

The 2008 Classic Yacht Symposium

by Phil Kimball

The Third Classic Yacht Symposium, held on April 4-6, in Bristol, Rhode Island, was co-sponsored by the Herreshoff Marine Museum and the Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers. The event began on Friday morning with a tour of three boat restoration shops specializing in the restoration of classic yachts including MP&G in Mystic, CT, Stonington Boat Works, in Stonington, CT and Taylor & Snediker in Pawcatuck, CT. All three shops opened their doors to participants for an up-close view of their current restoration projects and a firsthand view of the techniques used in the restoration of classic wooden boats.

The successful day-long boat shop tour was capped by an opening reception for all attendees and authors at the Herreshoff Marine Museum. Halsey Herreshoff introduced the symposium's planning committee members and spoke about this year's wide selection of highly qualified papers and presentations. Philip Kimball, SNAME's Executive Director, conveyed the greetings of Society President Kramek, and extended his wishes for a most successful third symposium, on this the 115th anniversary of the Society. He also introduced to the audience a framed certificate of appreciation intended for Olin J. Stephens, II, one of the Society's highly respected Honorary Members and a constant contributor to the profession over his 74 years of membership, who was about to celebrate the grand occasion a full century of life on April 13.

The symposium was again held on the campus of Roger Williams University in Bristol, but this year we enjoyed the facilities of the Law Building, which accommodated the larger audience of classic boat enthusiasts as well as professionals and amateurs engaged in the restoration and replication of classic yachts from around the world. The morning session, moderated by noted yachting author, Roger Marshall, featured four presentations including a lead-off paper on the considerable works of an international yacht designer followed by papers featuring three different classic wooden yacht restoration projects.

The first paper by David Battistin and F. Leonardon from Trieste, Italy, entitled, "**Carlo Sciarrelli and His Yacht Designs,**" was a retrospective of Italian yacht designer, Carlo Sciarrelli (1934-2006), who over the course of a brilliant four-decade career, created 140 designs known for their elegant style and hull shapes that made their behavior both "smooth and safe." The second paper, "**S/V SARAH, A Love Affair,**" by Margo Geer, was a description by the owner of her many trials and tribulations during the eight-year restoration of her beloved Concordia yawl. Author, Michael Hanyi, then described his project to re-create the "**RIVIERA,**" an early hard chine light wooden hulled sailboat designed by Nathanael Herreshoff, and dating back to 1874 during his early travels throughout Europe. The last paper of the morning was "**ANNIE: History and Rebirth of a Sandbagger**" by Quentin Snediker, who outlined the complete restoration of the ANNIE, a sandbagger built in 1880 and the first acquisition by the Mystic Museum in 1931, which had been restored numerous times before this most recent restoration that was completed in 2005.

The afternoon session, moderated by SNAME's immediate past president, Dr. Roger Compton, began with presentations by Ed McClave, Bill Mills, Jim Elk and Bill Taylor entitled, "**Restoration of the New York 50 SPARTAN,**" which discussed the history and the re-construction details of the 72-foot Herreshoff design, one of nine to have been built in the winter of 1912-1913. Dave Snediker then presented his paper entitled, "**Row Boats for the Herreshoff 560 Class,**" wherein he described the construction of three Herreshoff tenders using the same methods employed by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company in the late 19th Century. The last paper of the afternoon, "**A Return to the Edwardian Era – Completing CANGARDA, Initiating CORONET,**" was presented by Jeffery Rutherford and Robert McNeil who described their restoration of the 1901 steam powered yacht, CANGARDA, and introduced their new project of restoring "the last grand American yacht, CORONET."

Significant papers not presented at the Symposium were displayed as poster sessions in the lobby for all participants to view and discuss with their authors on the breaks. The first paper by David Stimson entitled, “**SPIRIT of NEW ENGLAND, a 144-Foot Racing Schooner to Race for the New International Fisherman’s Trophy,**” described the intended construction of a new schooner, based on the best characteristics of the schooners that were built in the 1920’s, to compete with the BLUENOSE IV for which construction is about to begin by a Canadian group. Laura Hoenemeyer authored “**The Influence of Working Craft on Post World War I Wooden Yachts of the Pacific Northwest,**” which described early wooden sailing vessels engaged in the logging, fishing and coal trades, and the eventual Post WWI conversion from sail to power. The last poster session, “**I Boats, The 18-Footers: Variation within the Rules,**” by Philip Mallard was a description of the history, construction and rule variations of the 18-foot waterline boats that raced as a class from the late 19th to mid-20th centuries.

Saturday’s discussions and papers were concluded with a gala reception and dinner in the Herreshoff Museum’s Hall of Boats among many of the yachts designed and built by the Herreshoff Manufacturing Company. Well-known sailing enthusiast and classic yacht restorer, Hal Sisk, regaled the dinner guests with the history of yachting and yacht racing and how it all got it start in Ireland.

On Sunday, Symposium participants were treated to two more papers. The first paper, “**CORSAIR: Alive for Another 80 Years,**” by Fred Bisset and Jim Titus, and discussed by John Palmieri, involved the restoration of the 30-foot motor launch, designed and built by Nathanael G. Herreshoff in 1925, for J Pierpont Morgan’s steam yacht, “CORSAIR.” The final paper entitled, “**Painting Wooden Boats,**” by Jim Seidel, discussed the preparation of wooden boat hulls for finishing and the application of varnishes and paints.

The attendees were universal in their praise of the importance of the Symposium to the classic yacht restoration community, and the significant lasting value of the *Proceedings* that contained a total of twelve papers and reports. Copies of the *Proceedings* will be available through SNAME by calling 201-798-4800, or toll-free at 800-798-2188.

The next Classic Yacht Symposium will be held in April 2010, following the Society- sponsored Chesapeake Powerboat Symposium in Annapolis, and alternating yearly with the SNAME-sponsored Chesapeake Sailing Yacht Symposium (CSYS) held on the odd years. Please refer to the SNAME events calendar at www.sname.org for details.