

## Sally

(ex-Rugosa - HMCo – #608)

### How a Boat Determines the Course of Your Life.

#### In the Beginning:

Although my father always told me that my first sail was in a basket on a Star, my earliest boating memory is diving below on “Trim”, a US One Design, scooting forward and emerging through the forward hatch running down the deck aft and doing it again.

US Ones, as they were called, were classic sleek fractional rigged sloops similar to a Dragon or a Knarr. They were designed by John G. Alden and Carl Alberg. Thirty were built between 1946 and 1948 at Quincy Adams Yachts Yard located in Quincy, MA. Many notable yachts were launched at the yard such as “Ticonderoga”, winner of many ocean races.

I really have no recollection of sailing or racing on “Trim”, however I am sure we did so as a family. My mother was never really very interested in sailing, but she had married a sailor and lived to 100 putting up with a husband and son who really cared about little else.

#### Sally Becomes a Family Member:

In 1954 my father, Jerry Hickey, and Herb Bathke purchased “Sally” from the estate of Peter McNulty. Peter was a wealthy patent attorney, who had owned and, I understand, successfully raced “Sally” since becoming her owner in 1941. The early fifties were the beginning of the heyday of the CCA rule for handicap racing. CCA favored yawls with fine entries and long overhangs aft. Although I am speculating, I believe that Peter purchased “Tahuna” to be more competitive in racing. He maintained ownership of “Sally”. “Tahuna” was a 44' Phil Rhodes yawl. I was too young to remember much about her, but my father apparently raced on her including a Chicago Mac win in 1952.

When Peter passed, my understanding is that my father was charged with disposing of the boats by the estate. To the best of my knowledge, there were a number of Star and Lightning type boats in the estate that Peter had maintained to loan to local youth in Milwaukee.

Jerry and Herb bought “Sally” from the estate and “Tahuna” was sold to Claud and Bill Hogan in New Orleans. She was delivered down the Mississippi by my father and others including Shuff Willman who went on to run Palmer Johnson for many years. They became fast friends with the Hogans and eventually sailed at least one St. Pete to Havana race with them on “Tahuna”. This was the genesis of our eventual migration to New Orleans with “Sally” in tow.

#### Cruising and Racing on Lake Michigan:

Although I know we raced “Sally” and have a few recollections of doing so, with the exception of racing to Port Washington and Racine. My most vivid memories are of cruising. Starting in probably 1956 we began to take family vacations on “Sally”. My father always referred to her as “Dirty Old Sally”. We must have gone for at least ten days each time based on the distance we traveled. Each vacation included my mother, father, sister and myself, as well as Herb’s son Tommy and at least one of his friends. I was six and my sister was nine in the summer of 1956. Tommy and friends were in their mid-teens. We also did shorter weekend cruises, but the two most memorable were crossing Lake Michigan to Macataw and Holland, Michigan and an extended cruise of Green Bay and Door County.

The Macataw trip was memorable because on the 75 mile crossing of the lake it was blowing pretty hard and the seas were fairly high. Tommy's friend Marvin, who accompanied us, spent the trip in the lee scupper returning his lunch to Poseidon. That was great fun for me. Another thing that stuck in family lore was, while walking down the street in Holland my mother was wearing bright pink pedal pushers and a brightly flowered blouse (it was the fifties), one of the conservatively attired locals commented: "They're straight from the hills." We chuckled about that for years.

The Green Bay / Door County cruise(s) were memorable because we went to so many beautiful places, but two incidents define the memory. The first was the escape from Washington Island. The second was the transit of Death's Door.

There was an anchorage at Washington Island that was, and probably still is, very popular with cruisers. I vaguely remember that there was some sort of summer camp there. There was an old barn there that everyone who anchored there had painted their boats name on. We must have made more than one cruise there because I remember the roof and all four sides were covered in boat names. When we arrived this time, there was a brand new unblemished roof on the barn. We did whatever we did that day and when I awakened in the morning we were under power and out of sight of the island. Tommy and friend had taken the spinnaker pole ashore and shinned up it to paint "SALLY" in six foot letters on the brand new roof. My father caught them returning to the boat and weighed anchor. Some time in the seventies I saw a picture of that barn on the cover of Lakeland Boating and you could still see "SALLY" under all the other boat names that had been added over the years.

Death's Door Passage (Porte des Mortes) is the passage between Green Bay and Lake Michigan. At it's narrowest point it is about a mile and a third wide. It can be very rough under the wrong conditions. It has a relatively fierce reputation because the shoals make the channel narrow and loads of boats have been lost there. On our passage out of Green Bay under power it was rough. It was hot and my mother was down below cooking on an alcohol stove and was getting a bit green around the gills. She finished cooking and delivered the meal on deck just as we were entering the roughest part of the passage. Just as I got my plate, we shipped some spray. So I took my lunch below and ate it in the heat with the smell of the alcohol stove. My mother said she knew then that I would never be seasick. I heard that story many times into my adulthood and after a lifetime at sea I have never been seasick.

### **The Migration Begins:**

In 1959 my father came home one day and announced that he was sick of working on the boat nine months of the years and sailing three months. He wanted to flip that and sail nine months of the year. He had a new boss at work whom he pretty well despised. It was decided that he would find a job in either New Orleans or Tampa. New Orleans it was, so he bought Herb out of the boat and she was shipped to New Orleans where I became an Orleanian, through and through. I was nine and went from fourth grade in Milwaukee to fifth grade in New Orleans.

My mother published an article in Lakeland Boating that details our first foray into the Gulf of Mexico. She being a journalist, I will not attempt outdo her so please read the article. There is a detail in her article that needs to be explained. While sailing to Gulfport we shipped a lot of water primarily because the topsides were dry and the seams were open. After several hours her planking swelled and the leaking abated. Anyone who sailed wooden boats would be familiar with this phenomenon. It was a common occurrence when splashing the boat for the first time in the spring on the Great Lakes. With "Sally" in the water year

round sailing in predominately light air, she dried out and rarely heeled enough to keep her swollen. On the 18 – 20 hour race to Gulfport she was rail down a lot.

Maintaining “Sally” in the south was a chore. In Milwaukee we had a family support group and a partner to help take care of her. She was on the beach for nine months so there was not a lot of time pressure to do things. In the water 12 months of the year there are things that must be done or you sink. While Jerry quickly made friends who sailed with us and helped out, the burden was too much so the decision was made to find her a new home and switch to a plastic fantastic boat. We wound up finding a couple of guys in Houston who had a fiberglass Shaw 24 yawl and wanted to move up so a deal was struck. We became owners of “Truant”. It’s hard to remember a time when a fiberglass boat was a novelty, but in the early sixties they were few and far between.

### **Go West Old Girl:**

I really can’t recall whether it was 1963 or 1964 when Jerry and I left in “Dirty Old Sally” to start the trip to Galveston. We took her to Houma Louisiana via the Intercoastal Canal. The trip entailed going through the Industrial Canal locks up the Mississippi to the Algiers locks into the Intercoastal and down the bayous to Houma. It took two days. We left her there for the new owners to pick up and continue on to Galveston.

That was my first real experience with the bayous of South Louisiana. Over the course of my 45 years career in the offshore oil industry, I became intimately familiar with those swamps as well as many others around the world.

### **Last Sighting:**

In 1967 I helped deliver a CAL 2-30 to Galveston for a race from Galveston to Gulfport, MS. We retraced the trip “Sally” had made years earlier. It’s a long way through those bayous at 5 knots. When we arrived in Galveston and tied up in the marina I noticed a familiar looking boat a couple of slips down. It was “Dirty Old Sally”. Her bowsprit had been removed. She was re-rigged as a sloop. A deckhouse had replaced her forward hatch. She looked terrible. Someone in the marina told me a college professor had purchased her and planned to retire on her and sail away.

My next sighting of “Dirty Old Sally” was on the Herreshoff Registry in San Diego where she awaits a Knight in Shining armor...

### **Epilogue:**

I have to say that “Dirty Old Sally” and subsequently “Truant”, the Shaw 24, defined my life. I wound up as a Navigation Systems Engineer and then a Dynamic Positioning Systems specialist. I have been involved in the design and construction of several billion dollars’ worth of deep-water drilling and marine construction vessels. I’ve worked on every continent except Antarctica and been around the world more times than I can count both in the air and at sea. I owe it all to my very patient parents and life lessons on “Dirty Old Sally”.

Sean Hickey

Pensacola Florida, 2022