

NY-30

NEW YORK THIRTY CLASS

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100 Years Young

by:

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By now you are probably aware that the Nat Herreshoff designed and built New York Thirties are celebrating their 100th Anniversary. The class has such a rich history with so many facets it is impossible to tell all their tales in a single article.

In addition to being well documented, the historical facts surrounding the formation of the New York Thirty Class yachts in 1905 have become somewhat legendary. Given that, I won't tire the reader by recounting the same details, but refer you to the recent article in *WoodenBoat* (May / June 2005) that details the class's early beginnings, designs, and construction particulars.

Through my work in re-forming the class several years ago, what I have learned to be most interesting, beyond the basic design and build cycle, is the individual stories of personal commitments and triumphs made on behalf of these beloved yachts throughout their history. The allure of a NY-30, much like a sirens song, must have powers beyond reason as their owners, consistently through time, have committed brave acts of insanity and emotionalism that transcends common-sense.

But, isn't that what the restoration of an old classic yacht is all about?

These boats, albeit beautiful, were not particularly spectacular or remarkable in their day. A casual glance through a 1904 *Rudder Magazine* can clearly demonstrate this as plans for 40+ ft, gaff-rigged sloops, with square cabin windows, short bow-sprits, and minimal free-board are prevalent from many different designers. If anything, the NY-30's were somewhat modest in that, designing them to the new "Universal Rule", Captain Nat intended them to have moderate free-board and shorter over-hangs than most yachts of the time.

As the stories go, the NY-30's were "rode hard and put away wet" in their early years. Most of them were changing hands on an annual basis for their first 10 or so years. Much like any current class of contemporary yachts, it was also common to see that some owners sold their yachts only to purchase a different one a few years later because they loved the design so much.

Ultimately the Thirties survived when other classed came and went. They continued to participate in NYYC events long after many of them were sold out of the club. By the late 20's and early 1930's, when participation in NYYC events such as the Annual Regatta and Annual Cruise were at their lowest point, it was the NY-30's that continued to race, sometimes making up as much as one-half of the fleet.

It is about this time that we start to see the first personal commitment stories evolve. The class had it's first dedicated soul in Ghirardi Davis, a club member, and owner of his "beloved" Alice (#7) -- ex. Tabasco. (I say "beloved" because there is never a reference to him and his yacht, where this is not specifically pointed out.) He became the class historian and detailed much of what we know in a 25th Anniversary report he created for the NYYC. Long after he stopped sailing her, he continued to participate on the cruise, on the RC Boat, while his Alice was competing with Sherman Hoyt at the helm.

During the 1930's, we learned, that more and more of the yachts began moving out of Long Island Sound and were falling into various hands. One, (Oriole #11) however continued to race hard in club events, for 30+ years, until the owner's untimely death, on the docks in Newport, following a particularly hard fought win. He had raced it continuously for nearly 20 years and vowed never to give up a day on the water in his NY-30.

We also know about H.A. Callahan, owner of Cara-Mia, #14 (then Old Timer) and author of "Race Your Boat Right". His mid-century accounts on racing tactics and sail trim is a venerable bible on how to properly set up a NY-30 as his obvious references and dedication to "Old-timer" could not be disguised by journalistic objectivity.

Through World War II and the 50's, many of the boats finally started to show their age beyond normal upkeep. Rigs began needing replacements and cabins were low and outdated. The boats began to morph. Many were converted to marconi sloops and yawls. Some (including Amorita, NY-9) had the indignity of being glass covered with raised dog-houses installed.

But, through it all, it seems that so many of them had a guardian angel watching over them. It was at this critical stage in many of the yachts lives where the emotions kicked in and sanity left the equation. Many boats were eventually saved and extensive restoration projects were undertaken regardless of fiscal or practical returns. (Thank god for emotions !!) Each boat can be traced to a few of their own saviors.

Amorita had hers, and still does. The Odenbach's in Rochester (who owned her during her early time in the mid-west) have illustrious stories on how the boat became legendary and still holds a famous spot in sailing history in that region. Relatives of this family still approach Amorita for pictures and stories of her more recent life. But, during the 70's she was abandoned in the back of the Cleveland Yacht Club after changing hands many times. Her fate was sealed and she was to be cut-up. For all intents and purposes, her life was over. Yet the siren sang again and a strong pull of emotions took over as the surveyor called in for last rights couldn't let her be destroyed. Against all better judgment, he

personally saved the boat and funded the best restoration he could afford. From there she passed on to another savior (David Kiramijian of Full Sea) who kept her alive for the current owners (Pearsall family) to dive in and complete her rebirth as close to original as possible and who continually upgrade and refine her every year.

I can say, being smitten as I am, that the original restoration of her in 1980, her upgraded restoration in 1994, and her significant update in 2004 is a bit more like tending to a loved one's needs than the simple reconstruction of wood, bronze and steel. You do it because you should, there is never a question or hesitation. New York Thirties have that impact on people.

Not being a trained woodworker..... or even an amateur one.... (okay, I hated woodshop and sucked at it to boot. There, I said it. I admit it. I am a restoration poseur) ... it would be illogical for me to present an accurate technical description of her work. But, I love the beauty of classic yachts and marvel at the craftsmanship so many of you readers possess, but don't ask me to steam-bend a frame or plane a plank unless you are hoping for a box of match-sticks as the finished product. I just don't have it in me.

That being said, given my lack of skills and technical familiarity with the topic, although I mention a few below, I will gladly refer to the professionals to provide details of the problem areas and restoration issues that face this venerable class and how they have evolved and have been solved, over time.

Primarily, the biggest Achilles heal of these yachts were similar to most Herreshoffs of the day is an undersized mast-step and surrounding floor timbers. Over the years, the rig-strain was effectively pushing the masts through the bottom of the hulls. Many documented initial techniques included bulking up the step, but it did not seem to solve the problem. The current solution for most of the boats now include a bronze bridle, that runs under the step, then ties into large turn-buckles, and attaches to a full bronze plate (that is bolted on either side to the chain-plate / frames). For Amorita (and others) this has greatly stiffened the boats and has done wonders for the bilge pump action.

For the most part, Amorita had been restored as close as possible to the original specs. and techniques available 25 years ago. However, like any restoration, the compromise of strict authenticity verses modern improvements will always be a debate best left up to the individual as there can never be a "right" answer.

In addition to her initial total restoration which included new frames, deck, cabinetry, hardware and rig (although nearly all of her planking is original), her work over the past 20 years include a new cockpit, engine, plumbing, electrical, and interior upgrades. All of her work and maintenance since 1994 has been completed by McClave, Philbrick and Giblin in Mystic and they keep her in top shape.

Another one smitten by the NY-30 bug includes Alfred Slanetz, current owner of Cara-Mia. After receiving initial estimates for one season's worth of work, he proceeded to undergo an 8 year metamorphosis that required a level of dedication second to none. Tayler and Snediker completed a full stem-stern restoration that included nearly all aspects of the boat. Cara-Mia can be seen locally in front of the Museum of Yachting in Newport and she competes in many of the IYRS events with current and former students on board in addition to participating in her upkeep.

The famed Nardi yard in Italy has also completed a full restoration of a New York Thirty to compliment their work on Dorade, Stormy Weather, and Nyala. Linnett (#10), was completed in 2000 and resides in Europe taking the racing circuit by storm. Her project included keeping her without winches or engine (as originally designed). As well, Nautilus (NY-16) underwent a restoration by Frank McCaffrey of Narragansett Shipwrights and was completed after his passing to be one of the beautiful threesome to grace Newport on a regular basis.

Oriole (NY-10) underwent a detailed restoration by William Cannell Boatbuilding in Camden Maine over the last few years which included a slim veneer on her hull for smoother topsides. Her full restoration is detailed on the website (www.cannellclassicboats.com) where you can learn of all the specifics of her reconstruction. Most recently, the discovery and restoration of Alera (NY-1) has been one of the most exciting projects undertaken (see sidebar).

Banzai (NY-15), has the distinction of being restored to original specifications over the years by it's owner, a cabinetmaker, Carlo D'Antonio, in Martha's Vinyard. She looks extraordinary, still carrying many of her original spars. Helen, NY-7, ext Tobasco, meanwhile, is sailing as a marconi yawl out of Wickford Rhode Island and has been owned and maintained by Lee Park for nearly 30 years. As well, NY-12, Neola II is owned and maintained by a real estate broker and is sailing as a marconi sloop out of Greenport Long Island.

But, there are still others awaiting their savior. Carlita (NY-8) and Ibis (NY-2) are for sale and waiting restoration, while Anemone II (NY-18) is on the hard at the Herreshoff Marine Museum.

Unfortunately, not all 18 survived, Atair (NY-3), Maid of Moudon (NY-4) were lost during storms in the 1930's, Pintail (NY-5) was lost in a trans-Atlantic attempt in 1979, and Dahinda (NY-6), Minx (NY-13) were cut up in the 1980's.

Lastly, since the publication of the recent WoodenBoat article, I have since learned the fate of the sole lost treasure. The most recent owner of Phyrne (NY-17) contacted me to let me know that she was dropped from a travelift in 1976 in Washington State and destroyed. His voice was soft and it crackled when he relayed the story, clearly upset still 30 years later. Much like all of the other angels of the class, his emotions ran strong and his love of the boat was still very much evident. He has since provided photos and documents of the boat to round out the history of the fleet.

The weekend of July 16th and 17th is the class's official 100th Anniversary Celebration, aptly thrown by the New York Yacht Club on the docks of Harbour Court. All are invited to view the boats up-close and celebrate this historic class. For many it will be a homecoming, for some it will be a rendezvous, for others it will be a chance to recount stories of fathers' and grandfather's connections to the boats. But, for all, it will be a very special weekend.

We hope to see you then!

(For more information, log onto www.NY30.org and www.nyyc.org)

RESTORATION OF ALERA SIDEBAR --

The most recent restoration of Alera (#1), has been completed in amazing efficiency and a dedication to authenticity second to none. Headed by David Stimson of Boothbay Harbor Shipyard, Alera's work was a team effort including many of the great shipwrights of Maine playing a part of the project. These include, Jim Elk of Bar Harbor to build the mast and other spars, Matt Bertram of Bertram's Wood Joinery in Camden to build ALERA's deckhouse, hatches, and skylight, Nat Wilson of East Boothbay for the standing and running rigging and new sails, and Jim Reineck of J. Reineck & son, to make all of the new bronze hardware. Below are excerpts provided by David Stimson on Alera's work:

The ballast keel was cocked to starboard at an angle of 2 or 3 degrees, and the keel bolts and floor timbers had lived out their useful lives. Some of the forward frames had been replaced by the previous owner, but all of the frames from the mast to the transom were original, and most of these were cracked at the turn of the bilge. They had been sistered with short pieces that weren't really doing their job, so complete replacement of the frames was necessary. The previous owner had also taken the deck off, and started to replace the deck beams with laminated ash. This was not in keeping with our plans for an original restoration, so all of the deck beams would have to be replaced. There was nothing left of the original interior, and the rig was gone. The good news: most of what was left of the boat could be saved. This includes the keel, stem, deadwood, bilge stringers, sheer clamps, and 95% of the planking.

The first order of business was to get the ballast keel refastened to the hull in its proper orientation. Using jack stands under the turn of the bilge, we heeled the hull until the ballast keel was plumb. We then welded braces from the steel shop floor to the top of the ballast keel to keep it held rigidly in place. With the keel braced plumb, we put a level across the sheer clamps, and found that the starboard side was two inches low. By alternately easing the port stands and cranking up on the starboard ones, we were able to get the hull level and square to the ballast keel. We removed most of the keel bolts, leaving two to keep the hull aligned with the ballast, and then replaced the floor timbers one-by-one – marking the location and angles for the bolt holes on the bottom of each floor, and drilling from bottom to top with a 7/8" ship auger. The joints between keel, deadwood, and ballast were well slathered with bedding compound, and the new keel bolts installed and tightened.

Then it was time to replace the frames. We began by removing alternate pairs of frames, leaving the others to hold the shape of the boat. The quickest way to remove a frame is to cut it into short pieces, 4"– 6" long, using a skillsaw with an old carbide blade. Goggles are a must, because the saw often hits a bronze screw, sending sparks and shrapnel into the atmosphere. The short frame sections are then split vertically away from the fastenings with an old chisel or screwdriver. At this point, the neophyte will usually take a hammer

and pound the screws out from the inside. This will be regretted after inspection from outside reveals the terrible carnage that has been wrought upon the planking. Long splinters of planking will be blown off next to the bung holes, and this will be difficult or impossible to repair without replanking. The proper way to remove the screws, assuming that the bungs have already been taken out, is to station one person outside to monitor each screw as it is being tapped out gently from the inside. The first couple of taps will reveal whether the screw plans to come straight out of the hole, or get itself fetched up on one side of the bung hole. In the latter case, it is an easy matter for the outside person to coax the head of the screw back to the center with a thin screwdriver so that it can be tapped out easily without damage to the planking.

The new frames were milled from “flitches” – big slabs of 2” thick white oak with the bark still on the edges. By using flitches, we were able to saw the frames out parallel to the grain of the wood to make them stronger and less likely to break during steam bending. The frames in the central portion of the NY 30s are planed to a constant thickness in the sided, or fore and aft dimension, and are tapered, from 1-1/2” at the sheer to about 2-1/2” at the heel in the molded, or athwartships dimension. They were originally bent in one piece, but the new frames were “kerfed” or split with the bandsaw from the sheer to a point below the turn of the bilge. This relieves a lot of the tensional stress on the outside of the frame, and it will be less likely to break when the planking swells. After 1-1/2 hours in the steambox, the new frame is pre-bent over one knee, and the top end shoved under the bilge stringer, which has been lubed with a spot of grease. Once the heel of the frame is positioned correctly, two screws are driven into the heel from the outside. We put a clamp at the top to pinch the frame securely between the sheer strake and sheer clamp, and pound down with a maul until the outer face conforms nicely to the shape of the hull. The friction from the clamp at the top keeps the frame locked in place until the frame has cooled and set. It takes two hours or more to remove a frame and make a replacement, and only five minutes to bend it into the boat. After the frame has cooled, it is “back fastened”, which means that the two layers where the frame was kerfed are screwed together from the inside. The new plank fastenings are then installed.