



Spring 2019

# Sou Wester

*The Southwest Chapter-Antique & Classic Boat Society  
serving Arkansas, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas.*

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Monogamous Boat Owner!



## ***The Bow...***

As the boating season is rapidly approaching us, we are all getting our boats ready for the season and the upcoming events. I know Karen and I have been busy with *Gypsy*, our 24 foot Shepherd, getting a couple of coats of varnish and lots of chroming.

We are looking forward to the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Keels and Wheels Boat Show May 4 and 5, 2019 .This year Clive Cussler, Famed author and Car collector will be the 2019 Grand Marshall. He will be doing some book signing over the weekend also. There will also be the event dinners on Friday and Saturday night hosted by the Lakewood Yacht Club.

The show is still looking for more boats to display. Registration forms are available at [www.keels-wheels.com](http://www.keels-wheels.com). We also need volunteers- people to help place boats and put up stands on Thursday and Friday; also to help reload boats on trailers on Sunday afternoon. Contact Robert Black, [blackd@earthlink.net](mailto:blackd@earthlink.net). 713-974-7919. This is a Great opportunity for all chapter members to get involved and have a wonderful weekend.



We are Happy to have Clay Thompson back as our Chief Boat Judge. The registrations are coming in and we are in the process of determining the classes that each boat will be in.

Don't forget the Early bird cruise to Sundance Grill 2 on Thursday evening and of course the closing good byes at Las Brisas are always a great time—but remember *we will be paying on our own!*

Hope to see you all there!

Brian and Karen Fielder





# KEELS & WHEELS

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## MAY 4 - 5, 2019



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By Dave Kanally

# Mahogany Monogamy

## or, The Man Who Loved One Boat

*Editor's note: This story, along with many other wonderful wooden boat stories, including ones about the boats used in "On Golden Pond" are found in Bob Matson's book, "What's in Your Boat House?"*

"I have been here before!" exclaimed my mother as they approached the waterfall along Six Mile Creek. "I used to bring campers here when I was a counselor at the camp up the road." This unexpected connection to her past brought my mother fully into the excitement of the day. **The journey had begun with a very different intent...to trace the origins of Cowell Boat Works, the maker of my father's 1957 16-foot outboard runabout.**

Although the Cowell name is still known in Erie, Pennsylvania, Cowell boats are all but forgotten. The family's standard bearer today is Richard Cowell, an attorney practicing in Erie. His late father Tom was the founder of Cowell Boat Works. Richard was with my parents this day, graciously accompanying them on this unannounced probe into his family's history.

Cowell Beach is accessible only by the Cowells' private drive, which my parents and their Erie friends, the Sorces, hesitantly followed through the vine-laden woods. They reached the two-story frame home where Richard grew up, and proceeded toward the bluff that overlooks the beach.

They passed a cottage and a barn, and then saw Richard gathering and burning driftwood on the beach. He climbed the bluff to greet them and showed them around the property, including its own natural wonder, the waterfall along Six Mile Creek.



They gingerly picked their way down a steep path toward the beach where Richard and his wife Jane had been clearing the driftwood. There, massive concrete slabs and reinforcing steel that once were a boat slip and pier lay askew, victims of forty years of Lake Erie freezes and thaws. And a bit farther up the beach were the crumbling remains of the buildings where Cowell boats were made. Doors and windows were long gone. The paint was splotchy. The vines and bushes that dominated the property were well on their way to reclaiming these buildings as well.

From Richard's family archives came brochures that detailed the various models in the Cowell line. "Sea Pups" were the open fishing boats used with small engines, driven from the stern. Our boat was clearly one of the runabouts, a "King".



Other materials from Richard included a publicity photo made in the late 50's with employees, neighbors and friends aboard, including young Ron Smith at the wheel.

Completing their tour of the Cowell property, my parents saw a late 1950's Cowell 19-footer, sheltered in the Cowell's barn since it came from the shop.

But our family's Cowell boat story began over a decade later, in 1969.

## The Muskrats and Boat Ownership Peer Pressure

Our first encounter with Cowell boats was unintentional. Sometime early in the summer of 1969 we decided that boat ownership was desirable. Our family, together with three other families known collectively as "The Muskrats", had shared a summer rental cottage on Bemus Bay at Chautauqua Lake, New York.

Throughout these summers, the kids of all four families spent most of their school vacations at the lake. The parents, who had responsibilities to their work, rotated the weekday kid-sitting burden, each couple taking their turn watching all the kids during one week of the summer. On weekends, though, everyone from the first and second generations of Muskrats was at the lake.

In the early years, we had access to one boat, a Penn Yan 16-footer with a gutsy Johnson 60-horse belonging to Phil and Jewell Meacham, the senior Muskrats. Behind this boat, every young Muskrat learned to water ski. Soon thereafter, our bright red, square-stern fiberglass canoe, the Muskrat, joined the flotilla. No perch or bluegill was safe from a junior Muskrat dropping his line over the gunwales of this stealth craft.

Not to be outdone, fellow Muskrat H.S.J.B. (more about him later) added two crafts to our Navy: The Ramstuk, (can you find the word Muskrat therein?) a featherweight oak and plywood rowboat and Remister II, a tiny sailing tub named after H.S.J.B.'s boss. (H.S.J.B. was *bohn* and *reahed* in Boston, but lived and kept *hosses* in Pennsylvania). No other Muskrat had horses or sailboats, so it was good for us that H.S.J.B. was in our midst.

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Steel, Kevlar, Kilo, Kevlar, Kilo, etc. • Select white oak • Plywood—Top Quality 1/2" • 2 ply Whiteoak Marine Plywood • Decks and deck linings—Marinegrade plywood • Tonnage, 1000, 1500, 2000, 2500, 3000, 3500, 4000, 4500, 5000, 5500, 6000, 6500, 7000, 7500, 8000, 8500, 9000, 9500, 10000, 10500, 11000, 11500, 12000, 12500, 13000, 13500, 14000, 14500, 15000, 15500, 16000, 16500, 17000, 17500, 18000, 18500, 19000, 19500, 20000, 20500, 21000, 21500, 22000, 22500, 23000, 23500, 24000, 24500, 25000, 25500, 26000, 26500, 27000, 27500, 28000, 28500, 29000, 29500, 30000, 30500, 31000, 31500, 32000, 32500, 33000, 33500, 34000, 34500, 35000, 35500, 36000, 36500, 37000, 37500, 38000, 38500, 39000, 39500, 40000, 40500, 41000, 41500, 42000, 42500, 43000, 43500, 44000, 44500, 45000, 45500, 46000, 46500, 47000, 47500, 48000, 48500, 49000, 49500, 50000, 50500, 51000, 51500, 52000, 52500, 53000, 53500, 54000, 54500, 55000, 55500, 56000, 56500, 57000, 57500, 58000, 58500, 59000, 59500, 60000, 60500, 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This floating frenzy culminated in a trip to the Starbrick Marina in Warren, Pa. by my father, my younger brother Kevin and me, in June of 1969. We drooled a bit over the new-looking and new-smelling boats in the showroom, but our budget led us quickly to the back parking lot where, sitting alone and sorely neglected, was a blistering and peeling wooden runabout of noble lineage. A swooping script logo, "Cowell, Erie, Pa." was affixed to the rear hull, on the port side. We immediately saw the potential and overlooked the shortcomings of the slightly shabby craft. A few hundred dollars later, we drove off with the boat, a 45-horse Mercury outboard and a Cox trailer built for the millennium. (Thirty-one years later, all three items would prove themselves to be Y2K compliant.)

When we pulled into the driveway, my mother's expression let me know that no parental pillow talk had preceded this purchase. This "honey, guess what!" buying technique has served me well over the ensuing years.

We set straight to the work of restoration. A stained blister on the front deck plywood was injected with glue with a veterinarian hypodermic needle, pushed flat with weights, then sanded. All topside surfaces received several coats of spar varnish. The hull was painted with white marine enamel. In short order, the new old boat was ready for launch.

## **H.S.J.B., denatured alcohol, and the "fish-pound" theory.**

"Handsome Smiling Jerry Bozzo" he signed his cards and letters. An engineer by training and a corporate executive, gentleman farmer, building supplies retailer, and boss owner by profession, H.S.J.B. had knowledge of most subjects, especially those involving mechanics, electronics, chemistry, boats, dock building, and horses.

This knowledge impressed us young Muskrats deeply, and came in particularly handy on the day we launched the new old boat.

*It is important, albeit irrelevant, to insert a brief expose of H.S.J.B.'s "fish-pound" theory at this point:*

*Any given body of water (in this case Chautauqua Lake) is capable of supporting a certain poundage of fish life. This poundage could be comprised of (a) a large number of small fish or (b) a small number of large fish. Since any self-respecting fisherman would prefer the latter scenario, it is important for all fishermen (especially young Muskrat fishermen) to do their part to eliminate undersized fish from the population. This way, the fewer remaining fish could grow bigger, to the benefit of everyone. It is due to the practice of this fish-pound theory that between 1965 and 1970, scores of hapless late-blooming adolescent Chautauqua Lake bluegills were mercilessly slammed against the planks of the Muskrat boat dock, where they briefly twitched, then met their maker.*

## **The Launch and the Sputter**

Hesitantly, with multiple re-orientations, we backed the trailer down the public boat ramp at Bemus Point. The fresh varnish reflected the upstate New York partly cloudy skies. The fresh, new American flag fixed to the stern light snapped in the lake breeze. After the ceremonious shove-off, we cranked the Merc and she turned over just as she had done at the Starbrick Marina. My brother, my buddy Kent (elder son of senior Muskrats Phil and Jewell) and I were to pilot the boat back to the cottage.

But then our hearts sank. The motor would run only at half throttle. We chugged around the bay a bit, pulled the cowling from the motor and pretended to adjust things, to no avail. Dejected, we returned to port and trailered the boat back to the cottage.

H.S.J.B. to the rescue. His expert diagnosis revealed that the lower carburetor was clogged with "vahnish", the dried residue of the 28:1 gas/oil mixture that the 1960 power plant burned. He also determined that denatured alcohol would make a suitable solvent for said vahnish, because it was "sufficiently volatile." We young Muskrats accepted this diagnosis at face value.

With youthful bravado and close coaching by H.S.J.B., we pulled the lower carb, dismantled it and reamed out the jet with a denatured alcohol-soaked broom straw. Following careful reassembly and remounting of the carburetor, we dragged a 55-gallon drum to the stern of the trailered boat, pulled the drum up and around the lower housing of the motor, and filled the drum with water. This time, the Merc not only turned over, but whined into the highest rpm range, churning and spewing water like a possessed eggbeater. We were mechanics!

All thanks to H.S.J.B.

## **The "Middle Years" and the Mortician**

As young Muskrats grew into adulthood, the Chautauqua summers came to an end. The new old boat was due for another restoration. The blister on the front deck had risen again, and the stains just seemed to get worse and worse. We were understandably concerned for the boat's health, but nothing could have prepared us for the day the Mortician showed up. What relief we felt when it became clear that Frank Switzer wasn't there to bury the boat, but to improve it. You see, in a town the size of ours, there aren't enough people dying to keep a mortician busy full time. So Frank laid tile and did upholstery on the side. His solution to our blemished front deck was to cover it with a high-quality nut-brown colored vinyl upholstery material, which he did, quickly and masterfully. Seats, gunwales and other remaining woodwork received numerous new coats of spar varnish, and the new old boat was ready for the middle years.

Since we kids were grown and gone, my Dad used the boat for two main purposes: to take a couple of other people's young kids fishing at Chautauqua Lake from time to time, and to travel with my Mom and several other empty nest couples to Kippawa, Quebec, for week-long fishing trips.

At some undocumented point during this period, the boat and trailer both received a coat of cream-colored paint to match the new Olds station wagon.

## **Hagar's Magnificent Obsession**

Something came over my father in 1985. He had a vision of a completely restored new old boat. He began a process which would fill our garage, consume his time and challenge my mother's patience for nearly two and a half years.

At some point during this time, my mom began calling my dad "Hagar" after the boat-loving Viking of comic strip fame.

She laminated and displayed this and other Hagar comic strips on the wall of the garage as her quiet vigil continued.

A hardy band of guys led by Bob Hartle, our town's second underemployed mortician, came to help Dad flip the boat so he could begin removing the multiple coats of paint. With a heat gun and scraper he spent evening after evening scraping through layers and layers of cream, white, green, yellow and other colors of enamel until he reached bare wood.

Once the scraping phase was complete, the guys re-righted the boat. Dad removed the troubled front deck entirely, and replaced it with brand new marine mahogany plywood and trim that he had to drive 9 hours—all the way to White Plains, NY-- to get.

For all the Hagar teasing he got, it is important to note that my dad is a skilled and fastidious woodworker. He boiled and bent new oak ribs to replace the rotting members in the stern. He designed and built new gas tank holders and created a new seat to cover them. He raised the rear seat to accommodate both cranking and accessory batteries. He plugged screw holes with bungs, trimmed them with a tiny Japanese back saw and sanded everything until it was perfectly smooth.

During this period, Dek subscribed to Wooden Boat magazine, where he found sources for modern epoxy hull coatings, durable enamels and ultra-violet light-resistant spar varnishes.

He acquired all these products by mail order, and painstakingly applied them all to his new old boat.

The result was a mahogany jewel, glistening with a mirror finish.





## Troubled Trip to Texas

Hagar (the boat, not the Viking) made a few trips during the years between 1987 and 1999...mostly day trips or weekends to Chautauqua Lake or Kinzua Dam. Lately, though, the new old boat had been in storage most of the time, and my dad thought it was about time to pass it along. I was thrilled at the prospect of being the new owner of the boat, but one major logistics challenge lay ahead...how to get the boat from Pennsylvania to Texas in a time-efficient and economical way.

After considering several options, we decided that it would be best to acquire my brother's 1988 Isuzu Trooper (which he was looking to sell anyway) , tow the boat to Dallas, then sell the Trooper. Our elder son Brian and I would do the driving.

Good plan, but the Trooper didn't have a rear bumper, and the hitches that were locally available in Pennsylvania required one.

So we had to add a supporting member to the rear frame of the Trooper to support the hitch. This modification held up for the first 250 miles of the trip, getting us to the west side of Akron, Ohio, Medina to be precise. At that point the rusting rear frame gave way, and we needed the intervention of some professional welders to reinforce the hitch to make sure we could finish the remaining 1200 miles of the journey.


We found a welding shop that would do the work, which caused a half-day delay in the journey, but only a minor blip in the project budget. We finished the trip without further incident and found a new home for the new old boat in North Texas.



## Finding the Good Life in Texas

Since coming to Texas, the Kanally Cowell has become affiliated with the Antique and Classic Boat Society (ACBS) and the Wooden Boat Association of North Texas. The Cowell has been in several shows, including the Texas State Fair, the Annual WBA Show & Ride at Lake Lewisville, and the Annual Keels and Wheels show at Clear Lake.

The boat that one man loved is now safely in the loving care of another. The new old boat is plying the new millennium in ship shape. The new owners are thankful that Dek's craftsmanship and care have made this all possible.



**Coming early to beat the crowds? Staying late to avoid Sunday's traffic? The Southwest Chapter ACBS has options for you!**

## ***EarlyBird Cruise to dinner THURSDAY, May 2nd***

**We'll leave the inner harbor in our boats for a gentle 1 hour (or less) cruise past Watergate Yachting Center and into stunning Waterford Harbor to dine outdoors at Sundance Grill 2 overlooking our boats.**

Tentative timeline

Leave the inner harbor around 3:30ish.

Arrive at *Sundance Grill 2* courtesy docks by 4:30.

Depart 7:30ish for our short cruise back, arriving before dark.

We will pay on our own, the prices are moderate (15 and up).

Arriving by car is also an option.

## ***Closing good-byes at Las Brisas SUNDAY, May 5th***

**Many of us stay Sunday night. We're tired, the boats are finally out of the water and on their trailers. The event is over.**

Around 7ish (after the duties are done at Lakewood Yacht Club), we tread down Highway 146 to Las Brisas Mexican Bar and Grill in nearby Bacliff, Texas. Good prices, Good food, Good margaritas!



## ***The ACBS presence at the Boating Trades Show Houston/NRG Center!***

The trade show season in Houston kicks off with the 64th annual Houston International Boat, Sport, and Travel Show at the **NRG Center. It's the largest indoor boat show in the United States**, with more than 1,000 powerboats, pontoons, luxury cruisers, fishing models, personal watercraft and manually operated vessels such as kayaks and SUP boards on display. They cover more than 700,000 square feet of the center. This year, the wonderful experience was January 4<sup>th</sup> thru the 13<sup>th</sup>, and it was one of the chapter activities highlighted on the ACBS website. John Platou was the organizer.





There was also a section for the Kids Build-a Boat program. John and his crew spearheaded this to involve the youth, and provide a talking point for their parents.

In addition ,the Outdoor Motor Guys had an interactive motor display for kids. The youth were given wrenches to tear into, and rebuild outboards!

**Below, note one of the “woody” cars with some of our boats.**



Right, note outboards and classic glass and lapstrake runabouts captivating the audience. One of a string of vintage Evinrudes in the foreground. John Platou assisting youth below.

Normally, this event starts on a Friday, and continues for a week, ending on a Sunday night. A huge endeavor for the volunteers as this is immediately after the December holidays, some still feeling the effects! This particular show was unique in that it started on the first Friday of January, but was closed that Saturday due to the Texans Wild Card game. The balance of the week went as expected





There was a variety of boats ranging from inboards, outboards, hydro planes, sailboats, etc. Every year we make a barn find during the show —boat, motor etc. Over 75,000 people tour the show with 260 companies exhibiting.

Below, note some of the hard working volunteers helping young volunteers use cordless drills to attach the bottom of a pram. The pram is the raffled off at the end of the show. Each young person who was involved in the build is given a raffle ticket—and a chance to win the boat. This is a highly successful program that John initiated within our club years ago for our key-note events.





# Upcoming Events

March 21-24, 2019

Sunnyland Antique Boat Festival  
Sunnyland Chapter ACBS  
Tavares, Florida

April 4-6, 2019

Hot Springs Classic on Lake Hamilton  
Heartland Classics ACBS  
Hot Springs, AR

May 2-5, 2019

Keels and Wheels  
Southwest Chapter ACBS  
Seabrook, Texas

Sept 5-8, 2019

Mahogany & Chrome  
Heartland Classics ACBS  
Grand Lake, OK

Sept 20-22, 2019

RideNShow at Bass Pro Shops,  
WBA of North Texas  
Lake Ray Hubbard

Oct 11-13, 2019

Austin/Hill Country LaKE Ibj SHOW  
and Colorado River Cruise  
Southwest Chapter ACBS  
Horseshoe Bay, Texas

As always, please confirm with a board member. These are tentative dates, especially those furthest away.

## The Board....

President	Brian Fielder
Vice President	Lindy Robinson
Treasurer	Robert Macaluso
Secretary	Robert Black
NewsLetter Ed	Craig Stanfield

## Directors:

Clay Thompson  
Di Johnson  
Dave Person  
David Kanally  
Ray Balsam  
Mike Friesel

*For individual contact information, go to*  
**Southwest-acbs.org**

*For detailed information and vision of the Antique and Classic Boat Society, go to* **ACBS.org**.

**We're also on Facebook as ACBS Southwest Chapter - Vintage Boating**

## From the editor...

Craig here. Big thanks to David Kanally for his well written story on the Cowell, and to Robert Black for his coverage of the Houston Trades Show!

**As always, we're looking for stories, antidotes, and histories of your beloved boats.**

Send me an email at rancheroxl@yahoo.com.  
**And if you don't feel like writing, I can call you and take notes on your story. I promise you'll get veto rights before publication!**

See ya at Keels and Wheels!  
Craig