



Amorita

"It was the worst moment of my life," says Jed Pearsall. His precious *Amorita*, a 102-year-old New York 30 sloop, had just been rammed by a 94-foot ketch during a classic yacht race and was sinking fast. "I stayed with her until she sank under me and, as her deck went down, patted her, and said I'd be back."

As he promised, Pearsall raised the gaff-rigged yacht from the bottom off Rhode Island three days later and took her to a shed. The ensuing three years have been painful, as the other owner and insurance companies fought over who would assume responsibility for repairing the irreplaceable classic that was now, says Pearsall, "about 30 percent splinters!" But, as *YACHTING* goes to press, *Amorita* is undergoing a full restoration...again.

Bill Doyle, *Amorita's* co-owner, is upbeat, "*Amorita* has such spirit and determination. If she had less soul, she'd have been cut up and gone long ago. This is her fourth life so far."

Amorita was the ninth of 18 sloops designed and built by the great Nathanael Herreshoff for members of the New York Yacht Club. Built during the winter of 1904-1905, the yachts were complete—right down to matching china, tufted green corduroy cushions, and pleated curtains.

Amorita was actively raced until 1939, when she was moved to the Great Lakes and dropped out of sight. By 1975, she had been through several owners and was in disrepair in a boatyard that was going to chainsaw her to salvage the lead keel. But the surveyor hired to value the project recognized her significance and found a buyer for her just 30 minutes before she was to be destroyed.

This was, at best, a temporary delay. She was minimally

patched up, sold, and then donated to a charitable foundation. At this point, the Pearsall family entered the scene with Jed's father, Adrian, buying the boat in 1981 and lavishing a total restoration that took her back to original specifications. The project included reframing, new decks and cabin, new interior, and new gaff rig. In 1983, *Amorita* was taken to Newport, Rhode Island, to debut in the spectator fleet during the America's Cup races.

"Dad wanted to save the boat," says Pearsall of his late father, "and he couldn't just walk away. Neither can we now." Adds Doyle, "There is something intangible about her, an emotional bond. She'll be back."

So *Amorita* has been in the Pearsall family for 39 years, sailed in many races by Pearsall and Doyle. But this wasn't her only brush with death. In 1986, her mooring lines chafed through and she drifted several miles down tricky channels to gently stop just 15 feet from a rock wall. (Who says boats don't have spirit?)

Pearsall and Doyle are not exactly boat-less during the restoration, however, since they own several other classics ranging from a P-Class sloop to a vintage 1920s Fife-designed Six-Meter. But *Amorita* is clearly their true love.

And she is loved by others, too. The families of previous owners, including one that used *Amorita* as their Christmas card image for a dozen years, stay in touch and come to visit her when they are in town. "She's like an adopted child," says Doyle. "We've committed to care for her but, eventually, she'll move on to someone else. *Amorita* will outlive us all, and we'll just be a couple of time-lines on her history."

Do they have any advice for potential buyers of classic yachts? "The boat has to speak to you," says Pearsall, "There has to be a connection." But Doyle is more pragmatic: "It's like falling in love. You just can't give any practical advice to anyone else."