

John E. Conway
P.O. Box 46
Westport Point, MA 02791
617-821-7890
Jeconway3@gmail.com

A Marvelous Mystery

In pursuit of a catboat legend

by

John Conway

Part 9: Some Re-Assembly Required

That bittersweet time of year has arrived in New England when boats are put to sleep for what promises to be a way-too-long winter. As detailed in the last MAIB issue, this past season was especially bitter for the MARVEL Restoration Team in that medical issues had thwarted our goal of relaunching the olde girl. However, the sweetness returned somewhat in August once the restoration resumed. Several outstanding repairs were completed and many of the restored hardware and woodwork items were re-installed. With this came the realization that come next year she would be ready to launch just about as soon as the season opens.

Never-Ending Punch List

As all boat owners know well, there seems to be an never ending list of “things to do” in advance of a relaunch. This was especially true of a wooden boat that had been neglected as long as MARVEL had. All of MARVEL’s major structural work (ribs/planks/fastenings) had been completed by June of 2021. Yet this left a to-do list that included deck repairs, engine exhaust repairs, electrical system upgrades, cabin porthole refurbishment, bilge pump system upgrades and a number of additional items designed to make MARVEL a bit more user friendly. And then ,of course, there was the dreadful task of scraping, sanding and painting. Hmmm. Maybe the last few months were not so sweet after all.

Painting and More Painting

During September the team continued to fair the exterior hull and applied two coats of primer. We decided to delay applying the finish coats until the spring to avoid damage during the harsh winter. We had been avoiding a paintjob on the cabin interior due to the thanklessness of the job; way too many nooks and crannies to scrape, sand and prime. Nevertheless someone had to

do it. So over a warm/dry week in October I took on the task. First up was the bilge. It had been pressure washed in June and was still remarkable clean. So this went quickly. It now sports two coats of bilge-paint gray . As expected, the cabin was another matter. Yet after four days of applied elbow grease, and efforts with both brush and roller, the job was finished. It looks fantastic. **(Figure 1)**



Figure 1: Before and after views of the dreaded cabin painting)

Engine Exhaust Revealed Problems

For reasons unknown, the engine's exhaust exited below the waterline through a fitting that had no seacock. Obviously this curious arrangement had two serious problems. Exhausting underwater must have created horsepower-robbing back pressure and suggested that the installer had no idea what they were doing. Even if this had been appropriate, this also revealed a below-the-waterline opening with no means of closing it off had the exhaust hose failed.

To gain access to the hose and fitting we had to remove a large section of mahogany beadboard that shrouded the lining of the cockpit. **(Figure 2)** In so doing we noticed that the hose from the



Figure 2: Cockpit beadboards were carefully removed to gain access to the hose

manual bilge pump exited the transom from above the waterline. Perhaps a previous restoration had accidentally switched the exhaust and bilge pump hoses? To fix the situation we removed the underwater exhaust fitting and plugged, epoxied and faired the hole. We then installed a new, above-the-waterline fitting for the bilge pump and connected a new length of bilge hose to the new fitting and back to the deck-mounted Guzzler manual bilge pump.

While connecting the exhaust hose to its transom fitting we noticed that a pin-hole had developed in the hose. **(Figure 3)** Cheap Yankees that we are, rather than replacing this

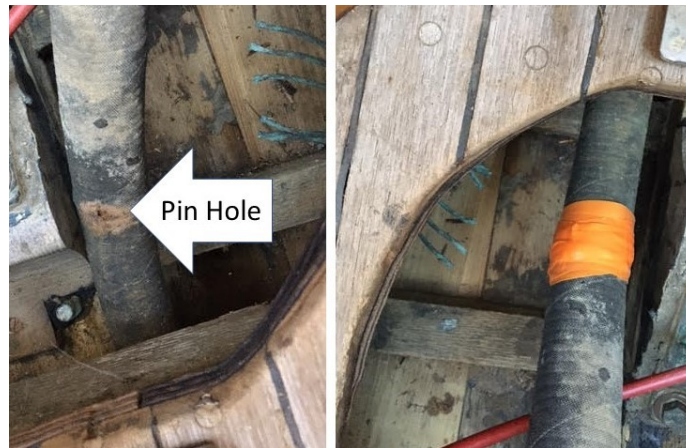


Figure 3: The pin hole in the exhaust line was repaired with Rescue Tape

expensive hose, we decided to repair it with Rescue-Tape, a remarkable stuff especially designed for this purpose. **(Figure 4)**.



Figure 4: Rescue Tape excels at repairing marine exhaust systems

When we re-installed the beadboard we plugged the screw holes with removable plastic bungs. **(Figure 5)** We did this to make access to these critical hoses more convenient. No more drilling



Figure 5: Plastic bungs made future beadboard removal easy

out glued wood plugs to remove a board.. Simply pop out the bung and unscrew the board. Some may complain that this ruins the aesthetic but we decided to err on the side of practicality. I'm not sure most people will even notice.

Deck Repairs Provide a Challenge

As shown in **Figure 6**, sections of MARVEL's beautiful teak deck had pulled away from the underlying structure. The culprit turned out to be random patches of delaminated marine



Figure 6: Damaged teak deck sections required challenging repair methods

plywood underlayment. Most deck repair locations afforded easy access and could be addressed with penetrating epoxy (to re-laminate the plywood) and/or installation of new sections of marine ply. However, several required the removal of the mahogany bead-board that shrouds the boat's cockpit to gain access to very tight spaces. **Figure 7** shows how this was accomplished.



Figure 7: Deck repairs utilized long screws and fender washers to unwarped deck sections

As with the engine and bilge pump hoses, beadboard sections were carefully removed. This exposed the failed underlayment. Penetrating epoxy was injected and a new, backer-piece of marine plywood affixed. It allowed us to remove the original deck screws and insert long bolts backed with large fender washers. Tightening the bolts allowed the fender-washers to pull the bulging deck section back flush. Once the epoxy had cured, the bolt/fender-washer hardware was backed out and proper marine-grade deck screws inserted in their place. The beadboard was reinstalled as a last step. In this way, we repaired a number of semi-inaccessible deck sections.

Potholes in the Portholes

As mentioned in past installments, MARVEL's cabin is constructed with inner and outer walls with structure in between to form a sandwich. The boatbuilders inserted wooden blocking that ring the inside edge of the porthole opening. This provides a mounting for the bronze, external portlight surrounds and for the interior portlights themselves,. When we removed the portlights for refurbishment we noticed that some of the blocking has rotted away, leaving a void (**Figure 8**).

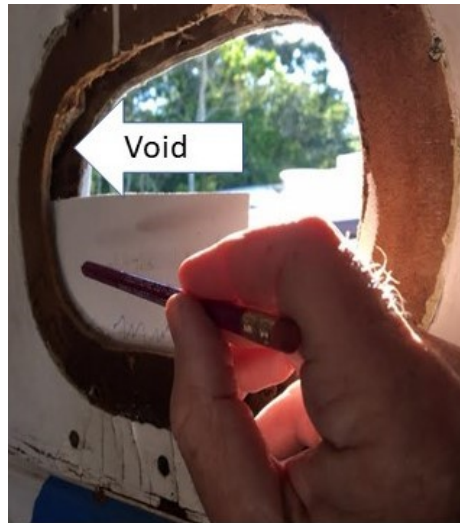


Figure 8: Rotten porthole inserts created voids that needed to be repaired

To address this we made templates and fashioned replacement blocking using pressure-treated wood and epoxied these into place. (**Figure 9**)

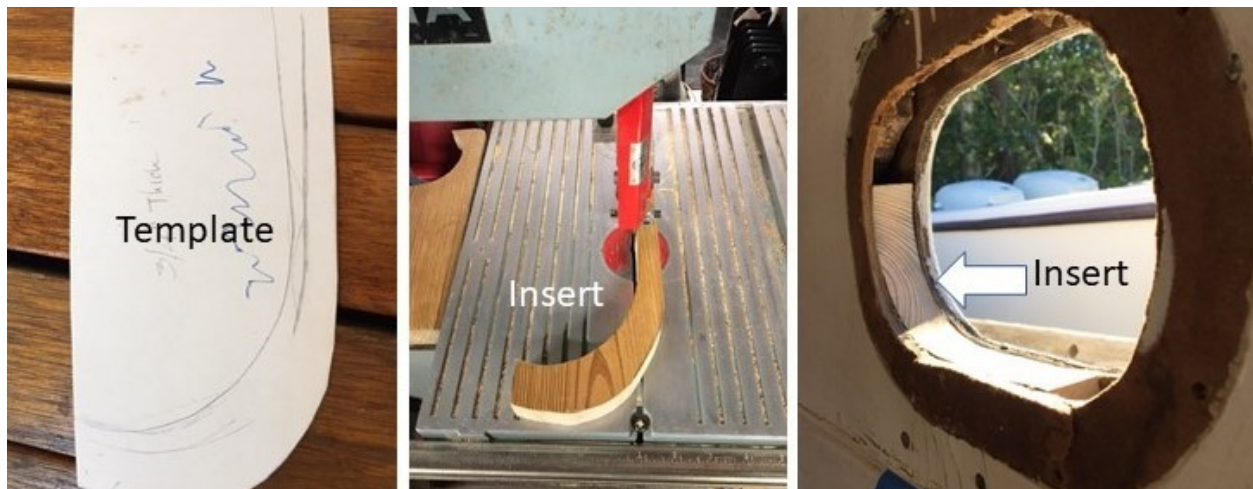


Figure 9: Template of the voids led to bandsawn filler blocks that led to epoxied inserts

Once the epoxy hardened, the surrounds and portlights were reattached or reinserted and fastened into place. (**Figure 10**)



Figure 10: Porthole exterior surrounds and internal portlights were reinstalled

Old Time/New Time Electrical

During the restoration of the cabin interior we noticed a number of ceramic standoffs mounted on the foremost cabin roof support. (**Figure 11**) These were clearly electrical fittings left over



Figure 11: The foremost cabin roof support contained a number of knob and tube ceramics

from the days of knob and tube wiring. (Perhaps when MARVEL was restored in the 1920's?) Located just beneath the forward cabin wall they must have supported wires that delivered electricity to the port and starboard running lights directly above. As a nod to the historical nature of this discovery, we decided to repower the boat's running lights using these antique fittings but restrung them with marine-grade, 21st century wire and connectors. (**Figure 12**)



Figure 12: For historical reasons we rewired the running lights using the existing knobs.

History notwithstanding, we did opt to replace the electrical panel installed during her 1960's restoration (**Figure 13**) with a state of the art breaker box mounted just inside and to the right

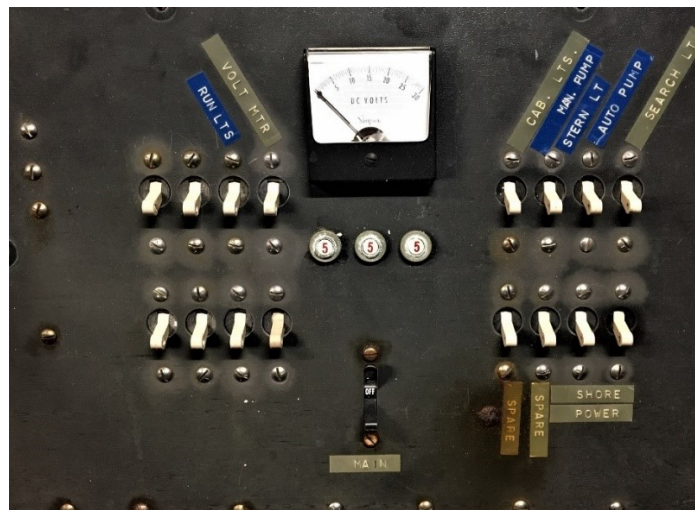


Figure 13: The old breaker panel was removed and updated

of the companionway (**Figure 14**). This provided digital monitoring and readout of the battery voltage and provided USB and 12 Vdc outlets. We also replaced all of MARVEL's running lights with energy efficient LED versions.



Figure 14: The new breaker panel offered many features not even invented for the old panel

Bilge Pumps Upgrade

Along with the redirected bilge pump hose described earlier, we upgraded both the deck-mounted, manual Gusher pump draw hose and filter and the Rule automatic electric pump and its hose. **(Figure 15)** Hopefully these will see very little action in the seasons ahead.



Figure 15: The automatic bilge pump and the intake for the manual Guzzler share bilge space

Rope Locker Installation

Curiously, the boat did not have a hawser pipe to feed anchor rode down into what was obviously a chain and rope locker located just behind her stem. On a trip to the Wickford Marine Consignment Shop (7725 Post Rd, North Kingstown, RI 02852; Phone: 401-295-9709) we rustled through their stockpile of antique marine hardware and secured a proper bronze pipe. If you have not been to this shop you owe yourself a visit. It is overstocked with everything imaginable for boating... and even stocks a few boats for sale as well. **(Figure 16).**



Figure 16: The Wickford Marine Consignment store is a boat bargain-hunter's paradise

A few minutes of well-placed drilling with a hole saw just ahead of the mast partner allowed us to install the fixture and feed the 300 feet of anchor line into the locker with little aggravation. (Figure 17).



Figure 17: Installation of the antique hawser pipe was straightforward with a drill hole saw

This should work nicely with the turn of the century wrought iron yachtsman's anchor shown in **Figure 18**. It was donated to the cause by Westport resident Carroll Williamson. We plan to have this anchor sand blasted and hot dip galvanized by the Duncan Galvanizing Company during the winter months. (DGC at 69 Norman St # 2, Everett, MA 02149 Phone: 617-389-8440). It will serve as our vintage-proper "working hook." A new, 25 lb Danforth that came with the boat, will provide storm anchor capabilities.



Figure 18: The new hawser pipe, line and chain should work well with the antique anchor.

Stove-Pipe Redux

As mentioned in a previous article, the boat once had a Shipmate #1 Wood/Coal stove aboard. Over time this was removed but the flu-pipe hole in the cabin roof, the turbine ventilator pipe and the water deck iron remained. Several of you wrote to me regarding these hardware items. Both were supplied by the firm that was then called the Perko Marine Lamp and Hardware Corporation (currently still in business as the well-known Perko, Inc.) **Figure 19** shows pages

PERKINS MARINE LAMP & HARDWARE CORP.

TURBINE VENTILATOR WITH MOUNTING FLANGE –
Fig. 748

For removing gasoline fumes from engine room and bilge, cooking odors from the galley, ventilation of the cabin, etc.
The mounting breeze whirls the blades and the resulting vacuum causes a powerful upward lift to the air below.
Absolutely quiet in operation, durable and rainproof.

Inside Diameter Inches	Dist. Inlet, in.	Clear. Each	Height Overall Inches	Base Diameter Inches	Qty. Weights Per Set
4	\$25.50	\$36.25	10 1/4	6	3 1/2
5	27.25	37.50	12 1/4	7	4 1/2
6	31.50	41.50	13 1/4	8	6




Fig. 748

WATER DECK IRONS – Fig. 430
Galvanized Cast Iron

Size of Stove Pipe Inches	Each	Outside Diam. of Flange Inches	Dist. Flange to End of Pipe Inches	Weight Pounds
3	6.25	3 3/4	7 1/2	4
3 1/2	7.25	3 3/4	8 1/2	5
4	11.00	4 3/4	9 1/2	6 1/2
5	13.50	5 3/4	10 1/2	9
6	18.50	6 3/4	11 1/2	11 1/2




Fig. 430

Figure 19: Items found in an early Perko Marine Lamp and Hardware Corporation catalogue

from one of their early catalogues. One MAIB reader directed us to remove paint from a spot at the base of the ventilator. Sure enough, there lay the brass PML&H boiler plate (**Figure 20**).



Figure 20: Brass “boilerplate” logo found on the Perko Turbine Ventilator

Since the Shipmate is no longer aboard, we decided to replace the ventilator with a more conventional cowl vent. We did so by simply snapping a SeaDog rubber vent onto the Charlie Noble mount to the water deck iron. (**Figure 21**)



Figure 21: The addition of a rubber cowl turned the water deck iron into a ventilator

This last task essentially completed the major punch list items and set the stage for placing MARVEL beneath her winter cover once again. However, we needed one last inspection by Luke

Mullaney, shipwright master extraordinary, prior to buttoning her up. Thankfully we passed Luke's intense scrutiny. (**Figure 22**)



Figure 22: The author with his toughest marine inspector... grandson Luke Mullaney

NOTE: Just before putting the olde girl to bed for the season we received the good news that George Schuld, our New Jersey-based centerboard expert, had regained 85% of the use of his thumb. Recall that it had been nearly severed in an industrial accident late spring. George reported that our computer designed and fabricated G-10 centerboard is ready installation as soon as the boat's winter cover comes off.

An Historical Surprise

In an earlier draft of this article I was about to report disappointment that both our bottoms up and top down historical research had hit brick walls. Then, just as I was about to send the copy off to Bob Hicks at MAIB, Kathryn Greene, daughter of former owner/restorer Walter Krasniewicz, emailed me to report that she had discovered two remarkable documents that could well blow through the blockages. The first is shown in **Figure 23**.

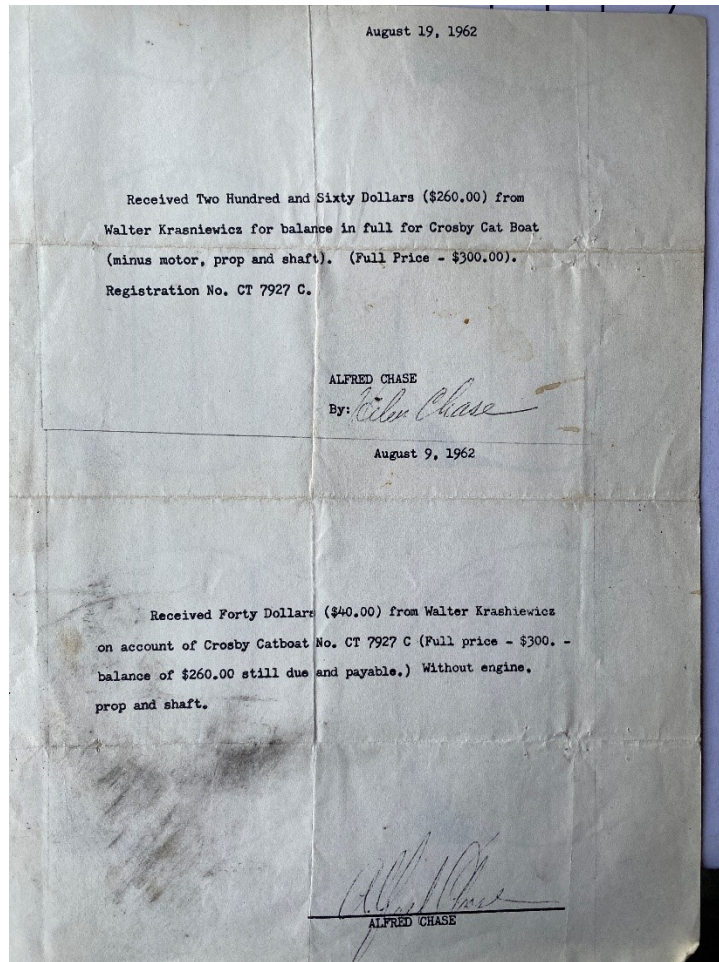


Figure 23:The bill of sale that could become a critical puzzle piece in the MARVEL's mystery

Dated August 9 and 19, 1962, it is the bill of sale for the boat from Alfred Chase to Walter Krasniewicz. Not only does it reveal the purchase price for what was to become SUNNYSIDE (To my mind a lot of money for an old wooden boat with no keel or engine) but that it is a Crosby Catboat (but sadly not identified by name or by builder as either a Charles, Daniel or Herbert Crosby boat.). Importantly, the document included its State of Connecticut registration number when sold (CT 7927 C). With this number Tim Delgado, an analyst with Connecticut's extremely well organized, DMV DEEP-Boating division in Old Lyme, CT should be able to trace multiple owners back through time. If so, this may well close the gap between when the boat moved from Long Island to Connecticut (~1919) and its ownership by Alfred Chase. This may well prove the provenance of the boat as MARVEL (or, *maybe not* MARVEL) We've just reached out to Mr. Delgado and will report our findings in the next installment come spring.

The second document, dated September 15, 1961, (**Figure 24**) contains a dialog between the boats' pre-Walter K owner, Mr. Chase, and the Universal Motor Company (now part of the Westerbeke Engine Company). This provides Alfred's address but, more importantly, identifies his business as the Chase Aeronautical Services Company.

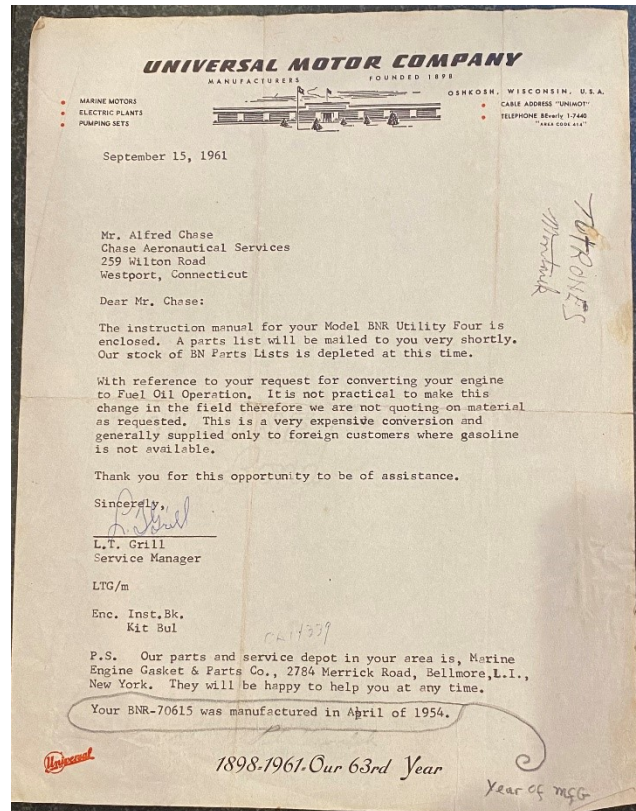


Figure 24: The letter that just might link the boat's previous owner to current relatives. We had heard from Kathryn's brother Tim that he recalled his father bought the boat from an airline pilot. So give Tim kudos. A quick GOOGLE search shows that a company with the name Chase Aviation, founded by Brian Chase, now operates out of Jamestown, NY. We will contact this firm in the hope that it is connected somehow to Alfred's old company.

Interestingly, the letter from the Universal Motor Company is dated September 15, 1961... almost a full year prior to the boat's sale to Walter. Looks like Alfred Chase was looking for parts for his boat's motor. This suggests that the catboat was in service on or about that time. If Brian Chase is related to Alfred he or his relatives may have old photos of the boat pre-Sunnyside and , perhaps, some great tales to tell.

Stay tuned.... This could make the winter months much more sweet than bitter for the MARVEL Restoration Team.

A Parting Shot

Just before we pulled her winter covers on we shot once last photo to carry us through the winter. The Olde Girl looks ready to roll among the wave once more come May.

Have a great and safe one everybody. See you in the spring.



Figure 25: MARVEL/SUNNYSIDE/SUSAN fully restored and ready for splashdown next spring
(To be continued in the spring)

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/>

Announcement: At this year's Catboat Association Annual Meeting (January 27-29, 2022 in the Mystic Marriott Resort in Groton, CT), MARVEL historian Joe Chetwynd and I will be holding a seminar on MARVEL and the processes we followed and tools needed to research the boats' history and provenance. More information can be found at www.catboats.org.)