



Notes from the Bilge



www.lcacs.com

September 2020

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

Steve Pond, President

Contents

President's Message	1
Editor's Note	2
Chronicles of Ninnyfish.....	3
Huber Johnson Adventures	5

President's Message

It's hard to believe that meteorological fall is already here. Our summer was very hot with July officially the hottest month on record in Burlington. The lake level reached a low point earlier than normal due to early snowmelt and little rain in the spring. Covid-19 has also taken its toll on the activity level for most ACBS chapters. Many events were cancelled or postponed. Virtual boat shows seemed to be the new normal!

We discussed the possibility of putting on our own virtual boat show but plans never materialized. Personally, I got distracted by taking time to do some needed deck work on our 26' Lyman, putting in more than 200 hours on the project. No sooner did we relaunch when the Crusader 250 started giving me problems. After a valve job and new ignition system, the culprit turned out to be a worn-out lobe on the camshaft. Needless to say, my focus wasn't on a virtual boat show.

The pandemic knocked the wind out of our social sails. With no Spring Dinner or July Boat Show to keep us all in touch, we decided to try a couple physically distanced rendezvous. I want to thank Susan Haigh for spearheading our efforts. Our first gathering was in her neighborhood in late July. The Blue Paddle restaurant opened a new venue on Keeler Bay in South Hero. It is boat-friendly and outdoors. We launched at Apple Island and after a spin around a few islands, and dodging a few storms, about a dozen members enjoyed a late lunch on the outdoor porch. We also had a small group meet at the Red Mill at Basin Harbor at the end of August.

Continued—next column

Four members arrived by boat having traveled down the lake from Mallett's Bay and another boat stopped as they were cruising by. Several other members arrived by car and enjoyed a friendly lunch together on a gray summer day.

Looking to the Fall, as you might expect, our Annual Meeting at Basin Harbor will not be happening due to the Covid-19 guidelines. Instead, we will work on setting up a Zoom or Go to Meeting that all members are welcome to attend. More details will follow. One major change I'd like to mention is that our hosting of the ACBS Annual Meeting and Show, which originally was scheduled for Fall 2021, has been moved to 2022. Bill Truex will update everyone on this rescheduling during the Zoom Meeting. We also will be cancelling our Christmas gathering at the St. John's Club as it simply isn't safe to gather indoors quite yet.

Because September can have fantastic boating weather, there's a possibility we'll arrange another rendezvous. If that happens, we'll send an invitation out through the ACBS portal so watch your email!

Stay safe, Steve

Small Boat Exchange

2649 Shelburne Road

Shelburne, VT 05482

802 985-5222

smallboatvt.com



• Day Sailers

• Classic Seaworthy Powercraft

Darling's Boatworks



802-425-2004

Restoration • Repairing • Refinishing • Transport

~ • ~

George Darling
P.O. Box 32, Ferry Road
Charlotte, VT 05445
gdarling@gmavt.net

Editor's Note ~

Growler launched late this year and I was late getting out of Shelburne Bay. I had heard fellow enthusiasts commenting on the lack of Canadian boats on the lake due to COVID-19. In spite of those comments, I was taken aback by the number of boats on the lake. A Saturday's afternoon traffic resembled a Tuesday's morning traffic.

My first trip through Burlington Harbor also impressed with the additional dockage now available where the LCT terminal used to be.

Another change this year is *Miss Magic* remains on the hard at Point Bay this summer. That's the bad news. The good news is *Miss Magic's* skipper managed to survive the winter in spite of health challenges.



A Full Service Marina

802 425-2431

www.pointbaymarina.com

email: pbm@gmavt.net

Chronicles of the Ninnyfish

Susan Haigh

My family's boat, the Ninnyfish, is a 13'6" Lyman Leader ordered in 1949 and delivered to the (then) family of four in Dallas, Texas in the Spring of 1950. The boat has been with us since then, traveled all over the US and passed down 3 times, each of us adding to her adventures. I am the last and youngest kid to inherit the boat and had it restored in 2016 by Snake Mountain Boatworks. Here is one of the stories of her past from my oldest brother Sam.



It was the summer of 1953, I was 8, Dad was 34 . . . We lived in Piedmont, California—a suburb of Oakland. We had trailered the *Ninnyfish* from Dallas, Texas 18 months earlier.

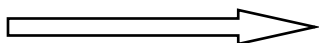
We loaded the *Ninnyfish* with food and beverage and extra fuel and launched in the morning in Alameda, with the plan to go across the bay and up the Sacramento River to Sacramento. We started to have engine problems just after we went under the Bay Bridge – the motor wasn't getting fuel. Dad took the cover off of the Johnson 25 and began taking off fuel lines and blowing them out etc., while we bobbed around in the bay in our little 13.5' Lyman Leader.

The tide was ripping out and we drifted out past Alcatraz and under the Golden Gate Bridge heading out to sea, raging current and big waves, when Dad finally got the engine to start. But it would only

go at slightly above idle speed, and only then if constant pressure was applied to the fuel line with the thumb pump on the fuel tank. So, Dad had me pump the fuel tank in the back of the boat while he drove us back under the Golden Gate and into the bay. But my eight year old thumb couldn't keep up, so we switched places while he pumped and I drove. This is how we went through San Francisco Bay and into San Pablo Bay doing about 4 knots . . . it took hours. Then the pea soup fog set in, and it started getting dark as we entered Suisun Bay. We couldn't see more than 15 feet, I'm at the wheel trying to stay on the compass course Dad gave me, while he cursed and pumped on the fuel tank.

Turns out Suisun Bay was a Navy ship graveyard with over 2,000 mothballed ships at anchor . . . we discovered this when every 5 minutes or so a huge side of a ship would loom out of the fog in front of us . . . scared the crap out of me . . . I would swerve the *Ninnyfish* away, the ship would disappear, and a few minutes later, the next ship would jump out of the fog in front of us. This

Next column



continued page 4

Ninnyfish ~ continued

seemed to go on forever, we were soaking wet from the fog and it was getting quite dark all the while, Dad was cursing and pumping and yelling at me. Finally, after an hour or so bumping up against ships, we found the channel and went up the river a few miles until we found a dock where we could land . . . it was now about 10 pm . . . Dad got to a phone and called Mom to come rescue us with the trailer.

It took a while to find a ramp, then they got the *Ninnyfish* on the trailer, and we headed back toward Piedmont at around 1 am. We went less than 5 miles and got a flat on the trailer. We had to leave *Ninnyfish* on the side of the road and drive home without her.

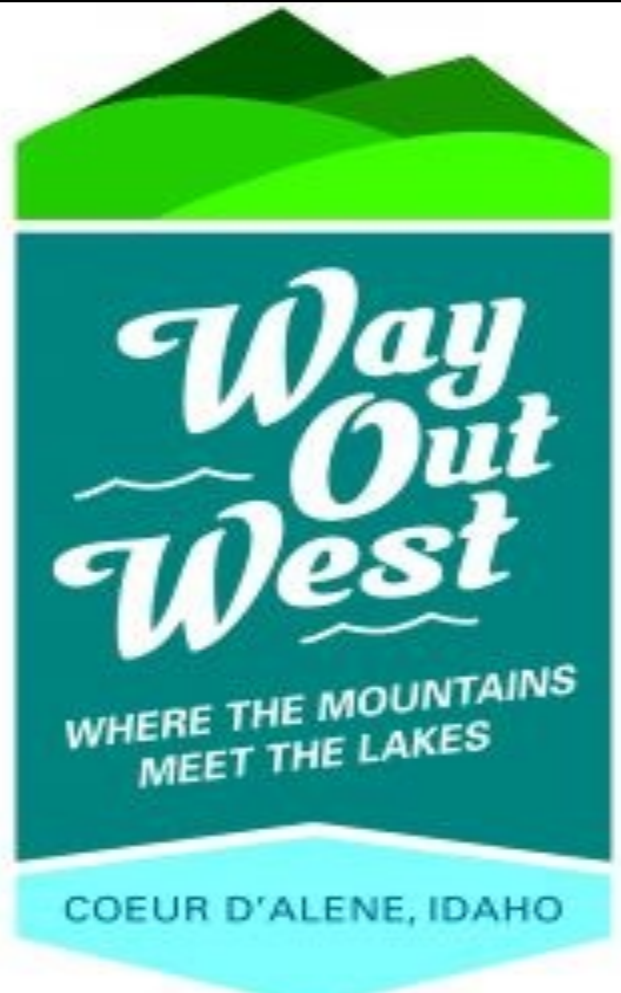
Next day Dad got another tire and went back and retrieved the *Ninnyfish*. I stayed home. That was the last attempt to go up the Sacramento River. 🍷



Champlain Yacht Services
Mobile Marine

Michael Sinclair

821 Ferry Road Charlotte, VT 05445



*Way
Out
West*

WHERE THE MOUNTAINS
MEET THE LAKES

COEUR D'ALENE, IDAHO

Matt & Susie's

Huber Johnson Adventures

reprinted from LCACBS website

We live a few minutes away from the New York side of Lake Champlain, big water. Summer is the work season for us, so late afternoon - evening getaways on the lake with food and drink, often with friends, are our main form of boating. There's nothing like being out on the lake when the sun goes down over the Adirondack peaks to the west and the full moon comes up over the Green Mountains in Vermont to the east. Sea skiffs are pretty popular on these large open waters. Our first was a 1939 Hubert Johnson 24' which had been stored in a shed at Velez Marine in Port Henry, NY for 25 years. It belonged to one of the owners, Juan Velez, who had bought it in 1972 but never put it in the water. Plenty dirty but in sound condition and big enough to carry a few people and a couple of deck chairs.

We'd never heard of Hubert Johnson but were told they were fine boats. Hubert started his boat shop at the north end of Barnegat Bay in Bay Head, New Jersey in 1912, next door to his father Morton's shop, became well known for sailboats, and began building sea skiffs in 1936, billing them as *America's Most Outstanding Sea Skiff*. After a cosmetic restoration and replacement engine we enjoyed 'Zephyr' for the next ten years before selling her to a very appreciative gentleman originally from the Bay Head area who had seen a boat like it at the Bay Head Yacht Club as a young man and wanted one ever since.

Our next Johnson was a 1964 24' Blackjack, a type designed in 1958 by naval architect David Martin, Mr. Johnson having passed away in 1949. The Blackjacks are beamier than the earlier Johnson skiffs, nice because there's more room for socializing. The hulls were built to the design but the topsides and interiors came in various forms. We knew the boat, now called *The Admiral*, needed some work but didn't realize how much until it sank at the dock, although fortunately not totally submerged.

Turned out pretty much all the ribs and planks were rotted at the waterline, concealed by stringers. Painstaking reconstruction has been seasonally ongoing in an unheated part of my brother in law's Canton NY boat shop (Everett Boat Works) for a few years.



It may get in the water this year.

Rather than sistering the ribs, they are cutting out the rotted portions at the turn of the bilge, making scarf joints on the ends, and using a jig to prepare steam bent scarfed inserts to match, which are then epoxied and riveted in place. They were even able to find rivets identical to those used in building the boat.

With this lengthy reconstruction ongoing, what to do about a boat? We found a 1957 24' Johnson, *Tydamar II*, at Antique Boat America, where it had been languishing for a few years with a decreasing price tag, which was finally down in our neighborhood.

The boat was in show condition, ready to go, with a custom trailer. However the original engine, a Chrysler Hemi, was not so ready, we discovered. It's a low hour engine but hadn't been run in about eight years. First time away from the dock an exhaust hose blew within a hundred yards and that was just the beginning of replacing and repairing externals, resulting in a mostly lost first summer. Recent years have been better and it has regularly won awards at the Lake Champlain shows. The riveted cedar over oak lapstrake hull is in remarkable condition – very tight, hardly any leakage, never been caulked. But the boat is an example of the older, narrower Johnson designs, no room for deck chairs, tight for socializing.

Last summer an acquaintance in Bay Head called to say he's aging out of boating, doesn't want to pay New Jersey winter storage again, and would we like to buy his '64 Blackjack? Really good condition he said, in the water, teak decks, depth finder, newly rebuilt 240 horsepower Chrysler V8, has spent the last twenty plus summers in a covered boat shed right across from the old Johnson shop. Oh no, we said, not another one. But he prevailed and we towed *The It* home on *Tydamar's* trailer in late August.

Our first real use was at last fall's Alexandria Bay
Continued on page 6

Darling's Boatworks



802-425-2004

Restoration • Repairing • Refinishing • Transport

~ • ~

George Darling
P.O. Box 32, Ferry Road
Charlotte, VT 05445
gdarling@gmavt.net



**Proud Sponsor of
the 2022 ACBS Annual
Meeting
and Boat Show to be
held in
Burlington, Vermont**

***13 Branches in Chittenden
and Washington County***

Matt & Susie ~ Continued from page 4

Our first real use was at last fall's Alexandria Bay ACBS Convention, where we had a great time hauling people around and also got an experience of these boats' seakeeping qualities. Heading down the river from Clayton after dark with half a dozen people aboard, in the narrow part just below the bridge, we approached an upbound freighter. It was pushing a huge bow wave. Concentrating on staying between the freighter and the rocky shore, I didn't see it coming and ran straight into the wave, shocking our chatty crew into silence. But the boat rode it well with no water over the bow.

The It got the bottom redone in the boat shed at the back of our barn this spring – scraping off layers of old paint, some loose screw replacement, caulking and five coats of paint – one epoxy sealer, two primer, two bottom paint. Thirty pounds of scraped off paint, maybe four hundred linear feet of caulking.





We save wood boats!

Our preservation work meets the highest standards of craftsmanship.

Ask about our Fixed-Price True 5200 No-Soak Bottom



1938 Chris-Craft 19' Custom Runabout, Flyin' By,
won Best of Show 2017 LCACBS Classic Boat Show

Cell: 802.734.1019

**Online: SnakeMountainBoatworks.com &
[Youtube.com/snakemtboatworks](https://www.youtube.com/snakemtboatworks)**

Shop: 7080 Weybridge Rd, Weybridge, VT 05753

Email: Michael@SnakeMountainBoatworks.com