

Boating Tips

Woodies

It was a cold winter day when I got the call to deliver a 65-foot Alaskan (woody) trawler from the Delta to Anderson's Boat Works in Sausalito. With the davit system and the bow pulpit we're looking at 72 feet plus LOA. I arrived before dawn and was greeted with a cup of coffee and a hearty "Welcome aboard skipper" from the potential buyer.

Seems the buyer, a pony-tailed, not-so-old salt, had been up all night getting her ready for the trip. (The boat had not been moved in many years.) He was tired but excited as well. He seemed to be focused on making sure the generator was up and running for the trip. I didn't really care what was going on down below as my job was to be at the helm and navigate this grand old lady safely to the Bay.

We were on our way with a really close about face in a narrow fairway and then straight into the tulle fog. Mind you, we have no electronics like radar or GPS. It was dawn and I could barely see the bow of the boat. I brought her down to "dead slow," sounded the horn every two minutes as required and followed the levee on the starboard side.

This was the safest way to travel and I knew if I hugged the levee I'd eventually come out on the San Joaquin River. The buyer was not familiar with the Delta and a little nervous about me navigating so close to the (rock) levee with his

potential new boat. HA!

The fog cleared just as we entered the San Joaquin River from Potato Slough. The buyer comes up from below and says: "Hey, want to see something that will blow your mind"? I reluctantly agreed and he took the helm. He told me to go down into the forward (peak) head and look down.

He had ripped up the floor to see the wood planks at the waterline on the bow. Water was flooding into the boat through the seams of the wood planks. I mean seriously flooding.

I came rushing back to the wheelhouse only to see him laughing at the expression on my face. It seems that when a wood vessel sits for too long the wood and caulking shrink causing the vessel to leak. The buyer said it was normal in these circumstances.

After a few hours in the water



BY KEVIN O'LEARY

the seams would swell and seal. Now I knew why he wanted the generator up and running for the trip; he had a big pump running to keep up with the (expected) inflow of water.

Everything was going well until we came into the harbor at Anderson's Boat Works. The helm froze, tilting about 10 degrees to starboard. We did not know exactly what was happening at the time because we were focused on bringing this bad boy up a narrow finger about 200 yards long.

There was no way this baby was going to be turned around in this finger, as it was way too narrow. So this was a "one way" trip.

The boat kept veering starboard with a wind on our starboard side.



1957 Mathews 42 ft. Name: *True Grit*. Owner: Gerry Merrit and Jerry Willar.

Basically, we had to “crab” the boat all the way down the finger. The guys on the dock waiting with the lift must have thought we were complete idiots watching us try to maneuver down the finger toward them. We made it safely.

Now, I’ve driven more than my share of woodies in my time, but never really got into the intricacies of owning, restoring or buying one. So I got in touch with some Bay and Delta area experts on the subject.

Tips On Buying A Woody:

From John Di Lillo, Broker, Classic Yachts, 106 Avington Road, Alameda, CA 94502. Office 510/814-0522 or 877/532-0885. Fax 510/748-0739. Cell 510/501-4193. E-mail johnd@myclassicyachts.com.

The guidelines for buying a classic are actually the same as buying any other boat. Buy a boat that you like, that suits your needs, and that you can afford.

The most important thing to consider in the purchase of any vessel is the condition. Some classics are inexpensive to buy, but that’s true of boats of all construction and age. It’s all about condition. Show me a 5-year-old boat that’s been trashed and I’ll show you a boat that isn’t worth much. Show me an 80-year-old boat in Bristol condition and I’ll show you a high-priced boat.

A show winner at Tahoe will cost you from \$200k to \$1m. Check the CYA classifieds and you’ll see that restored classics are just like classic cars. They can be very high priced and collectable. They hold value just like classic cars.

Walk through any marina and look at the boats. Which ones are going down in value? All the new fiberglass boats are going down in value each year. But come across a well-maintained old Stephens,



1963 Tully Craft 42 ft. Name: *Sue Ann*. Owner: Jack Hanna and Sue Reilly.



1952 Mathews 42 ft. Name: *Susan Gayle*. Owner: Rob and Susan Bernhard.



1937 Stephens 36 ft-0 in long. Name: *Ranger*. Owner: Bill and Sue Wells.



1959 Stephens 42 ft. Name: *Sea Witch*. Owner: Larry and Janet Hazlett.

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Chris Craft, etc., in good condition and it's holding its value or going up! A 40-foot 1940's boat that sold new for 18k is now worth more than \$50,000-\$600,000.

It also helps to have a knowledgeable broker and surveyor. Work with people who know how to assist in financing, insurance and maintenance of classic boats. There are some misconceptions about classic yachts. Here are a few tips about classics that buyers should consider:

1. Hull maintenance is the same for all boats. Every boat should be hauled out at least every 18 months. Check zincs, props, trim tabs, thru hulls, pressure wash, sand and paint.

2. Wood rots, metal rusts, and fiberglass delaminates or blisters. In general, salt water preserves wood and fresh water rots wood. Most rot problems on any wooden boat are caused from fresh water coming in from the topside and seeping down to the bulkheads, ribs and hull planks.

3. Some of the most modern boats are still being made of wood and there are more wooden boat manufacturers all the time. Try buying a Rybovich or Riva and see how much you pay. New wooden boats are some of the most expensive on the market. The leading tournament fishing boat is a Maverick and it's made of wood.

4. Wood does take more topside maintenance, but all boats of any kind need attention. You do need to maintain all that beautiful varnished mahogany, but most owners think it's worth it.

Tips On Insuring A Woody:

From Jim Hackworth, Hackworth & Company, 800 Airport Blvd. #422, Burlingame, CA 94010. Voice 650/348-9130. Fax 650/348-9135. Website: www.woodenboatinsurance.com.

The life expectancy of a boat and its machinery depend on how the vessel has been used and maintained. As a vessel gets older, proper maintenance becomes more critical. Older boats are more inclined to experience losses (explosion, fire, sinking) due to antiquated systems, deteriorated structural members, inferior safety features or obsolete malfunctioning machinery.

Because of this, most insurance companies don't like old wooden boats. However, there are a few that will consider covering them if the owner provides the following:

1. Marine Survey – The purpose of a marine survey is to determine not only the soundness of the hull and machinery, but also the suitability of the vessel's intended use and detection of any conditions that need to be corrected. You should hire a surveyor who has experience with wooden boats. He or she should provide you with a "Condition & Valuation" survey that will determine your boat's current market value and its current condition.

2. Owner/Operator Experience – Perhaps the most important factor in the underwriting of a yacht risk is the quality of the owner/operator. A good owner or operator can make a mediocre risk acceptable, while a bad owner or operator can make the best physical risk a poor one. Insurance companies look at the owner's experience with the size and type (power or sail) of wooden boat. They typically like to see at least three years experience and don't like seeing someone jump from a 26-foot

boat to a 50-foot yacht.

3. Prior Loss Experience – Information regarding prior losses is critical from a risk selection and rating perspective. Past losses have a bearing on whether the company will accept or decline risk.

4. Financial Information – Credit scores and Motor Vehicle Reports are sometimes good predictors of future loss potential. This information will permit the company to be reasonably assured that the insured will pay premiums promptly, adequately maintain the vessel, and take reasonable safety and loss prevention measures.

If all of these factors are positive, then you should qualify for insurance coverage.

Our insurance agency has specialized in wooden boat insurance for over 20 years. We have two programs that offer unique features specially designed for small vintage boats (wood or fiberglass) and generous limits and coverage for classic yachts.

Tips On Restoring A Woody:

From Tony Gliedt, Gliedt's Boat Shop, Located at Perry's Marina on the Delta Loop, Isleton, CA. 925/516-8717. E-mail: gliedtsboatshop@hughes.net.

Researching a potential restoration project and any design modifications that may be considered should be the first step in planning a project. The internet and boat clubs are great sources of information to start out. Joining a boat club and educating yourself on the original builders and models that are available to be restored would be a good starting point for people who are new to the idea of restoring an antique boat.

The contacts I have made as a member of the Classic Yacht Association have been priceless in

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researching my own projects, and in collecting the team of people that are now helping me to resurrect the shop and boatyard at Perry's Marina on the Delta Loop.

Recently, I also joined the Antique and Classic Boat Society, which focuses on the preservation of smaller boats, and I am sure the contacts made there will be equally as valuable in the research of future restorations. These organizations can be found online at www.classicyacht.org and <https://www.acbs.org>.

After studying a potential project that appeals to you, and defining the scope of work, the possibilities of phasing the project if funds are

an issue should be considered next. Many of the cost considerations will be based on materials and the methods of construction to be used, and the labor costs associated with the restoration shop.

If you are considering a do-it-yourself project, many yards are eliminating these services due to liability and environmental concerns. The availability of these facilities should be researched in your local area before purchasing a potential project if the labor costs are a factor in the budget and purchase of a project boat.

Once a boat has been selected for a restoration, the management of the restoration process will have great similarity to the project management of a remodeling project in your own home. This comparison may be helpful for those that have been through a home remodeling

project, when comparing shops and crews for their projects.

Each builder you talk with will come to the project with a particular set of skills, a comfort level with certain materials, and maybe an interest in a particular type of project. They are all different with different talents and specialties, so time should be taken to find a shop that will fit your specific project and your personality. Similar attention should also be given to their crews and subcontractors.

Finding the right shop to manage the restoration of any project is as important as finding the right boat to restore. If the builder and the project manager will not be you, try to define the project in the greatest detail possible. This will help you to define the profiles of the right craftsmen required for the project.

Most projects need a variety of

qualified people in several different areas. Time should be taken to assemble the right team for the project to assure quality, productivity and the greatest possibility of staying within the budget and achieving the initial goals that were set out to achieve.

Once a boat and builder have been selected, consider natural places to phase a project's schedule in terms of immediate priorities, practical stopping points in the construction steps that are required, and with constant consideration on the budget and where you can disperse the funds. This can help to spread out costs of the project over a longer period of time, and maybe allow for a few boat rides in between projects.

Ask lots of questions throughout the process, and question all the answers.

Kevo's Tip:

Did you know Perry's Marina on the Mokelumne River on the Delta Loop has reopened? The new owner of the marina and the new owner of the boatyard have been renovating the facilities, and are planning a fall event called the "Delta Wooden Boat Festival" on Saturday, Sept. 26, and Sunday, Sept. 27, as their grand reopening.

Gliedt's Boat Shop, located on the premises of Perry's, is the founder of this first annual event that will be held each fall at the facilities at Perry's Marina. All those interested in these historical marvels are invited to stop in, by boat or car, and check out some really beautifully restored woodies as well as some "diamonds in the rough" that are just starting the process.

For more information on the fun, food, music and refreshments, call Tony Gliedt at 925/516-8717 or visit www.gliedt.com. This year's event will include a variety of professionals from the marine industry that will be onsite to provide more details on the entire process of owning, restoring, maintaining and selling these classic boats.

Be safe & happy boating.

As always feedback is appreciated. I can be reached at 925/890-8428 or kevo@yachtsmanmagazine.com. ☞