
The Shallow Water Sailor

Number 191

A simple boat, a bit of marsh, a redwing's song, and a friend or two

October 2014

The Bosun Chair

Greetings SWSers,

The fall here in Maryland has been wonderful. Days in the seventies and nights in the fifties. Perfect for sailing. DC is crowded with tourists. I drove in to pick up my outboard and past 20 parked tour buses and crowds of pedestrians looking at the sights.

I keep busy reading and gardening. In an hour I'll be off to a Master Garden clinic at a local library. As a MG intern, I sit and listen to the old time MGs as they talk to people with gardening questions of all kinds. The old timers know the name of every plant and tree in question and do a good job on the control of weeds and insects.

I spend about an hour a day on SWSer work. Just lately I have caught up with the 3 PDF files of every single SWS issue since August 1986! We should have a party in 2016 when we reach year 30.

Still have 100 bucks in the bank. Going entirely digital has many advantages, one being low cost. To keep an Internet site up you pay for keeping the site's name and cost of the computer space from an Internet provider. Currently our provider happens to be a SWS member who refuses to take money. The costs of the editor and his copy editor and computer are zero. So the \$100 has not been spent. Once we get a new editor and copy editor there might be charges for needed computer programs and maybe night courses to get them up to speed. I plan on helping the new editor when that happens for as long as necessary. My guess future costs might require about \$10 per member per year. I plan to bow out at the end of 2015.

Please enjoy this issue. John Z's article concerning stern wheelers is a great example of reporting on boat related festivals found in all the states. Let's hear from more of you on such experiences. John's photos are great too. There's lots of space for color photos. Keep them coming.

May the sun shine warm upon your sails,
and rains fall soft upon your boat,



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2014 Ohio River Stern Wheel Festival

By John Zohlen

Stern wheel paddle boats are, by definition, shallow draft. I thought readers of this newsletter would be interested in some BIG shallow water boat activity that occurred at the 2014 Ohio River Stern Wheel Festival held September 5-7, 2014 at Marietta OH.

I had never seen a stern wheel paddle boat before, much less been aboard one. About six months ago I saw an article in a magazine advertising the stern wheel festival held annually at Marietta OH. So, here was an opportunity to see a stern wheel paddle boat and perhaps, board one. I put the date on my calendar. My plan was to drive our 2010 RoadTrek 170 motor home to the festival. The RoadTrek is a Class B motor home built on a Chevy Express 2500 van chassis. It is 18 ½ feet long, no longer than a Chevy Suburban.



The 350 mile drive from Annapolis to Marietta on Thursday through the rolling hills and mountains of eastern Maryland and West Virginia was pleasant. The countryside was lush green and the roads were good. The GPS took me right to the Washington County Fairgrounds, about a mile north of downtown Marietta and the levee on the Ohio River. The fairground volunteers gave me a spot right under an enormous sycamore tree. I would be thankful for the tree's shade the first two days of the festival. The daily site fee was \$35 which was more than I had planned on spending, but it included electricity, showers and a bus that regularly took campers from the fairgrounds to the downtown area and back.

Eventually there were over one hundred motor homes and travel trailers parked at the fairgrounds for the festival. My recreation vehicle was the smallest of them all! About fifteen large Air Stream travel trailers arrived Friday as a group. Their sites became known as "silver city". There were 15-20 large Class A motor homes (think of John Madden's traveling bus) parked nearby. I marveled at the amount of money that must have sat on top of their six or ten wheels. Some of those rigs surely must have cost a quarter of a million dollars! The motor home parked next to me was a 1964 Travco. The fifty year old vehicle, built on a Dodge chassis, had been lovingly restored over a ten year period of time by the woman's father and her husband. Her husband was a Vietnam era Navy veteran so we had a lot in common to talk about over the weekend.

Marietta is located in the southeastern corner of Ohio. It was one of the first European settlements in the state. The city is on the northern bank of the Ohio River where the Muskingum River joins the Ohio. It was a trading center for the North American Indians long before European settlers arrived. The Muskingum River was the first to be canalized in North America.

This small city on the banks of the two rivers was the site of a large ship building industry in the 1800's. More than forty ocean going vessels were built there in the first half of that century. They were launched and sailed down the Ohio to the Mississippi River and then down to New Orleans. Over two hundred river boats were built in the Marietta area. The abundant forests near Marietta produced the lumber necessary for this ship building activity. The Marquis Lafayette visited Marietta in 1825 during his year and a half visit to the then, new United States. The five-star Lafayette Hotel, located above the levee in the downtown area, is named after the French general of Revolutionary War fame.

Marietta is the site of the Ohio River Towboat Museum. The 1928 steam powered W. P. Snyder, Jr. is moored along the banks of the Muskingum River as part of the museum exhibits. It was retired in the 1950's and replaced by diesel powered towboats. Towboat is really a misnomer; the boats actually push barges. The museum also had some steam boat pilot houses from the late 1800's. I could just picture Mark Twain standing at the wheel in one of them.

The river front was quiet Friday morning. There were between 20-25 stern wheel paddle boats moored side by side, bow onto the levee. The largest, P. A. Denny, was 150' long. The smallest, probably 35 feet long. Some were retired commercial towboats built in the 1920's and 30's and some were home built boats. I asked the captain aboard Hobby III how power was transmitted to the paddle wheel. He graciously invited me aboard and gave me a full tour of his boat. She is 80' long and draws 17". See, I told you they were shallow draft. The deck house and "engine room" are essentially mounted on top of a barge built of ¼" steel plate. There are no through hull fittings. The engine uses keel cooling tubes mounted across the transom. The underside of the bow and stern are reinforced (in Hobby III's case, with ½" steel plate) to allow them to drive onto the river bank or levee. Most of the boats have brows or gangways that are held up at an angle over the bow by a king post while underway, and then lowered onto the levee for embarkation and disembarkation. The boats are held onto the bank by quarter lines on both sides.





Hobby III uses a reversible hydraulic drive on the transversely mounted diesel engine to turn a belt driven speed reducer that drives a chain driven speed reducer. The chain exits the after bulkhead of the deckhouse and drives a sprocket on the paddle wheel. The wheel's maximum speed is 30 rpm. The paddle wheel loses power above 30 rpm. Hobby III's maximum speed is about seven knots. The boat has two steering rudders in front of the paddle wheel and two "monkey" rudders after the wheel. The boat's forward direction is controlled by the paddle wheel thrust over the monkey rudders. Thrust over the steering rudders when the wheel is backing moves the stern transversely, much like a Navy landing craft. The boats appear to be quite maneuverable in spite of their large sail area. Very few have a bow thruster. Most of the boats had smoke funnels on either side of the pilot house even though they are diesel powered.

I wondered: "Where do you moor a privately owned boat that is so large?" It would cost a fortune here in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. As it turns out, most of the boat owners have waterfront property on some river in the Ohio River watershed. The boats came from as far away as Pittsburgh PA to the north and Charleston WV to the south.

Saturday's festival activities were held on several blocked off streets up from the water front. A strong cold front came through Saturday afternoon and cooled things down. The fireworks display over the Ohio River that night was spectacular. The highlight of the festival for me was Sunday morning. All eyes were focused on the river. The stern wheel paddle boats raced up the river past thousands of people lining the levee in six races.



The boats were matched in size and power. It was exciting watching these big boxy boats churning up the river, neck and neck a few feet apart, with water thrashing so hard you could not see the paddle wheels.

I enjoyed the five day, four night "land cruise". It was interesting to learn more about the maritime history of some of our country's interior waterways and see the boats that are unique to that history. I am definitely planning to attend the festival next year. By then I should have mustered the courage to invite myself aboard one of the stern wheeler as a "deck hand" or "snipe" during one of Sunday's races. That would be one more thing checked off my "bucket list"!

MAIB Commentary, Part 2

By Bob Hicks

In issue SWS#189, the SWS editor did not provide Bob Hicks entire commentary (by mistake). Here is the last part. It's important because it deals with the proper timing in one's life when the pastime of sailing becomes attractive. In other words what do we mean by "young people". The SWS editor adds his comments at the end.

My own personal experience has been a fortunate one in that my son grew up during my motorcycle racing years and here was a sport with great attraction to young men. He followed in my wheel tracks with his own racing career, at which we became avid followers, and after his retirement from competition he joined me in non competitive adventuring off road, culminating on a ten day adventure ride in Mexico's Baja peninsula with a group of my riding friends. That latter adventure was the nearest we came to a laid back "cruise" on our bikes.

The point of my personal experience was that I happened to indulge in a game that had basic appeal to youth. In sailing this manifests itself in the form of summer racing at yacht or sailing clubs. The older adult sharing of that experience comes in coaching and taking care of background arrangements. How does one attract the young racing sailor to so pokey an event as a small boat backwater cruise?

Failing to achieve this, which is the most likely outcome in my view, the "young sailor" we're looking for is more likely to be found amongst those of the age you were when you first found such sailing outings as a spring cruise attractive, perhaps amongst the 30 somethings still enjoying sailing but now beyond their competitive years. Doing some numbers on this SWS Spring Cruise now having run 35 years and noting the age related reasons some are now bowing out of overnight camping in cramped small sailboats suggests to me that they were in their 30s when they got hooked on it. Perhaps amongst the participants in the one day or weekend messabouts many of our readers enjoy can be found those ready to expand their boating horizons beyond that gathering at a beach for a day or two of messing about locally. They may not be youthful in years but still have a youthful spirit and physical capabilities sufficient to try extended outings afloat with kindred spirits indulging in exploration of new sailing venues.

Ken's Comments

I enjoyed Bob's comments about the meaning of "young people" and his suggestion of 30 somethings might hit the mark. In my case my *kids* are in their forties and are still heavily involved in child rearing with little time for a pastime that requires caring for a sailboat. I figure a sailboat, in the family, is equivalent to raising another

child. For my viewpoint, as a 70+ guy, when I look at my kids, I still see them as little people running around the backyard. It always shocks me to realize they are nearing middle age and have heavy family responsibilities! In my own case my first sailing experience was on a relative's *Lighting*. We were ghosting along at sunset in the middle of Manhasset Bay, east of Great Neck, NY. I, a sixteen year-old, was asked to jump out and was towed slowly behind the boat in deliciously warm water. Unforgettable. It was because of that memory, some 30 years later, that I bought my Bay Hen, *The Sanity*. I sailed alone or with one other family member for the next 7 years before joining the SWSers and in another 5 years became the SWS editor. And now after another 16 years of editing I sit here thinking about who will take over my job and who will come aboard the SWSers. Us old timers must look around and find our replacements, as we, the old-timers, remember those unforgettable times on the water.

Emails

From: Mac Craig <m.craig01@bigpond.com>
Subject: Re: SWS#191
To: Kenneth Murphy <kengmurphy@gmail.com>

Hi Ken,

From the old salts from down under.



Mac's *Mudlark*

My mate, the skipper, the bloke with the big beard (see video), had to be rescued by our Coast Guard. His Horizon Cat Boat, built in Florida and shipped to Melbourne had a few early problems but all is now sorted and she is a much loved boat. On this day, the rudder broke off and floated away looking rather like the fin of a great white shark. Without steerage we were powerless to retrieve it. Not that it would have been much use anyway. I'm the guy with the blue and white striped shirt.

[Click here to watch the action .](#)

We enjoy reading your great magazine.

Mac of Mudlark