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A Marvelous Mystery

In pursuit of a catboat legend

by

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Part 8: Restoration Progress Thwarted

The last installment of our tale closed with the question “Can summer really be that close? We had hoped that the long awaited re-launch of MARVEL/SUNNYSIDE/SUSAN was just a few weeks away in July 2021. Then the Sea-God version of *Murphy* stepped in to thwart that goal.

Medically Scuppered

Two significant medical problems conspired to set back the restoration project just as we approached home plate.

George Schuld, our talented boatwright and centerboard expert, suffered a tragic industrial accident that nearly cost him the thumb on his right hand. This would have him out of action for all of the summer and unable to install his incredible, computer-designed and fabricated G10 centerboard into the Olde Girl until September.

About the same time, my doctor discovered a large, potentially malignant tumor growing in my upper right thigh. (a rare liposarcoma). This was successfully removed on June 16th and turned out to be benign. But hospitalization and recovery would have me out of action for over a month. Insurance rules prevented MARVEL’s volunteer restoration team from working on the boat unless I was present.

We held out hope that we could recover from these setbacks and have MARVEL re-launched in September. This plan was thwarted when I contracted bacterial streptococcus pneumonia that had me virtually bedridden for yet another four weeks until mid-August.

So much for a fall launch.

As you read this (written in September) restoration work has resumed. The revised plan has all work scheduled to be completed before the snow flies so that we can celebrate a marvelous relaunch in late April or early May 2022. As my neurosurgeon friend says in the OR prior to all of his surgeries:

“What could possible go wrong?”

Progress Unthwarted.

Fortunately, several tracks continued during the restoration’s medical hiatus.

At the risk of being redundant, readers will recall that our marvelous mystery tour rolls along three tracks:

- **Track 1:** Chronologically traces the boat’s provenance from the present backward, i.e a *Top-Down* research approach
- **Track 2:** Chronologically traces the boat’s provenance from her build date (1904?) forward, i.e. *Bottoms-Up*.
- **Track 3:** Chronologically traces the current restoration project from acquisition to re-launch

Former owner, Jeff Megerdichian, and Kathryn Greene and Tom Krasniewicz, two of the children of former owner, Walter Krasniewicz, continued to supply **Track 1** input.

Simultaneously, **Track 2** continued to chug along thanks to the generous efforts of historians Stan Grayson, Joe Chetwynd, and to Andy Crosby, great, great grandson of the builder H.F. Crosby. As you will see, new information from both of these **Tracks**, have contributed further to the marvelous mystery swirling around this historic catboat...*and, in some cases, have actually deepened the mystery.*

Track 1 Update

Kathryn Greene, on a trip East from her California home, along with Tom, her Connecticut-based brother, journeyed to Westport Point, MA and spent a day inspecting the boat they knew in their childhood as SUNNYSIDE. This was the first time either of them had seen the boat since approximately 1987. It turned out to be quite a valuable and emotional visit.



Figure 1: Kathryn Green and Tom Krasniewicz inspect the boat they knew as SUNNYSIDE.

“I can’t believe she still exists,” A skeptical Tom whispered. Kathryn echoed Tom’s sentiment. **(Figure 1)**

Many tales of family adventures and mis-adventures spilled forth as the pair explored the boat. (More of these in a future installment). Relative to the restoration they were able to point out modifications made “post-Walter” and in so doing identified holes, cutouts and other physical artifacts that had had us wondering “I wonder what used to be *here*?”

One observation regarded the placement of the hole **(Figure 2a + b)** in the cabin roof for a flue pipe and “Charlie Nobel” (smokestack for the coal stove).

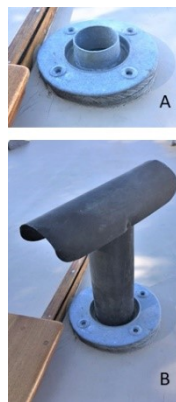


Figure 2: The hole in the cabin roof held flue-pipe hardware (a) and the boat’s Charlie Nobel (b)



Figure 3: The flue pipe misalignment revealed cabin modifications

A Shipmate No. 1 stove (**Figure 3**), came with the collection of loosely boxed artifacts when we took ownership of the boat. It could not be placed in the current cabin layout as it did not align with the flue pipe passing through the hole. (**Figure 4**)



Figure 4: With the flue pipe misaligned, there was no place to mount her Shipmate #1 stove

After some debate between the siblings, it was decided that someone post-Walter had re-configured the cabin layout to accommodate a newer galley cabinet. In so doing they had eliminated a place for the stove. Kathryn and Tom agreed, however, that the stove was once located on the starboard side of the old girl beneath the flue pipe. A photograph of SUNNYSIDE

at Mystic Seaport circa 1980 (**Figure 5**), with Walter Krasniewicz proudly sitting in her cockpit, confirms this. The Charlie Nobel is indeed located on the boat's starboard cabin roof. So the Shipmate #1 must have been located directly beneath on a shelf of some sort.

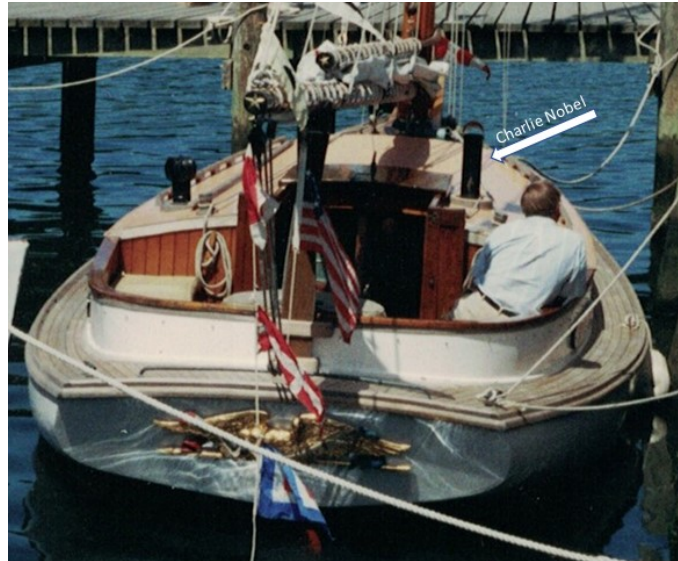


Figure 5: The position of the Charlie Nobel in 1980 confirms the original position of the stove.

“I bet your dad would be upset that the stove had been removed after all of the effort he had invested in SUNNYSIDE’s resurrection and renovation, eh?”, I offered.

With a bit of a wink, Kathryn replied, “I don’t think so, He never cooked anything on that thing as far as we know. Don’t you remember the cartoon that Peter wells drew? That says it all.” (**Figure 6**).



Figure 6: Elimination of the Shipmate stove would probably not bother Walter

Additional comments and point-outs made by brother and sister now allow us, where appropriate, to restore the “pre- and during Walter” position of a number of missing hardware items (cleats, cabin items, etc.,) now that we know what went into the voids left by their removal.

During the visit, Kathryn and Tom were joined by Andy Crosby and his wife Michelle. They all posed for an historic photo that effectively spans the years from the boat’s building through the late 1980’s. **(Figure 7).**



Figure 7: (L to R) Michelle Crosby, Andy Crosby, Kathryn Greene and Tom Krasniewicz pose by the boat’s helm for an historic photo that spans over a century of ownership.

For those of us involved in the boat’s current restoration, it was by all accounts a very memorable day.

Track 2 Update.

Just before I took ill, historian/author Stan Grayson was becoming convinced that our restoration boat might not be the MARVEL... even though her title documents from 1904 say otherwise. Stan has referred to the QYC Annuals that show Daniel and Charles Crosby (D& CH Crosby) as MARVEL’s builders and that the H.F. Crosby builder's plate on our boat is a better representative of her actual provenance.

To validate Stan's beliefs, I reached out to historian Joe Chetwynd. I knew that he had access to the QYC Annuals. I wrote to him asking if he would be interested in examining the Annuals to determine if they identified any D-Class boat built by H.F. Crosby.

His response exceeded our expectations.

Joe replied, " John... I have excerpted all the Crosby -built vessels from the QYC enrollments. For each year, I have listed the Crosby vessels enrolled per year, and noted their particulars, including which of the several Crosby's who built them. I would note that the names are as follows :

- DH & CH Crosby Cotuit, Ma
- D & CH Crosby, Osterville, Ma
- H. Crosby Osterville, Ma.
- H.F. Crosby, Osterville, Ma
- C.E. Crosby So. Orleans, Ma
- Wilton Crosby, Osterville, Ma
- N Crosby, Osterville, Ma

Please send me your mailing address and I will send the list to you. -Joe."

A few days later, a thick, three-ring binder arrived in the mail. In it Joe had compiled copies of all of the QYC Annuals from 1890 through 1914, the last year they published these remarkable year-books. (Figure 8)

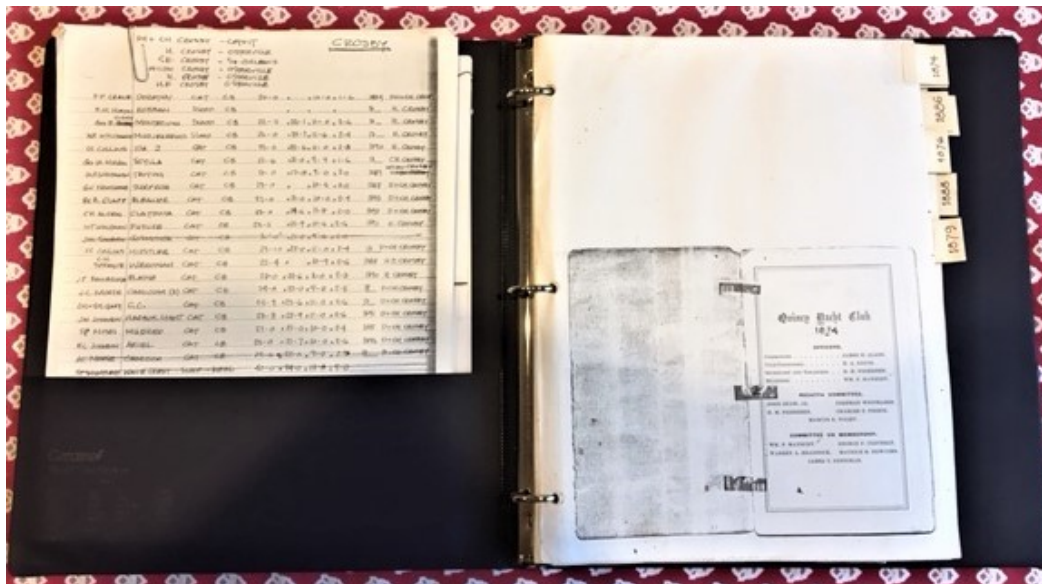


Figure 8: Historian Joe Chetwynd supplied a compilation of QYC Annuals from 1890 to 1914

As shown in **Figure 9**, The QYC Annuals listed, for each member’s vessel, her:

NAME; OWNER; TYPE; LOA; LWL; BEAM; DRAFT; YEAR BUILT and BUILDER
 (Note the entry for MARVEL)

MAISIE	F. S. Patch.....	C. B. Cat.	20 10	19 2	9 6	2 6	....	W. F. Maybury, Quincy.
MARGERY A..	Adams & Bennett.	C. B. J. & M.	19 10	12 3	6	1	1901	W. S. Bennett, Quincy.
MARVEL	Ira M. Whittemore.	C. B. Cat.	25	24	11 3	3	1894	D. & C. H. Crosby, Osterville.
MAY G.....	Arthur J. Cavanagh	C. B. J. & M.	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	A. J. Cavanagh, Braintree.
METEOR	John Chellman....	Keel Cat.	19 6	15	9	2 6	.....	.....

Figure 9:The QYC Annuals contain comprehensive details of member’s boats and their builders

From Joe’s incredible find (and assuming that the data in the Annuals are accurate... more on this later.), we now know that MARVEL was built in 1894 (!) not 1904 as her 1904 registration papers claimed; That she was initially owned by a Mr. Reed (1894), later co-owned by both Reed and a Mr. A.A. Lincoln (1902), then by A.A. Lincoln alone (1903) until Ira Whittemore came along in 1904.

In other words, Ira Whittemore, one of the creators of the D-Class of catboats, bought MARVEL as a *14-year-old used boat*. (!) Throughput all of these years, the Annuals identify Daniel and Charles H. Crosby as her builders not H.F. Crosby.

Can we depend on the accuracy of the QYC Annuals? Not necessarily.

In the case of MARVEL, for example, her listed dimensions vary (slightly) from year to year: 24.6x24.0x11.5 (1902), 25x24x11.3 (1903); 24.7x23x11.3 (1904) and when sold in 1907 24.6x24x11.0. Apparently the QYC left it up to the boat owners to supply the specifications.

So it is conceivable that MARVEL’s builders may have been listed incorrectly from year to year as well. Perhaps that is why Ira Whittemore, when he sold her in 1907, decided to identify her as a Crosby boat without boatwright attribution.

All of this does raise the question though, “ If we are not currently restoring MARVEL, what what catboat are we restoring?

To investigate this, and assuming the HFC builder's plate on our boat was originally "original", we poured through the QYC records to identify club member catboats identified as H.F. Crosby boats.

The QYC Annuals list only three HFC catboats; IDA J (1890), WENONAH (1888) and ELAINE (1890). Only one of these, ELAINE, owned in 1902 by a J.P. Bainbridge and in 1904 by Harry C. Brownell raced as a D-Class cat... and for only one race during the inaugural year of D-Class racing, 1904. Curiously, someone has crossed out the entry for ELAINE in the only 1904 QYC Annual we have. **(Figure 10)** Was this the work of a race victor annotating his Annual? Maybe.

We do know that after 1904, ELAINE and Harry C. Brownell disappear from the QYC Annuals.

Were they given the proverbial boot? Did Brownell switch clubs? Yet another mystery.

DOROTHY, 3d.	Frank F. Crane...	C. B. Cat.	27	23	11	2 4	1893	Smalley, Harwichport
EKRUB III	W. E. Burke.....	C. B. J. & M.	16 2	12 6	4 2	4	1900	Mather L. & C. Co., A
ELAINE	Harry C. Brownell	C. B. Cat.	25	22 6	11	2 2	1890	Crosby, Oyster River
ENIGMA.....	G. Wesley Sargent.	C. B. J. & M.	32 4	21	9 4	1 2	1895	Wm. Maybury, Quincy
ETHEL S	G. F. Swift.....	C. B. J. & M.	19 10	15 4	7	1	1901	Swift, Quincy.

Figure 10: Someone scratched out the 1904 entry for the H.F Crosby D-Class catboat ELAINE

The Research Hunt Goes On

Is SUNNYSIDE really ELAINE? Were MARVEL's QYC D&CH Crosby builder attributions wrong over all of those years?

Many on our team believe we have the MARVEL... There are just too many coincidences. Yet.... When Walter found her she carried an H.F Crosby builder's plate not a D&CF Crosby plate.

Some in the Catboat Associations claim that you can't always rely on the builder's plate to determine provenance. Apparently the Crosby clan were sometimes known have the last family member who worked on the boat (could be as simple as the member who painted her) affix their own, unique plate.

While we may never know the true identity of SUNNYSIDE, undaunted detectives that we are, we will continue to follow several Track 2 threads in hopes of resolving this marvelous mystery.

The first thread depends on whether the Marine Registration Division of the State of Connecticut has luck in tracing MARVEL from her last known stop in that state.

The second effort will focus on determining the history and provenance of the D-Class boat ELAINE. Why was she raced for only one year? Who was Harry C. Brownell? Was he any relation

to the famous boat transportation Brownell's of Mattapoissett? Did the ELAINE somehow also end up in Connecticut as did MARVEL for Walter K to later discover and resurrect?

The quest... and the marvelous mystery goes on.

(To be continued)

The author would greatly appreciate donations as small as \$1.00 to support the grassroots project restoring this historic catboat. These can be directly made to:

<https://gogetfunding.com/marvel-an-historic-boat-restoration-project/>