

# The Ash Breeze

Journal of the Traditional Small Craft Association

## MENGER MESSABOUT #1

### *IN THIS ISSUE*

**Building a Kingston Lobster Boat**

**North Country Messabout**

**Rising Tide Youth Boat Building**



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The  
Ash  
Breeze

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## Volume 44, Number 2

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The Traditional Small Craft Association, Inc., is a nonprofit, tax-exempt educational organization that works to preserve and continue the living traditions, skills, lore, and legends surrounding working and pleasure watercraft with origins that predate the marine gasoline engine. We encourage the design, construction, and use of these boats, and we embrace contemporary variants and adaptations of traditional designs.

TSCA is an enjoyable yet practical link among users, designers, builders, restorers, historians, government, and maritime institutions.

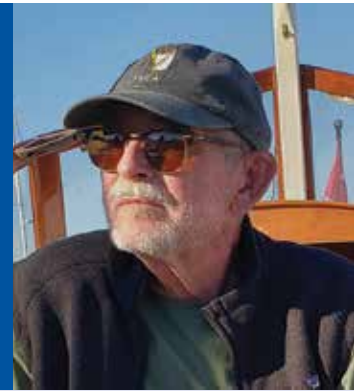
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*TAB Layout Design: Karen Bowen*

*Cover: Figgy, a Menger 19 Catboat sailed by Chris Farr. Image courtesy Don Dill.*

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*Michael Jones*



Summer is here, and for the TSCA that means beginning our new year with new council members. We want to thank Walter Baron, Todd Bloch, and Douglas Oeller for their years of service on the board. By the time you read this we will have three new members of the TSCA council.

Over the past year we have been working on ways to introduce the TSCA to a wider audience by supporting events at festivals such as the family boatbuilding at Port of Toledo's Wooden Boat Show. You will also find us at the Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival next to the registration booth where we are joining the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum to support that event. We look to our chapters and members at large to help increase our exposure and introduce the TSCA to a larger audience.

The council is also initiating a program to work with builders, designers, and suppliers of boat building kits for the TSCA to supply a free one-year digital membership to the TSCA for their clients. The Traditional Small Craft Association can promote the virtues and values of small craft, but it is essential that we have designers, builders, and suppliers to make it possible for people to learn the skills and benefits of building and enjoying "simply messing about in boats."

Through our John Gardner Grants program there are several active projects being supported: youth-oriented programs at San Francisco Maritime Museum, the Cleveland Amateur Boatbuilding and Boating Society, and The Sound School/New Haven Harbor Foundation. We're also supporting the documentation of the building of a traditional Banks Dory with Milford Buchanon at the Shelburne Dory Shop, and The Low Country Maritime Society's adult boatbuilding program. Look for reports on these projects in a future *Ash Breeze*. (Donations to the John Gardner fund can be made at <https://tsca.net/john-gardner-fund/>.)

Thank you for your continued support, and we all hope you are finding time to enjoy being on the water.

Michael Jones  
President TSCA





# BUFFALO MARITIME CENTER CHAPTER MESSABOUT

## AT GLENWOOD LAKE IN THE NORTH COUNTRY

*By Roger Allan*

After several fits and starts, Greg Gruntisch, President of the Buffalo Maritime Center (BMC) Chapter of TSCA, finally cajoled a bunch of chapter members to messabout on the Glenwood Lake in Medina, New York.

October 23rd is a very late date to expect boatable temperatures in the short, “on the water” season up this far in the US. Here, boats are usually hauled out and snugged down weeks before this. After all, Lake Ontario is barely a dozen miles north of Medina, and the true north, Canada, is just on the other side of that big lake. But, even though President Greg has not been the best of Weather Wizards for previously scheduled messabouts, and despite a week of iffy weather forecasts for the scheduled day, he pulled a beautiful blue sky with mild temps out of his hat for this one. The

weather was perfect, with just enough breeze to be called a zephyr.

Medina is one of the small Upstate New York towns that grew up along the Erie Canal after 1824. East and west of it are other canal towns, with names that seem out of place to anyone who lives on the coast. If Lockport, Middleport, Gasport, and Eagle Harbor are Google mapped, they appear to be farm communities pretty far away from navigable water—unless you zoom in close enough to read street names. Only then is the narrow ribbon of the canal visible, and it can be seen to tie these towns together just as it first did when the canal opened back then.

In the heydays of the canal, thousands of big line boats and freight boats hauled into wharves and along bulkheads in each

---

*Top: Tina in the kayak and John in the Caledonia Yawl.*



of these port towns to pick up cargoes of wheat, lumber, and salt, among countless tons of other bulk goods. People and manufactured goods were also offloaded, or loaded, for a new and faraway destination with the same hustle and bustle as could be found at any small port on salt water.

Medina's specialty was "Medina" sandstone. Used as a primary building material along and for the canal, the reddish-brown stone is readily quarried out from the escarpment that is the great stone ridge over which the famous Niagara must fall. Medina sandstone is so natural as a building material that when you drive past a place where road builders have cut through a ridge of it for the right-of-way, the remaining deposit of stone looks like a man-made wall. Thousands of tons were shipped out along the canal each season, and the town flourished until canal commercial traffic began a serious decline in the early decades of the last century.

The 93-acre Glenwood Lake curls off from the center of town in a northerly direction out into farmlands and vineyards that surround the town. It was created in 1925 during the Centennial of the canal by damming Oak Orchard Creek for a small hydroelectric generating plant.

Making electricity wasn't the creek's first important role in the early development of Medina. One of the first proposals for the Erie Canal suggested that enough water from Lake Erie, at an elevation of 570 feet above sea level, would be diverted from its natural course down the Niagara River into "Clinton's Ditch" (what the earliest version of the canal was unaffectionately called by detractors). The lake water

would "gently" flow eastward, dropping downhill by over five hundred feet for nearly 500 miles, carrying canal boats across the entire State to gush out into the Hudson River at Waterford. Recreationally it would have been an exciting ride but geographically and hydrologically it would be nearly impossible to do. The brilliant amateur canal engineers—who overcame the other astounding number of difficulties met while hand-digging a canal through what was still a land of virgin forests, swamps, and porous terminal moraine—came up with a better solution for watering the canal. Every creek within a reasonable distance of the new canal's course would be drafted into service as a tributary to the local stretch of the canal. Oak Orchard Creek was recruited, and still, after nearly two hundred years, provides a dependable flow of water, tapped off to fill the canal just before it crashes over Medina Falls to supply Glenwood Lake. Despite all of that hard work, there are other paddle-able stretches north and south of Medina where the creek in its original form passes through some very lovely pastoral parts of western New York.

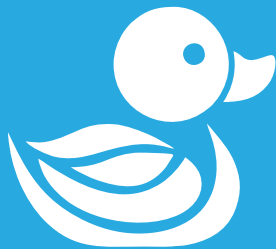
Six boats with nine crew members showed up for the 11:00 a.m. rendezvous at the lake's excellent ramp and kayak launch. President Greg sailed with wife Naomi in their rebuilt Beetle Cat. John Montague brought his Ian Oughtred designed Caledonia Yawl. Buffalo Maritime Center's Director, Brian Trzeciak, and our new Educator, Chelsea Moore, showed up in a tandem canoe. A guest of theirs, Marla Segol, showed up in her own kayak as well.

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*Chelsea shows Tina a turtle at Glenwood Lake.*

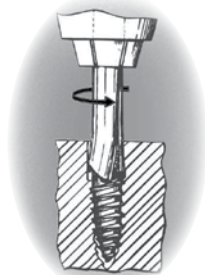


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*Beetle meets Caledonia Yawl on Glenwood Lake.*

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My wife, Tina, and I brought kayaks that we'd recently picked up for a steal at a house sale. Marla "oooh-ed" over my boat, which is some kind of skinny carbon fibre thing that'll keep moving for many yards with a single slice of the featherlight paddle that came with it. As I write this, our two kayaks are hanging from the floor joists in the root cellar of our old farmhouse down in the Southern Tier, south of Buffalo. There is a fair drift of snow blocking the hillside access door—or else I'd go try to find out who produced our boats—but it's below 27 degrees out, and there's a layer of ice on top of the snow, so I won't.

In any case, Marla turned out to be an aficionado of the type, and a masterful paddler—which I am not preferring to sailboats instead—and she thought Tina's boat was generally a better all-around boat: more comfortable, though not as fast. I asked Tina if she wanted to trade, as I like fast women, but she said no. I was OK with that, too, as I like comfortable women just as much.

Messabouts truly reflect the kind of individuality found amongst small boat builders and users. Some of us like to sail in company. Some hit the water with a splash and head out as if there is a race to be won. Tina and I began our exploration in company and paddled around John and Greg and Naomi. The two sailboats initially mostly drifted around until a pretty little breeze settled in and then both worked their way out towards the middle of the lake. The canoe and other rocketeer kayak had disappeared beyond a small point of land—a cape, as it were—that marked the entrance to the southern end of the lake.

In any case, after hanging around with the sailboats, and appreciating how pretty the wooded shores of the lake were,

I followed Tina down into the narrow part of the lake to see where the other half of the fleet had disappeared to. After a short lazy paddle for me, we met the canoe crew and kayaker coming back at us.

We learned that Brian and Chelsea in the tandem canoe had taken advantage of the outing to keep in practice for the next year's 90-mile Adirondack Classic Canoe Race. The Canoe Classic, locally called the 90-Miler, is an Adirondack tradition going back over three decades. Chelsea organized a BMC crew to enter BMC's war canoe in the three-day event in early September, and the two of them were still recovering. The course covers the first 90 miles of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail from Old Forge, New York, to Saranac Lake, New York. The BMC crew included some ringers from our Scajaquada Canoe Club, who are fierce paddlers and even more fearsome drinkers, and they came in a respectable second place in their class (of two). Don't laugh until you've done 90 miles of steady paddling, because that's a pretty fearsome amount of effort right there!

Back on the lake, with the sailboats trailing us, I followed Tina down to the headwaters where the Oak Orchard Creek cascades over Medina Falls to fill the lake. The fall rushes and crashes over a ridge of Medina sandstone, and though small by Niagara standards, it makes a deeply satisfying roar when you sit in a small boat near enough to be enveloped by its misty breath. The ridge of sandstone it has cut through continues to the east a little before it passes under and helps carry the canal "lense," as the channel of the canal is called.

The falls, and the wall that contains the canal near it, brook no passage by boat beyond them without a near vertical climb,




so I followed Tina as we headed back towards the rest of the lake. Fall colors were everywhere and rich. Turtles, an Osprey, a Blue Heron, and Kingfishers were all observed.

The sailboats had run into shallow water about halfway between the Cape and the Falls and opted to circumnavigate the rest of the lake instead, before heading back to the ramp. I beat Tina to the kayak haul-out, and she was the last boat hauled out for the day.

In the usual post-messabout palaver in the parking lot, while loading up, we all kept asking Greg why he hadn't dragged us out for other such perfect occasions. The BMC Staff, in particular, kept repeating over and over that getting people out on the water like that was as important as the many other watercraft-related educational programs we do, so why hadn't more of this kind of casual, almost impromptu event been worked out? Even now in February they're still talking about how great it was, so I'm guessing Greg will get heard as soon as winter begins to ease its grip up here and he starts asking for us to do another messabout soon. There are literally hundreds of such lovely lakes and creeks to be explored up here in the North Country.



*Right Top: Greg and Naomi in the Beetle.  
Right Bottom: The Fleet on Glenwood Lake.*



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We enjoyed TSCA member Ron Breault's *Ash Breeze* story on the building of his lapstrake tender, *Teer*.

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# BUILDING THE KINGSTON LOBSTER BOAT—IN KINGSTON!

*By Ben Souther*

The Kingston Lobster Boat, an iconic symbol of New England's fishing heritage, was originally designed and built in the mid-1800s in Kingston, Massachusetts, on the banks of the Jones River, which feeds into Kingston Bay, Plymouth Bay, and then Cape Cod Bay.

Designed to be sailed or rowed, the Kingston Lobster Boat, originally used for both fishing and lobstering, became a popular racing craft as boat builders and America's Cup champions Edward Ransom and Nathaniel Watson, both working in shops on the Jones River, tweaked and built on the designs of one another.

The Mass Bay Maritime Artisans are proud to be underway building the first Kingston Lobster Boat on the Jones River since the early 1900s. This small team has a diverse background ranging from seasoned shipwrights, boat builders, and carpenters to a commercial oyster farmer, a software developer (yours truly), a science teacher, and a retired pediatrician. It is being built in the Shiverik boat shop in the Jones River Ecology Center, one of the oldest continually running boat shops in the United States of America.

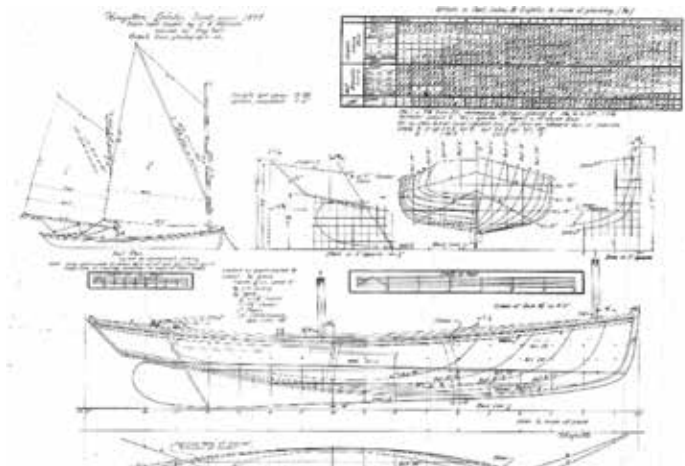
The project started in 2017 with the purchase of a set of plans from the Smithsonian. They were drawn by Howard Chappell, who lifted them from a half-model by Edward R. Ransom circa 1885. They contained little more than line drawings, sparse notes, and a table of offsets.

The oak and cedar logs were milled less than a mile from the boat shop, in a wooded area on the bank of the Jones River. The lofting, the building of the molds, and the attachment of the ribbands came shortly after.



All and all, things seemed to be moving at a pretty good clip for a group that only meets for a few hours once a week. Then the Covid-19 epidemic hit, and like most projects, this one came to a grinding halt for a couple years. Thankfully we all made it through, and the project is back in full swing.

The hull was created upside down on molds fastened to the floor. The frame and keel are made of white oak, while the carvel planking is made of cedar. Interesting note: the stem is made from a piece of live oak which was purchased by us after being excavated, out of the dirt, from under a building in the Charlestown Naval Yard, home to the USS *Constitution*. Nobody knows how old the oak is, but the building was over 100 years old when it was torn down.



The whisky plank (last plank on the hull) was fastened in early January, and on April 6th the hull was removed from the mold for the first time. These two events, for boat builders, are huge milestones.

When completed, the boat will have an overall length of 17'8" and have a 4'11" beam. It will have two masts carrying a loose footed spritsail main and a lace footed mizzen sail.



As much as possible the boat will be made using traditional methods and materials. The boat was lofted on the floor of the shop and planks were steam bent into place. However, to keep the project moving forward, and the budget within



reason, some compromises will need to be made. For instance, due to the high cost of materials, the original fittings are being fabricated from stainless steel with the hope of eventually casting their replacements in bronze.

The boat will be moored next to *Merrywing*, an 85-year-old Duxbury Duck, which was restored by the Mass Bay Maritime Artisans, in Kingston Harbor, at the mouth of the

Jones River, and will be used to teach boat maintenance and sailing to the community.

To stay up-to-date, you can find us on the web at [jonesriver.org](http://jonesriver.org) or follow us on Instagram at [@jonesriverecology](https://www.instagram.com/jonesriverecology).

If you find yourself in the area, stop by and say "Hi." We meet to work on the boat on Wednesdays from 5 to 8 p.m.

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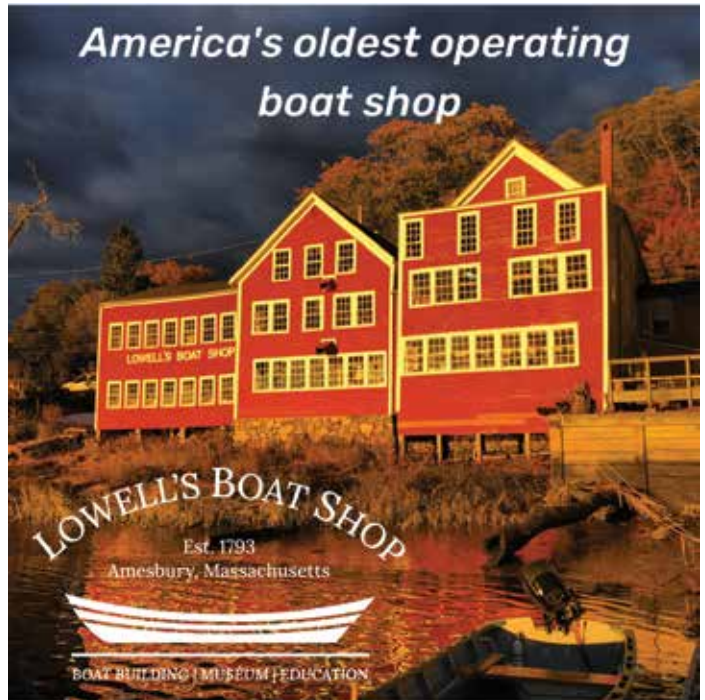
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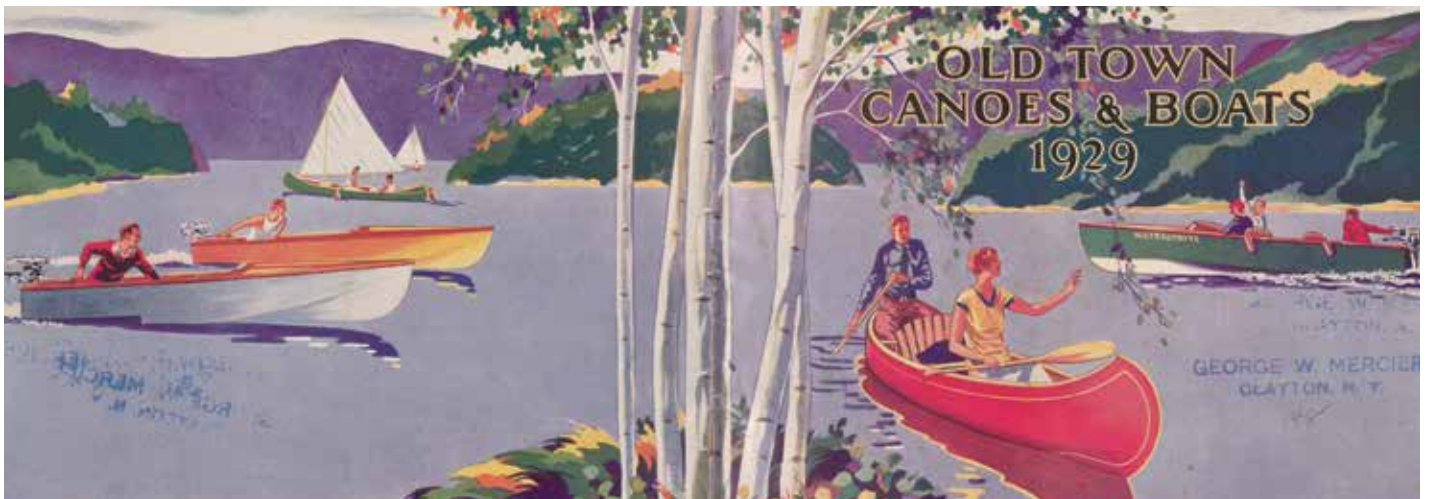
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# OLD TOWN CANOE OVER A CENTURY OF HISTORY AND INNOVATION

*By Matthew Macvittie—Antique Boat Museum's Curator/Collections Manager*

The year 2023 marks the 125th anniversary of one of the most well-recognized and revered small craft manufacturers of all time. Old Town Canoe is a truly American company still in business to this day. The company focuses on producing fine watercraft and leading the industry in innovation and modernization while still holding to the traditions that have made the company successful for over a century.

Old Town, Maine, was known for its watercraft even before loggers plied the Penobscot River with their wooden bateaux in the 1800s. The Old Town Canoe Company traces its origins to 1898, when it was formed to make a different type of boat than the bateaux. Their wood-and-canvas canoe evolved from the birch bark canoes of the local Penobscot people—a connection Old Town Canoe would feature in its advertising and celebrate to this day.

Originally called the Indian Old Town Canoe Company, the new enterprise was backed by members of the entrepreneurial Gray family. The Gray family had ventures in logging and hardware and owned a wildly successful salve for horses called Bickmore's Gall which would also endure for more than 100 years.

The first few canoes were made behind the Grays's hardware store, but within a few months, fabrication moved into two floors of an industrial building. High demand prompted

several other moves to increasingly larger facilities. Old Town built about 250 canoes in its first year. The company aimed for a wide market from the beginning by advertising in recreation publications as well as producing an annual catalog. According to Susan Audette's thorough history of the company, the distribution network for the horse salve was easily tapped for canoe sales. Audette noted that ready access to rail service was another factor in the firm's success.

The company was incorporated as Robertson & Old Town Canoe Company in 1902, and in 1905 sales reached about \$25,000. The company was soon making between 200 and 400 canoes per month. The product line was expanded to include shorter (15-foot) and longer (34-foot) models. The latter were called "War Canoes" and were designed for several people. By 1908, Old Town was also selling motorized models.

While the logging industry dwindled, New Englanders took to the woods—and the water—by the thousands. Old Town was expected to sell 6,000 canoes in 1914, before World War I intervened. As men went to war, noted Audette, the company tailored advertising to the women who started working and earning money. The company also supplied the military with paddles. A Square Stern model was introduced in 1917 specifically to accommodate new outboard motors. In 1923, Old Town became the first distributor for the Johnson Motor Company.

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**Top:** *This 1929 Old Town Canoe Catalogue from the Museum's Marion Clayton Link Archives was the inspiration for the 59th Annual Antique Boat Show's poster.*



Sales exceeded \$500,000 in 1927. Sam Gray became company president following his father's death in 1928. Sam Gray was described by Audette as a tireless and creative marketer. He began the enduring practice of giving away four-foot canoe replicas as promotional gifts to dealers who ordered complete railcars of 40 canoes. Those who ordered two railcars had the option of an eight-foot version. These models were highly prized and credited with boosting sales considerably.

In 1931, Old Town was able to produce about 1,600 canoes, in spite of the Great Depression. Its products were available in more than 50 different colorful designs in the 1930s.

The postwar years saw several different models introduced to encourage a newly affluent society to get out on the water. There was an emphasis on speed, noted Audette, with more

powerful outboard motors available. Old Town's all-wood motorboats were among its strongest sellers in the 1950s and 1960s. Old Town began working with fiberglass in the mid-1960s after acquiring the talents of pioneering designer Walter King, who helped develop the company's first large motorboat, the 24-foot Atlantis. Fiberglass and other new materials helped Old Town regain its lead against aluminum craft.

In the 1970s, Sam Johnson of S. C. Johnson wax fame was building a portfolio of outdoor-related companies and acquired Old Town Canoe in December 1974. The substantial corporate backing allowed the company to modernize its back-office functions, marketing, and production methods. At the same time, there remained a place for traditional wood-and-canvas canoe construction.

**Below Top:** Color options and index of models available in 1929. From the 1929 Old Town Canoe Catalogue in the Museum's Marion Clayton Link Archives. **Below Bottom:** Late 1960s catalogue spread promoting the Breakout color design.

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**COLOR DESIGNS**

In these nine sections of "OLD TOWN CANOES" is shown a wide range of designs for the whole length of the canoe. In ordering please specify the design number and price as indicated. These designs are susceptible of various color schemes, and can be executed in any combination of colors you may desire. Price of design No. 23 includes mahogany rub rail (\$5.00) which separate the colors. Assortment of these designs in stock but suggest allow ten days.

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# BREAKOUT

There's a spiky red blazoned Indian house in our bow. We're out like a corker, taller and more like a motor-cycle. We bump, bobble and occasionally take long trips to nowhere. You can tell our new Indian by his name, but not by the way he uses it. It swings across the white caps, yet will hold in a ripping brim. Sitters around rocks and landing water barely deep enough to wet a swimmer's back. Dives down the rushing, swelling wall of California surf. It is built like a mouse in a Canadian search for a speedy school of bass-fish in the Florida Keys. It can carry an expedition, but can be carried by one man. An Old Town canoe. A craft that's changing an old-fashioned image on the white water of the La-high River, in the surf of California Beach, cross country down the Rio Grande in the Gulf of Mexico, even at a beach party at Barnegat Light.

But that our modern canoe is built - actually different from the early Old Town Indians first floated on the waters of Northern New England. It's the canoe that has changed, who has not found the canoe looking in his quest for excitement, and who has adapted the sturdy craft to his sense of speed, maneuvering and power - man are go-lighters. Wherever the action is, few watercraft of comparable size perform as well as a canoe. None are as versatile. None are as challenging. Canoeing is breaking out.

The Old Town canoe isn't just any canoe. It's a high-performance, hard-crafted, sure-footed, inspiring watercraft that demands the most meticulous attention to the smallest details of both design and construction. Obviously no one type of sports canoe has all the advantages. Canoes have been built in Old Town for over 80 years, and we're making more models today than ever before. Some are adapted especially for seasonability, some for carrying capacity, some for sail. But all well-built canoes do have several things in common, they're light, responsive to touch and feel sturdy in a broad stretch of water. They're strong and tough, but easily repaired when damaged. Only two types of construction meet these requirements, wood covered with fabric, and molded fiberglass.

Wood is the lightest. Canvas is generally used for strength, but doesn't withstand abuse, extreme light weight is desired. When properly constructed, wood-hull canoes are as durable as fiberglass and repair more easily. Fabric is easily patched or can be completely replaced. Wood is relatively heavier and will heat several people even when filled with water. It is, however, of the heaviest and an excellent material. An excellent cost of paint will keep this canoe in perfect shape.

Fiberglass construction requires maximum care and maintenance, but fiberglass canoes will perform a wealth of reinforced plastics with and gain built-in strength and almost impervious to puncture. It usually allows more rocks and will resist heat but good handling qualities. Fiberglass has insulation qualities, but must have built-in flotation. The FC Model has performance built-in flotation, gasoline, and ducts in and skidals, strength

Aluminum canoes in our opinion do not compare with either wood-canoes or fiberglass. Aluminum has a tendency to bang-up on rocks in white water. Frequent leaks stretch it, having permanent dents in the bottom. Punctures are difficult to repair. It can get perfectly hot or cold and has no particular weight advantage. We do not build aluminum canoes but would be pleased to point you to someone that manufactures them.

Every year more and more people are enjoying the excitement of self-steer canoes. Road racing, sailing, skiing, boating and fishing. And canoeing. There will be a lot of new business in the Old Town this year.

Available in 12' and 14' lengths. See dealers or write for price.



# JOHN GARDNER GRANT

In 1999, TSCA created the John Gardner Grant program to support projects for which sufficient funding would otherwise be unavailable. Eligible projects are those which research, document, preserve, and replicate traditional small craft, associated skills (including their construction and uses), and the skills of those who built and used them. Youth involvement is encouraged.

Proposals for projects ranging from \$200 to \$2,000 are invited for consideration. Grants are awarded competitively and reviewed annually by the John Gardner Memorial Fund Committee of TSCA, typically in May. The source of funding is

the John Gardner Memorial Endowment Fund. Funding availability is determined annually.

Eligible applicants include anyone who can demonstrate serious interest in, and knowledge of, traditional small craft. Affiliation with a museum or academic organization is not required. Projects must have tangible, enduring results that are published, exhibited, or otherwise made available to the interested public. **Projects must be reported in *The Ash Breeze*.**

Program details, applications, and additional information:

[tsca.net/john-gardner-fund/](http://tsca.net/john-gardner-fund/)



*"To preserve, continue, and expand the achievements, vision, and goals of John Gardner by enriching and disseminating our traditional small craft heritage."*

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Old Town began distributing Lettmann and Prijon kayaks in 1979 and stopped selling kayaks under its own brand for a few years. Old Town's Discovery line of canoes was introduced in 1984. These employed a three-layer polyethylene hull developed by Lew Gilman. The strong, affordable, lightweight canoes were popular enough to return Old Town to profitability for the first time in ten years, noted Audette. Old Town became the world's largest producer of canoes, as aluminum canoes fell out of favor. According to Rhode Island's *Providence Journal*, Old Town had more production space at 181,000 square feet than all other canoe makers in the United States combined. At this time, Old Town was also selling kits, complete with wood, for buyers to construct their own canoe at home.

In today's technology-crazed, disposable world, the hallmarks of Old Town Canoe Co.—heritage, innovation, quality, and craftsmanship—stand out. The world's largest and oldest manufacturer of canoes and kayaks, Old Town successfully blends the performance of modern materials and design with the time-honored look and feel of traditional paddle craft.

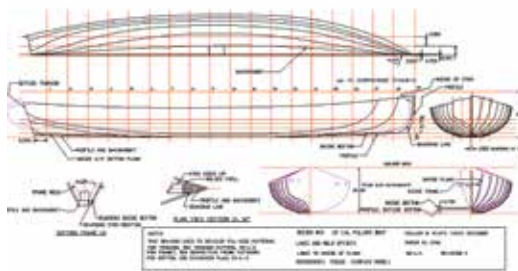
The Museum is delighted to celebrate Old Town Canoe Company alongside Correct Craft and Herreshoff at the 59th Annual Antique Boat Show & Auction. To learn more about the Antique Boat Museum and our 2023 programming, visit [abm.org](http://abm.org).

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# RUNDOWN ON THE BAY

*By Andy Wolfe*

It was the third week of June, last summer, when I received a message from John Fairfield telling me about a horrific accident that happened on Chesapeake Bay five weeks prior. John was alive by the Grace of God, though terribly injured. He wrote, "In a bizarre accident while rowing on May 13 (yep, a Friday the 13th), I was broadsided by a heavy crab boat on plane. Their foredeck was stacked with crab pots, so they couldn't see directly ahead. Result: two palm-sized pieces broke off my pelvis, clavicle broken in two places, massive muscle damage and bruising on my right side, and my boat crushed under theirs."



Reflecting on the accident, John said, "I am very fortunate to have survived. The VCU trauma center in Richmond installed a lot of hardware in my pelvis and collarbone. The prognosis is good for a full recovery, but it's going to take many months—I'm relearning to walk."

John was rowing *LOON*, a 21'5" custom four-oar gig designed by Bill Platt and built by me. We christened and launched *LOON* at the John Gardner Small Craft Workshop, Mystic Seaport, on June 9, 2002. She slipped into the water and instantly became the center of attraction on Australia Beach for the next several days. *LOON* was victorious in races with the Floating-the-Apple gigs and participated in all of the morning rows on the Mystic River.

*LOON* was designed to do many things well, whether

it be cruising, sailing (with her standing lug rig that folded into the floorboards), or just pulling (with one, two, three, or four rowers). John was smitten with the boat and kept her in pristine condition for 20 years. He said, "I loved that boat. Whenever we were at our place down on the bay, I'd be rowing the hour before sunrise, and the hour after

sunset. Often two hours."

When *LOON* was ordered, John was a principal at Rosetta Stone, the language teaching company. I thought of *LOON* as their corporate yacht. It covered some distance cruising under sail and oar far beyond Chesapeake Bay, proving to be a very fast boat, much to the credit of her designer.

Fast forward to the Mid-Atlantic Small Craft festival in 2017. John was there without *LOON*, the first I'd seen in nearly 20 years. He sweet-talked Andre de Bardelaben into letting him row his fixed-seat Skua in the race, and pulled to victory just ahead of my 16-year-old son Connor, rowing in his first adult race.

The dearly departed *LOON* was built by the Rib-Strip method 21'2 $\frac{5}{8}$ " LOA on the lines. A full twenty-two-feet-six-inches length overall by four-feet-seven-inches of beam, and about twenty inches deep when she came off the molds. She was cedar strip planked over laminated white oak ribs with mahogany thwarts and trim. I've included the lines to memorialize the boat...possibly the finest boat I ever built.





# RISING TIDE CELEBRATES ST. MICHAELS SCOW LAUNCH

*By Eric Detweiler*

With a collective push, a group of middle school students from the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum (CBMM) “Rising Tide” after-school program trundled the St. Michaels sailing scow they’ve spent the spring constructing onto the water for the first time on Monday evening.

The 12-foot wooden boat, dubbed *Pickle* by a consensus vote of the builders, launched into Fogg’s Cove to spirited

cheers from the assembled group of family, friends, and program supporters.

“It’s fun because you get to see all the stuff that you worked on, and then it’s finally done,” said seventh-grader Sofia Mercado, after taking her turn to get a short ride in the boat. “It’s fun to make something and see it turn out well.”

Meeting three days a week, a total of 19 middle school

---

**Top:** *The middle school students in the Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum’s “Rising Tide” after-school program launched their newly constructed St. Michaels sailing scow on Monday evening.*



students logged a combined 630 hours toward the project this spring, following Shipwright Apprentice Megan Mitchell's project plan with support from CBMM education staff and volunteers.

Rising Tide is a free, donor-funded after-school program that has been teaching students in grades 6–9 basic boatbuilding and woodworking skills since 2015. "It's been an incredible experience to see the Rising Tide participants take ownership of this project over the last few months," said CBMM Education Programs Manager Kendall Wallace. "I hope this project will help to reinforce the ideas that anything is possible if you're willing to try, and that patience and commitment can result in something to be incredibly proud of. I'm constantly inspired by the work they've put into this boat, which they can forever point to and say, 'I built that.'"

Beginning in January, the Rising Tide students contributed to nearly every step in the process to bring the boat to life in the program workshop. The project started by studying original plans in CBMM's collection, drafted in 1929 for the Miles River Yacht Club by George Krill, to draw information about the boat's shape and size and making a building plan for the molds to set the vessel's structure.

Once construction commenced, the task list included assisting with milling lumber, scarfing planks, and transferring patterns from the lofting to the building stock. They were involved with the gluing up and shaping of the mast and boom, crafting and installing all of the components, and painting the vessel, as well.

Each day brought new lessons for the students, ranging from wood species selection to proper use of block planes to the fine art of varnishing. One memorable February afternoon

brought a field trip to the newly renovated Norman & Ellen Plummer Center for Museum Collections to examine a sail in the CBMM collection that was originally built for a St. Michael's scow.

The result was *Pickle*, whose bright-white hull and green trim sparkled in the evening sun on Monday. It was the first boat built by the program since launching a pair of Chesapeake crab skiffs, *Mary* and *Susan*, in 2018.

Eighth-grader Mac Hudson said his favorite parts were learning the history of the boat and using a hand plane to shape it, while his brother Oskar, a sixth grader, liked getting to visit CBMM's working shipyard and the teamwork necessary to get the boat completed. "We all worked together," Mac Hudson said. "It's cool that we got to help make it, and now it's an actual boat that we can take on the water."

For Mitchell, the build served as a capstone project of sorts in her final year of CBMM's Shipwright Apprentice Program. She agreed to take on the project in December and quickly found it to be a mix of fun and challenge. "We've learned a lot from the project about what is necessary to complete a project like this with a build philosophy that the kids are helping in a meaningful way," Mitchell said. "That's so important. We want them to be involved. If they're just occasionally rubbing sandpaper on the boat, that's not meaningful and that's not building skills for them." Beyond the chance to teach her craft to the next generation, Mitchell found it meaningful to take a step back in time to complete a classic design with a distinctly local history.

True to its name, the scow is a St. Michael's original, serving as the racing class of the Miles River Yacht Club in the 1920s and '30s. One of the few surviving examples is in CBMM's collection and will be featured in the new watercraft heritage exhibition in the new Welcome Center. This is likely the first one to be built in-town in decades.

Rising Tide will resume in the fall with a new, yet-to-be-determined project to tackle.

---

*The launch event, including an awards presentation and pickle juice toast, was a well-deserved celebration of months of hard work by the students in CBMM's Rising Tide after-school program.*

---



# BUILDING THE BEVIN'S SKIFF

*By Richard Peterson*

“Now, let’s act as a TEAM! Everybody line up along the starboard side and grab the chine! Those forward, bend it inward. Those aft, lower the chine about six inches. Those in the center, twist and fit the chine into the notch between the center frame and the side panel. Now, as those forward guide it toward the stem, those aft raise the chine parallel to the edge of the side panel.” Viola! The spruce chine is installed (hopefully without breaking) on the overturned skiff with the ends fitting snugly against the transom and the stem. We pause to take some pleasure in this empirical sizing method that results in a tight, flush fit along a curved outline.

This is just one session in an ongoing effort to introduce woodworking and boatbuilding skills to 12-year-olds at the Cape Cod Maritime Museum in Hyannis, Massachusetts. The museum began this program back in 2012 using mainly volunteer instruction and assistance. Most are members of the

CCTSCA (TSCA Cape Cod Chapter). Our perennial theme has been the 12-foot Bevin’s Skiff designed by Joe Youcha as part of his extensive Building to Teach program that seeks to incorporate math and spatial thinking in a non-classroom setting, focusing on fun. The skiff is a simple, flat-bottomed design, constructed from marine-grade plywood and lumber yard spruce. Classes typically meet for one 3-hour session per week each spring and fall. Use of hand tools and assembly is emphasized in class. Operations that are even remotely hazardous or require power tools are performed on Thursday nights by experienced, adult volunteers. Occasionally, older, interested recent graduates of the Bevin’s class have been invited to participate as interns on these worknights or during class.

Over the years, 25–30 skiffs have been completed, including a few as demonstrations at fairs or boat shows. These builds

*Below Top: Lofting class.*

*Below Bottom: Preparing the Crosby OB Skiff for priming.*



*Below Top: Preparing to install the keel.*

*Below Bottom: Trimming the frames.*



usually involve rowing skiffs, but a handful of sailing versions have been constructed as well. A 10-foot version has been developed as a readily transportable alternative to the 12-footer. The museum often sells these boats to the public for use as dinghies, etc. But sometimes parents or sponsoring institutions purchase the finished products. A major goal in each class is to provide the students an opportunity to enjoy the fruit of their labors by launching their finished boat from one of Cape Cod's many beaches. When weather and scheduling permit, this is always a joyful and festive occasion for all!

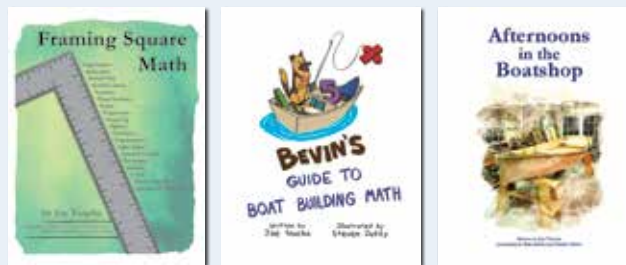
We grown-ups all understand the importance of proper use and interpretation of *measurement*—not only in boatbuilding but in most fields of endeavor—so we devote special care to how to use a tape measure, combination square, and ruler. We sympathetically challenge students to come to grips with the cumbersome Imperial system of measurement by cajoling them into doing arithmetic with fractions as the boat is assembled. Learning to drive a nail, cut a compound bevel, and mount a screw are repeatedly stressed. This exercise in quantitative thinking is reinforced by side projects where students are asked to build, for instance, a simple box holding one cubic foot or explain why an empty bean can floats but a crushed one invariably sinks!

This is an enormously satisfying activity for the adult volunteers. We do as much as we can with the time we have with these young people. There is never time enough. It would be nice, for example, to routinely include simple lofting techniques to transfer critical dimensions to plywood sheets in preparation for cutting. Nevertheless, for whatever we accomplish as mentors, we volunteers owe much to the enthusiastic support from the director and the board of trustees of the Cape Cod Maritime Museum.

*Trimming the stem.*



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# CEDAR KEY SMALL BOAT MEET

*By Michael Jones*

For thirty-eight years small boats have been gathering in Cedar Key on the first full weekend in May to enjoy “simply messing about in boats.” Saturday afternoon, under blue skies and light winds, there were 40 boats on the beach of Atsena Otie Key, and more still out sailing around the other islands. Atsena Otie is one-half mile off Cedar Key and is part of the Cedar Keys National Wildlife Refuge. With a welcoming sand beach for easy landing, it is always filled with an eclectic collection of boats and friendly people.

The event is unstructured, no fees or registration—just come and join the fun. On Saturday night we had dinner at the community center, this year with over 75 people attending. Ed Mauer led a discussion of Chapelle’s work published by

the Smithsonian Institute: *The Migrations of an American Boat Type*, the Sharpie. Ed has made available a reprint of these publications through Barnes and Noble.

Make your plans now to attend the 39th Annual Cedar Key Small Boat Meet, May 3–5, 2024.

The fall Cedar Key gathering is the Florida Gulf Coast Small Boat Meet, November 10–12, 2023.

These events are supported by the Florida Gulf Coast Traditional Small Craft Association (<http://fgctcsa.weebly.com/>) and The West Coast Trailer Sailors Squadron (<https://wctss.net/>).

Contact [fgctcsa@gmail.com](mailto:fgctcsa@gmail.com) for more information.







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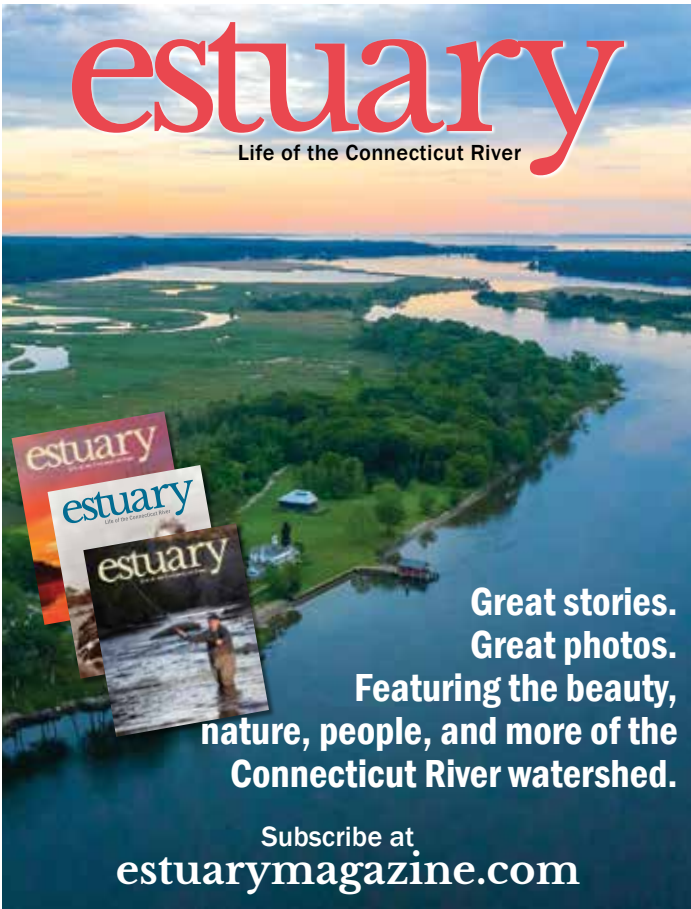
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# PINE LAKE MESSABOUT

*By Pete Mathews*

Sitting here watching it snow seems like the perfect time to reflect on what has become an annual small craft gathering here in the Midwest. On May 20, 2000, several friends at the Pine Lake Chapter got together for a messabout at the Lansing Sailing Club on Lake Lansing, in East Lansing, Michigan (all the same Lansing, Home of Michigan State University [MSU] and the “Spartans”). Since then, the event has been open to any small craft. Homemade, kit built, or manufactured; rowed, paddled, sailed, or pedaled—we’ve had some of each. It is the only event put on by the Pine Lake (the former name of Lake Lansing) Chapter all year.

For years now, the West Michigan Chapter (formerly the Michigan Maritime Museum Chapter) has participated as well. The club is capable of launching by hand off a beach, a walk-in ramp, and two trailer ramps. This is handy as they attract a variety of craft. The event is now usually held the second Saturday in September unless there is a home football game at MSU. Those days are avoided due to traffic issues.

In addition to members of the two chapters, sailing club members, students, and family members frequently show up—just possibly because the Pine Lake Chapter puts on a hot dog roast for the boaters, their families, and children and about anyone else loitering around with an interest in small boats. It’s as much a social event as it is a boating event. The Sailing club doesn’t have a “clubhouse” per se, but a small building with a deck and sanitary facilities serves.

This year the weather cooperated marvelously with sunshine, moderate temperatures, and enough wind to move small boats but not enough to discourage rowers. I brought the Faering that John Hansen and I finished earlier in the year. I got to row this boat solo for the first time, and Jack and George took it for a spin as well. George stayed dry this year. Jack brought the Chapter’s Pooduck Skiff with sail rig, and several members of Pine Lake brought their small craft. Another Pine Lake member, Walt Peebles brought his collection of peddle-power devices with boats to mount them on, so we had people peddling around the lake. Walt is also known for building currachs and coracles, traditional Irish small craft with wood frames and—in this day and age—painted canvas skins rather than the older cowhides (no cows were harmed in the building of these boats).

It’s always fun, sort of like Easter, but rather than a new bonnet, everyone waits to see what new or restored boats are going to show up. It was enough to bring out others on the lake to gaze at this unique assemblage of boats besides the usual squadrons of plastic ski boats that normally inhabit this urban lake. This has always been a one-day affair, so, after sun, fun, and food, the party loads boats and heads for home in time to get them put away in the daylight.



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# MENGER MESSABOUT NO. 01 AT LAKE MURRAY, SC

*By Don Dill*

It all started at last year's Mid-Atlantic Small Craft Festival when Andy Wolfe told me he was moving to Lake Murray in South Carolina. He said it was a great sailing lake, year-round, and intended to plow it up with his newly restored Menger 17 catboat. I said I had another friend with a Menger 19 who lived on the very same lake. I connected them and soon after was hearing about sailing the lake from both of them. Having the good providence to be the current caretaker of a Menger 19 myself, I was soon looking to sail this apparent aquatic marvel in Menger company. A date was set in April, and Chris and Brynley Farr graciously opened their home to me and my beautiful and talented first mate. They also provided an amazing location for what officially became the Menger Messabout No. 01.

We arrived on Friday and launched at Rocky Point, the neighborhood ramp. *Sea Wolfe* was already on the dock. After lunch, Andy and his wife, Rosemary, took a sail with us on our *Finale*. Then Chris's *Tiggy* got splashed and joined the pride.

Saturday morning was partly sunny with light winds, a chance of rain with wind increasing out of the west by afternoon. We set out for Twin Islands in company. We sailed south through the Little Gap then southeast on a broad reach for 3.5 nm with consistent wind. I am not sure why they are called twin islands; they were nothing alike. The larger one was tooth-shaped and had higher red clay cliffs to the west topped with trees, while the smaller one was dog-bone-shaped, low to the water with a pea stone shore and trees.

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**Left:** Menger Men—(left to right) Chris Farr, Bud Buckwell, Andy Wolfe, and (author) Don Dill. **Right:** Waiting for the wind.



We beached on the lee side of the smaller island for lunch. While children explored the island, we enjoyed conversation over the pros and cons of a dodger versus a bimini and our one-cylinder Yanmar diesel engines. All the while the west wind steadily increased and whitecaps appeared and we decided to make the run back to base camp comparing the performance of the afore mentioned Yanmar. The sun set as we enjoyed a great dinner followed by viewing a Bill Menger

infomercial about the superior attributes of the Menger breed. We were already sold.

Sunday opened about the same as Saturday, weather-wise, but with a slower, more relaxed pace. Chris and I were working on de-engineering an overly complicated spritsail rig on an old Redmond Bluegill when Andy arrived and set us straight on a few rigging things. Then we were ready to head out in the cats again, this time west to the hurricane hole. I assumed it was named for a good calm anchorage during storms. We ghosted along with very little wind until we were ready to eat lunch, or head home. As soon as we got to hurricane hole the wind stepped up to a fresh breeze; so we sailed—never stopping at the hole—and enjoyed lunch on our boats.

Back at home base (cat cove?), we were surprised with a visit from another Menger captain which started another round of Menger Cat talk in the cockpit of *Finale*. Then it was time to return the visiting boats to their trailers and wrap up the weekend. By the time we got home we were talking about Menger Messabout No. 02.

**Below:** Farr Crew. **Right:** Cat Cove.



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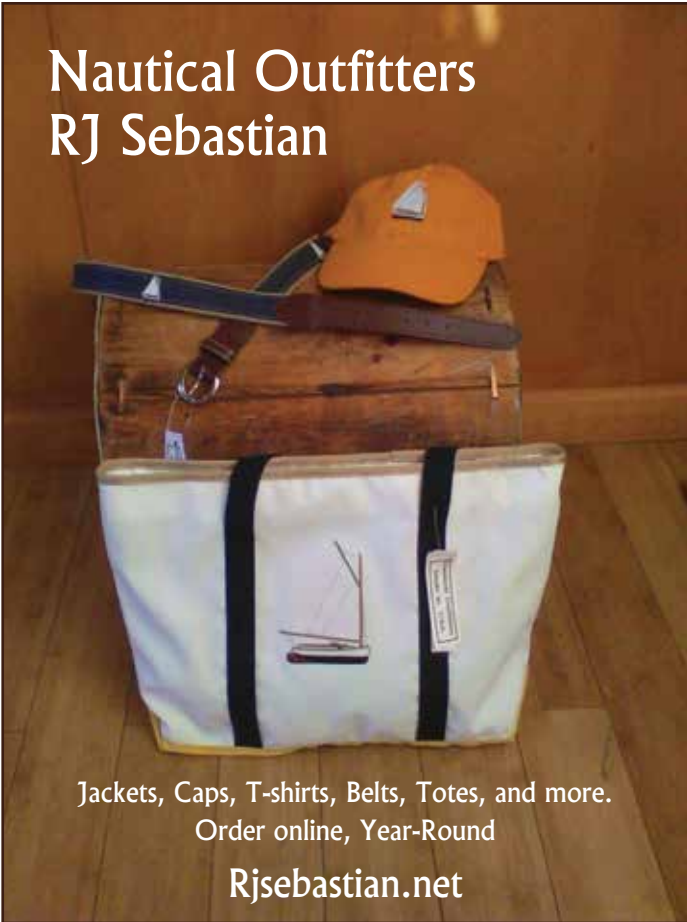
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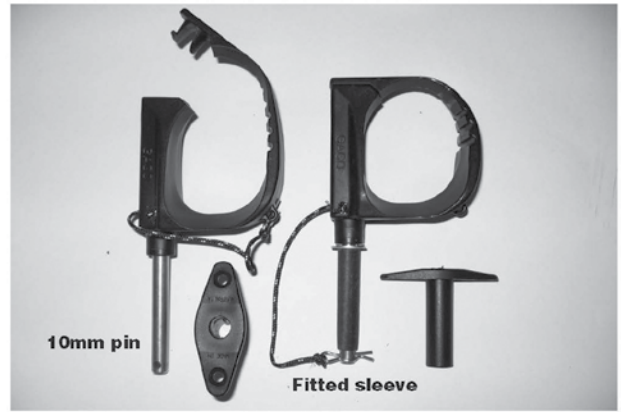
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Fall 2023 Volume 44 Number 3

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