASCAL* in chromed script made the power head an integral part of the design, further defining the boat’s character and purpose.

I’d met Bassett at the Riverside Yacht Club in the town of the same name located two train stops east

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of Greenwich, Connecticut. He'd traveled from New Hampshire to demonstrate the boat to a prospective buyer and invited me to join him for a test drive afterward. Bassett fired up the three-cylinder Mercury, which was still warm from his demo, engaged forward gear, and idled us into the channel.

At rest and under slow way, *RASCAL* lightly tapped to the rhythm of cat's-paws stirred by the breeze. This lateral motion is common to other runabouts I've driven and seems to be a characteristic of the bottom's shape and the boat's low center of gravity. I love this little dance, because it conveys a restless energy—the promise of speed. Most runabouts fulfill this promise, whether they are blindingly fast or simply pleasingly rapid.

Few powerboats involve us in their playfulness as completely as does a fine runabout, and *RASCAL*'s length and light weight intensify all of the sensations—save one: the rumble of an inboard engine, V-8, or straight-six barking epithets from the chrome tips of a through-transom exhaust. When I drove the original *RASCAL*, a 60-hp Mercury two-stroke outboard powered her, and I admit to being disenchanted by the ring, ding, ding voice coming from the transom. Sure, I knew better. I had road-raced two-stroke motorcycles in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and understood their potential to entertain the speed demon in all of us. I knew also that this light-weight outboard was the key to *RASCAL*'s personality.

Never mind Gar Wood's neat 16' Speedster inboard runabout or, to be more contemporary, Donzi's lovely Sweet 16 sterndrive, only an outboard would give Bassett everything he wanted—simplicity of installation, ease of maintenance, purchase price, light weight and performance. Although outboard-powered classics never gained the cachet of their inboard sisters, they've written a richly colorful history for themselves in racing and more sedate forms of boating. In *RASCAL*, Bassett has combined the spirit of the all-conquering Switzer Craft hydroplanes and utilities with the look and presence of a Gold Cup raceboat.

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After we cleared the mooring field and the no-wake zone, Bassett trimmed the outboard's drive leg and pushed the throttle to the stops, sending us in a single rush to a speed of 50 mph. In the open water, *RASCAL* skimmed atop a foot or so of chop, doing her best imitation of a Lotus Super Seven tearing along a country lane in the north of England. Hard left, hard right, the little boat put her shoulder into the turns and carved perfect arcs. A tiny skid fin, at the leading edge of the planing surface and projecting to a depth of 2 3/4" from the pad keel, helped *RASCAL* hold her line and speed in these turns. Without the fin, she would drift wide—her way of asking the driver to back off the throttle. We played until our faces ached with indelible grins and the electric tilt and trim on the outboard quit working. *continued page 8*

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*by Polly Brown*

*Powered by a 60-hp, Mercury outboard motor, RASCAL scoots along at better than 50 mph.*

# BURLINGTON HARBOR MARINA



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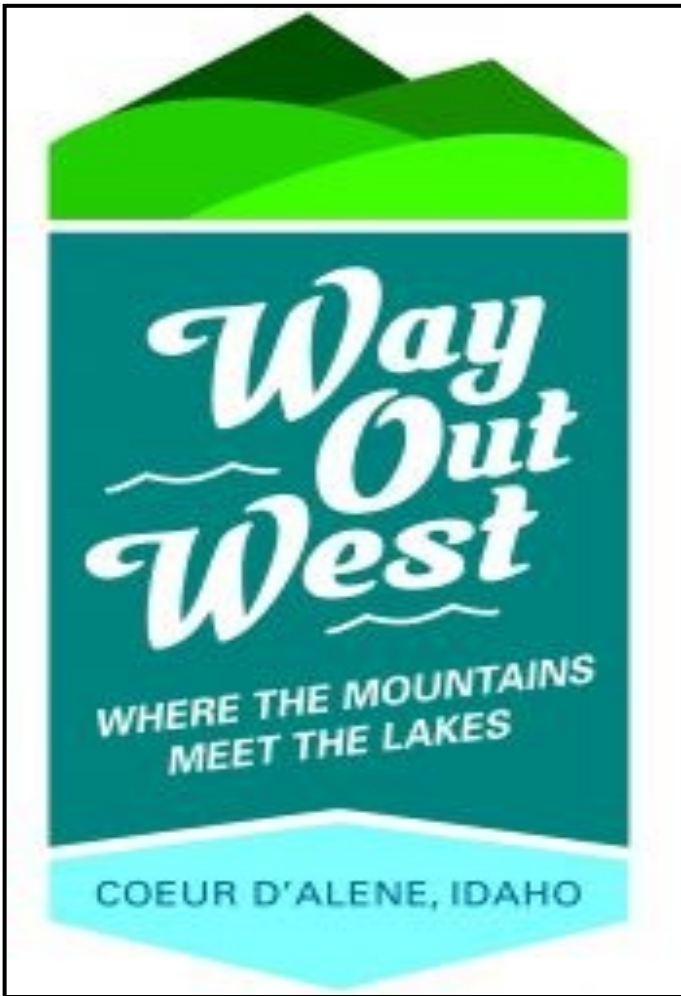
President's Message - continued from page 1

2022 as we host the ACBS Annual Meeting and Boat Show.

We are planning several rendezvous this year. A few options include Mooney Bay Marina in the northern part of the lake and Westport Marina for the southern end. Susan Haigh will keep everyone posted on upcoming events with updates on our LCACBS website. If there is anyone with technical expertise who would like to help Susan, please let us know. She would appreciate the assistance! We will also mail announcements about events through the ACBS portal. I realize their system can be fussy so check your junk email settings to insure you receive them.

We created a new LCACBS Membership Directory that will be mailed to all members soon. Our 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Boat Show registration for will be included with the mailing as well as included in this issue of *Notes From the Bilge*. We hope many of you decide to participate this year because we would love to see everyone for this fun event!

After the void created by the Covid-19 pandemic, it will be wonderful to meet again face-to-face. I hope to see fellow members and their boats on the big lake or whichever body of water you frequent.



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# One Man's Mistake is Another Man's Treasure

By Fritz Horton

The Thistle Class sailing dinghy was designed in 1945 by Gordon ("Sandy") Douglass to reach the post-war market yearning for inexpensive, high-performance one design boats. The design was patterned after then-current versions of the International 14 Class dinghies, in which Douglass had won a bronze medal in the '36 Olympic Games. On a trailer, like the Snipe and Lightning, the boat offered young families ready access to the water from their suburban homes. With her mast stepped on the thwart instead of on the keel, the Thistle was a sure winner of the then-popular "trailer-to-trailer" races, where the race started and ended with the boats snug on their trailers at the launching ramp!

The Thistle fully rigged is light (515 lb.) due to her cold-molded plywood construction. The hull, at approximately 300 lb., consists of five laminations of 1/16" mahogany, stapled and glued together and braced with gratings, thwarts and seats to yield a surprisingly open but very rigid structure. "Ouisquaebae" would have been Thistle #792 in 1952 if the bare hull had not been set aside by its builder, Douglass and McDleod, to serve as the plug for the new fiberglass designs. For that role, she was faired, templated, finished with lacquer and mounted on movable supports at stem and stern to allow her to be rotated 180° to drop the fiberglass female molds after curing. Fiberglass Thistles were then molded by Douglass & McCleod and other builders using the female molds from "Quisquaebae". She is truly the "mother" of all modern fiberglass Thistles.

Fritz Horton, an architect in Shelburne, Vermont, bought the boat in 1973 from John Riley, who, apparently by mistake, was allowed to purchase the hull from Douglass & McCleod in 1969. Despite Ray McCleod's pleas to return the "Class Plug", Riley refused. The Class then had a problem. It had lost something akin to the U.S. Constitution – the basis for measuring any suspected changes to the

*Continued next column*



Also, because her original hull number (792) had been assigned to another boat after she was set aside for use as a mold, the Thistle Class had to assign her the next highest current registration number, which at that time was #3184. Currently, no wooden Thistle with a higher registration number exists.

After removing enough of the finish to determine the outer veneer had been sanded through in several places, Fritz removed the outer 1/16" with a router and rasp, replaced it with sapele and finished the boat in Vermont over a two-year period, completing the process in 1978.



We met again later in the summer—this time on Candlewood Lake, near Danbury, Connecticut. This lake is an impoundment and is very narrow in many sections. Wind-blown waves and the wakes of powerboats bounce off the shorelines and march directly back toward the center of the lake. Picture the inside of a washing machine, the agitator of which moves rapidly up and down. Even during the week, motorboat traffic on Candlewood resembles the madness of I-95 between New Haven and Greenwich, so we looked for relatively quiet water to time her acceleration and top speed in fresh water. We recorded 2.7 seconds from 25 to 35 mph and a maximum speed of 52 mph.

My turn to drive. The cockpit is intimate, the steering wheel small, and the gauges are located in a panel at the center of the dashboard, similar to the arrangement in a 1952 Jaguar XK120. The seat is a paragon of simple design and construction, a pair of leather-covered foam cushions resting on nylon webbing. As drawn, the cockpit ought to accommodate a reasonable variety of human heights and widths. If I were going to build a Rascal, I'd figure out a way to make the seat adjustable fore-and-aft.


The unassisted cable-operated steering was quick, and RASCAL's response nearly instantaneous. At first, the boat's quickness startled me, so I eased back on the throttle until I got the feel of her handling. In those washing-machine waters, she preferred staying on top of the conditions, so the faster we went, the smoother was her ride. RASCAL reacted predictably to changes in the outboard's trim. Trimming in brought the bow down to engage the waves; trimming out raised the bow, transferring the load to her planeing surface under the cockpit. She never porpoised, chine-walked, or tried to get airborne. One owner of a Rascal has clamped a heavily modified outboard onto the transom and regularly sees 70 mph. He has reported that she remains free of handling vices. Like a pleasingly mischievous friend, RASCAL defies anyone to resist her charm, her playfulness, and friendly manners. She may not be the easiest boat to build, but rendering the two-dimensional drawings into all her wonderful three-dimensional shapes may make you as giddy as does driving her. 



Photo by Polly Brown Designer-builder Ken Bassett drives RASCAL at speed. The playful runabout isn't the easiest boat to build, but she rewards careful work with fine performance and head-turning appearance.



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## 2022 Sponsor Update

As you all know, we are reliant on the support of our Champlain Valley community to successfully host the 2022 ACBS Annual Meeting and Boat Show.

There is good news and there is bad news. We are currently at 80% of our budget of \$67,500. The bad news is we are presently falling short by 20%.

In the last few weeks, we have added three more sponsors - *LN Consulting*, an engineering design company, *Hanson & Doremus*, an investment management firm and *Raymond James*, a stock brokerage firm. When the opportunity exists, please demonstrate your appreciation of their support.

You may have already noted acknowledgment of their support on page 9.

We are continuing our effort to attain our 2022 Boat Show budget and welcome any and all assistance from the membership.



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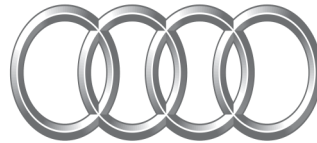
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# Lake Champlain ACBS Vintage Boat Show Registration Form



IF THE PICTURE AND DESCRIPTION ON FILE ARE UP TO DATE  
NO ACTION REQUIRED...  
CHANGES... PLEASE NOTE ON THIS FORM  
AND/OR SEND NEW PHOTO AS 4" X 6" JPEG 72DPI.

To GUARANTEE Proper Exhibit Space and Judging PLEASE Complete EVERY Category Below and Return

Lake Champlain ACBS Practices Skipper Judging Judge: Yes  No

*Boat Information:*

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Tel # \_\_\_\_\_ Cell # \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_  
Boat Name \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ Length \_\_\_\_\_ Beam \_\_\_\_\_ Draft \_\_\_\_\_  
Builder / Designer \_\_\_\_\_ Model \_\_\_\_\_

*Classification:* Historic  *Built up to and including 1918*      Antique  *Built 1919-1942, inclusive*      Classic  *Built 1943-1975, inclusive*  
Late Classic  *Built after 1975-1993, inclusive (exceptions apply).*

Contemporary   
Wooden boat *built within the last 25 years*  
~ These age classifications apply to both boats and motors.

*Class:* Runabout  Cannot Walk Between Cockpits  Utility Can walk Between Seats   
Lapstrake Utility  Side Planks Overlap  Cruiser  Outboard  Sail  Launch  Race Boat   
Contemporary Replica  Pulling Boat  Other: \_\_\_\_\_

*Boat Condition:* Preserved  Restored  Engine: Original  Re-Powered   
Engine Mfg. \_\_\_\_\_ IB \_\_\_\_\_ OB \_\_\_\_\_ Year \_\_\_\_\_ # Cylinders \_\_\_\_\_ HP \_\_\_\_\_ Sail Rig \_\_\_\_\_

*Additional Boat Information:*

On a separate page, please send us as much information about your boat entry as possible... Including...  
*Photo:* For the boat show program... *History:* Boat Designer... Previous owners and home ports. The story behind the boat's name... How did it get to Lake Champlain... Major renovations and by whom... Wood description... Awards and articles of interest... Any other things unique and of general interest to the boating public...

# Registration Due: July 1st



Lake Champlain 35th Annual  
Antique & Classic Boat Show  
July 31, 2021  
Burlington Harbor Marina  
Burlington, Vermont



I plan to arrive on: July 30\_\_\_\_\_ July 31\_\_\_\_\_ By: Land\_\_\_\_\_ Sea\_\_\_\_\_

I have made *Overnight Dockage Reservations* for: July 30\_\_\_\_\_ July 31\_\_\_\_\_

*Overnight Dockage Additional...* Call The Burlington Harbor Marina, 75 Penny Lane, at 802-540-6869 for reservations.

*Due to no Boat Show in 2020 all fees have been reduced for 2021.*

ACBS Member Registration Fee \$20 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Non-Member Registration Fee \$55 \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Includes ACBS Membership and Show Insurance

Additional Boats \$15 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Saturday Buffet Dinner & Awards \$ \_\_\_\_\_

# Of Guests \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$25 Each

TOTAL Enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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## INSURANCE AND FOREIGN MATTER WAIVER FOR ALL BOAT ENTRANTS.

This statement certifies that I am the owner of the boat described on the reverse side. I am entering it in the Lake Champlain ACBS Vintage Boat Show promoted by Lake Champlain Antique and Classic Boat Society, Inc. Taking place at the Burlington Harbor Marina and being held on July 31, 2021.

Owners that want their boats judged are encouraged to be present at their boat when it is being judged. By registering a boat to be judged, the owners explicitly grant permission for the judges to board their boat as may be needed to properly judge it, should the owner not be present. Judges are experienced in these matters and take due care, however owners agree that neither judges nor the sponsoring organization nor ACBS are liable for any damage that may occur during the judging process.

Further, I certify that I currently have effective insurance to cover any damage to my boat, and to cover my liability for any damages to others, or their property, arising from any use of my boat during this event.

I hold free and harmless the officers and volunteers of ACBS, Inc. and the Lake Champlain Antique and Classic Boat Society, Inc., the owners and staff of the Burlington Harbor Marina, any sponsors and or advertisers from any and all actions, claims, liabilities assertions of liability which in any manner arise be alleged to arise from any and all activities with the entry of, and use of, my boat connected directly or proximately with the boat show listed above.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**THIS FORM MUST BE SIGNED AND ON FILE BEFORE ENTERING THE BOAT SHOW AREA.** Thank you for your cooperation.

## The Saga continues . . .

You might remember an article in the December newsletter about a 1909 Consolidated acquired by Bob Schumacher. When last I visited Bob's barn, *Vagabond* was out of the weather and supported by Brownell Boat Stands.

Bob had indicated he planned on removing the fiberglass sheathing that had been applied by a previous owner. Both Bob and the insurance company disliked the fiberglass sheathing.

The fiberglass sheathing is now a memory.

Bob has begun the process of applying the new sheathing planks. It is a time consuming task. However, Bob is still sticking to his forecast of a 2021 launch date. With *Vagabond* floating, Bob will attempt to get her floating on her lines. Stay tuned . . .



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