



Owner's Association



NEWS LETTER

JANUARY 2012

DICKERSON HISTORY

A Historical Review Committee consisting of Barry Creighton, Paula and Jim Karr, D and Don Wogaman and the writer has compiled a Historical Review of Dickerson Boatbuilders from it's humble beginning at Bill Dickerson's back yard at Church Creek, Maryland in 1946 to Trappe and the building of the last Dickerson in 1987. The Dickerson Owners web site <http://dickersonowners.org/> features a short video of this fabulous history and a 16 page document with photos. At the 2012 Dickerson Rendezvous, June 15-17, we will celebrate the Dickerson Boatbuilders by inviting those that are still with us and the relatives of those that have moved on to visit with us and join in this celebration. In compiling this history, it was heartwarming to talk to the relatives of those that have passed on like Preston Brannock and Donald Griffin and those that are still with us like Tom Lucke, Ted Reed and our own Jim and Paula Karr (who played such active roles in the organization and got married while working for the Dickerson firm).

Following is a note that we received from Ted Reed who bought Dickerson Boatbuilders in December of 1978 with his friend Bennett Dorrance and built the D-37, D-50, and Farr 37 in addition to the D-41 and D-36; started a charter service, and built a new marina.

Joe Slavin, "Irish Mist"

"Dear Joe,

First I want to thank you and the others involved in compiling the Dickerson History and keeping the Dickerson Association alive and well. While the years I spent at Dickerson

were both the best and worst years (financially) of my life, it is gratifying to know that the boats we built are still being enjoyed and maintained by an active group of sailors. It makes the blood, sweat, and tears we put into Dickerson all worthwhile!

The following are random stories/thought which you may or may not choose to include in your history:

1. On page one you refer to the fact that Franc Mate compared Dickerson favorably to Hinckley. Just adding support to that claim, while we loved building boats for all our owners, one of my favorites was the Dickerson 41 we built in the early 80's for Ben and Nancy Belcher. Ben was the CEO of Benjamin Moore Paints and had owned four Hinckleys. He was thrilled with his Dickerson 41 and he too compared it glowingly to his Hinckleys and "at less than 40% of what they cost me!" As an additional bonus to building a boat for a wonderful couple who really appreciated the workmanship, Carla and I were offered and accepted the Belcher's offer to use their Dickerson 41 in Maine. We had a wonderful 2 weeks of cruising Down East and had one of the only vacations we had while we owned Dickerson.
2. You referred to the fact that I sailed with the Lewis family on their world cruise on "Southern Cross". I was with them for 6 months and sailed from Puerto Rico, to the San Blas Islands, through the Panama Canal, the Galápagos Islands, 2,400 miles to the Marquesas Islands, and on to Tahiti where I left them and returned to Philadelphia. Upon my return to Philadelphia in 1976 a good friend introduced me to Carla who was a widow with 2 small children. We were married and I convinced her we should have a Dickerson 41 built for us so we could go cruising. We had our Dickerson 41, Papillion, built the following year during which time we found out that we were going to have a baby and Carla put her foot down and said she would not live on a 41 foot boat with 3 children under 6 years old, so we bought Dickerson Boatbuilders instead.
3. A week before we closed on the purchase of Dickerson from Tommy Lucke in 1978 I got a call from Dick Hutchins who was a partner of Fawcetts Boat Supplies in Annapolis asking me to have lunch with him. At lunch he said that while he was really good friends with Tommy Lucke he advised me not to purchase the company as it was having financial difficulties and "the boat business is a very difficult one to make money in". When I told him that I was excited by the challenge and looking forward to growing Dickerson he then gave me this advice, "The way to take away a million dollars from a boat business is to start with two million dollars and get out quickly!" From a financial standpoint I wish I had taken his advice.
4. One of the easiest ways to sell the Dickerson 37's was into our charter fleet. Jim Karr who had worked with the Moorings in the British Virgin Islands spearheaded this effort and made it a real success. Shortly after purchasing Dickerson I took Jim with me to meet a friend at Schaefer's Canal House to try out his sales pitch on a good friend and sailor from Philadelphia. After Jim did a great job of pitching the pluses of Dickerson and the charter concept he concluded with, "and the best part is you can use the boat as much as you want in August!" My friend

cut the conversation and the sale short by informing Jim that he was not interested in being on the Chesapeake in August!

5. Soon after purchasing Dickerson, I realized many of the workers, including Preston Brannock, had never sailed. They may have spent a great deal of time on the water in workboats and had built many sailboats, but they had never sailed. I remedied that by initiating a semi-annual sailboat race for the workers followed by a crab/oyster fest. On the first race Preston was on my boat and as we were tacking toward the first mark I looked over at him and saw that he was white faced and hanging on for dear life. I asked him what was the matter and he said, "This damn thing is going to tip over and I am going to drown!" I said that I certainly did not think so, especially since he was the one who built the boat.
6. Another story about Preston, who was never afraid of speaking his mind, was a time when I was showing a potential buyer around. The customer, who was very proud of his sailing accomplishments, said in a very loud voice "In all the years I have been sailing, I have never run aground." Preston, who was working in the vicinity said in an equally loud voice, "Ain't never run aground, ain't never been on a boat." We did not make that sale.
7. While I have always been a cruiser and not a racer, the Farr 37 project is one experience I will never forget. Working with Bruce Farr and his partners was very different than anything I had experienced. In a five month period we built the plugs for the hull and deck and built the first 3 Farr 37s. We worked around the clock for weeks on end and I remember one of the workers comment at around 2:00 AM, "Well Mr. Reed, if it was easy everyone would do it!" Our first race on Bert Jabin's Farr 37, "Babe", on a Wednesday night at the Annapolis Yacht Club had the typical light winds. "Babe" was first in class by almost 6 minutes in a race usually won by seconds. Racing on the Bay changed dramatically that day.
8. As I look back on what went wrong with Dickerson financially I see several major causes:
 - a. Very aggressive expansion on my part:
 - i. Purchase of the fiberglass operation from Lippencotts
 - ii. Dredging and building 50+ slip marina
 - iii. New design and molding costs of the Dickerson 37
 - iv. Expensive national advertising campaign
 - v. Development of the Farr 37
 - b. Interest rates that went through the roof. Paul Volker raised the Fed Funds rate by around 5% in one day. I remember the day as I was taking a potential buyer on a test sail. He wanted two Dickerson 37s, one for our charter service and one for a charter fleet in Florida. When he heard the news of the dramatic increase in interest rates he called to inform me that he would not be willing to proceed with the purchase. The prime rate eventually reached 21.5%. We actually had one purchaser who paid 25% for his boat loan!
 - c. The strength of the dollar was such that foreign boats, Beneteau in particular, could be imported and sold for about 60% of what U.S. boats cost. As an example, the Farr 37, which was a faster racing boat then the

Beneteau 41 cost about 35% less than the Farr 37, had more space by far and was better, suited for cruising as well as racing.

- d. The final blow came when the IRS announced that they were questioning the tax deductions of second homes and boats in charter fleets. While none of our owner's deductions were disallowed, as one potential buyer told me "I am comfortable deducting the charter boat, but quite frankly there are other deductions on my return that I don't want Uncle Sam to see."
9. In 1994/95 Carla, our youngest son Josh who was 15 and I finally realized a dream of living and cruising on a Dickerson when we purchased a Dickerson 36 center cockpit, "Compass Rose". After several weeks of getting her ready to go cruising we headed north and got as far as Block Island. We then began our journey to Key West via the Chesapeake and the inland waterway with occasional off shore legs. We then made the quick hop across the Gulf Stream to the Bahamas where we spent a wonderful four months cruising with other cruisers we met along the way and finally back to La Trappe Creek where we put our beloved Compass Rose on the market. While there were so many highlights to our trip, certainly one of the highlights was when someone would shout out "What a beautiful boat. It's a Dickerson isn't it?"



Carla and son Josh



Carla and Ted



"Compass Rose"



Carla and Ted- It was a really great cruise

10. Well I could go on and on (maybe I already have), but I will stop here. Please feel free to use/edit as much or as little of this info as you would like. As I was recalling these tales and many more I primarily remember the joy of fulfilling many sailors' dreams and the financial pain we experienced becomes merely a thing of the past.

Thanks again. It is great to see the Dickerson Family so active and vibrant.

Ted"

BOTTOM'S UP (A love story)

It all began simply enough, as most of these things usually do. Rainbow was entered in the annual Annapolis to Solomon's Island race and I had assembled a crackerjack crew if there ever was one. Veteran Dickerson sailors Jim Freal and Dick Clarke were on board. We also had two ringers from the Salisbury State University sailing team: my cousin's daughter Julia and her friend Wendy. How could we miss?

We left the pier at five on that Friday evening to get in some practice runs before our scheduled 7:20 PM start; clear skies and a decent ten knot breeze awaited us.

"Rainbow" was sailing well as we assembled near the starting line with the other 125 boats that had entered the race. Sails were everywhere you looked and it was magnificent!

Contrary to tradition aboard "Rainbow", we got a decent start. She was hard on the wind and pointing well, making about five and a half knots. Then it happened. An hour into the race, Jim comes up from below. "John", he says, "Is there supposed to be this much water in the cabin"? A quick inspection revealed that several planks in the starboard bow area were disobeying orders and leaking. It was not bad enough that the pump could not keep up, but bad enough to



scuttle plans for the race. (I am under strict orders from my wife that I am not allowed to kill myself until after the kids are through college, then I can do as I please.) The skipper gave the order to come about and we headed back to Annapolis under a full moon. It was a great evening sail and it wouldn't have been this pleasant even if we had planned it.

The planks took up overnight and stopped leaking while at the pier, but I knew that it was time for some serious work to be done. The problem has its roots in a "repair" I made eighteen years ago when the planks opened up after six weeks of being on the hard. I took the hull down to bare wood that summer and put caulking in some seams that had opened just prior to re-launch. Never put anything in an open seam with these boats since when it finally swells, the planks eventually pull away from the frames and then they start leaking.

In preparation for the current repair, I tore apart the forepeak, head, and starboard forward locker, revealing areas that had not seen the light of day since she was built over forty years ago. This was not exactly what I had in mind when I repainted these areas just two months earlier.

Joe Reid of Mast and Mallet in Edgewater was my choice for the job. Joe had repaired some planks on Irish Mist and came highly recommended. We settled on a plan to replace several frames that had weakened (two had cracked) and several floors; these looked otherwise solid but since he would be working in that area anyway and I would rather do more than less. Joe estimated that it would take about 100 hours to make the repairs. You never know what you will find once you start work like this and he ended up being off by only a factor of two!

Rainbow arrived at the yard in mid-September and the Mast & Mallet team began removing planks. The kids and I would go to the yard every weekend to see the progress. It turned out that "progress" was ripping out more and more planks every week. Joe threw me a bone once in a while by putting in a new rib here and there but I was getting worried that she would be out of the water for the entire winter. Call their number and the answering machine says they are busy in the shop making sawdust. How true--How true.





The new planks are mahogany to match the originals and the new frames and floors are oak. Her new frames are heavier than the originals and were not steam bent. Joe cut them out of solid oak stock in the same way frames were cut for the old sailing ships and these are quite strong. Since the planks are held together with epoxy, there was no need to replace an entire frame up to the sheer clamp (carvel planks are not joined to each other, just to the frames and that is what makes the difference). Rain and high tides that flooded the yard on occasion slowed the work and it was not until early November that Joe and the team was ready to install new planks. The planks ends are ship-lapped to avoid butt joints that would require blocking behind them.

While the boat would be out of the water anyway, I had asked Joe to replace the wood pad under the stuffing box. The wood had looked a bit punky the last time I changed the shaft packing and re-bedded the stuffing box. So while we were at it, Joe replaced the original bronze shaft with a new stainless one, installed a new cutless bearing and since I had had a new prop in the garage for five years, we added that for good measure. To top it off, Joe re-cut the boottop which had gotten skewed after 40, these forty years.



Finally she went in. Rainbow had not been out of the water this long since I was acquired by her eighteen years ago, so she sat in the slings at the yard for twenty-four hours while the rest of the planks swelled up. There was still some slight weeping in areas that had not been a problem, so it's just a matter of time for them to get tight.

Looking good, we left the yard on Saturday the 12th and headed back to Annapolis. Now that she is back in her slip, it's time to reassemble the interior and break out the paint brush.

Too many D and Don "boat units" were consumed in this project to make sense. It's just crazy. But it's crazy that we fall in love and get married. It's crazy that we have kids. It's crazy that we do what we do with these boats. Crazy is the only way to live.

John Freal "Rainbow"

NEW DICKERSON HANDICAP SYSTEM

A new handicap system has been developed and was used in the 2011 season at the Dickerson Rendezvous and Western Shore Roundup. By all indications it was successful and it produced new winners and, I think, increased interest in racing.

Over the years there has been conversation amongst Dickerson folks that the same people win our racing events every year. Of course we are all very laid back about our racing, which is good. But it does result in the same folks being Commodore and probably takes some of the fun out of racing. For some of us that aren't all that competitive or don't keep our boats light, with clean bottoms, and near new sails the race may consist of a frightening start followed by following the leaders around the course with no hope of getting glory or silver.

A couple of years ago some bull sessions occurred on this subject and they resulted in a Committee being formed on the subject with the concurrence of the Commodore Barry Creighton and Dick Young. This Committee consisted of Dick Clarke, Bruce Franz, Bill Toth, Joe Slavin and Randy Bruns. With the exception of this writer these folks are the very ones that have been winning or doing well at the regattas. We all decided we need to get more folks winning the races and being Commodore. After a fair amount of debate it was concluded that we should adopt a system where the handicap is based on the individual sailor's prior results rather than a handicap based on just the boat. The better a sailor has performed the lower his handicap compared to others. This is like a golf handicap system. Golf handicapping has been successfully used for many years and if a high handicapper plays well in a round of golf he can even beat a pro. There have been golf style handicap systems used by other sailing groups but a review of some of these by Joe Slavin did not result in one that would work for us.

Consequently Joe and this writer spent the winter of 2009-2010 coming up with a formula for computing more egalitarian handicaps. We used results back to 2003 to develop new handicaps for all those that have raced in the Rendezvous. Essentially what is done is to compare the finish time of each sailor against the finish time of the winner of a race. For each race the handicap in seconds per mile needed to finish at the same time as the winner is computed. The handicap is computed for each year the sailor participated. These handicaps are averaged and then a single scale factor (for all boats) is multiplied by this average handicap. The resulting numbers were trialed

against the actual results of the Rendezvous for all years. It took a lot of EXCEL number crunching, changing the scale factor, to find the sweet spot that seemed most fair and distributed high finishes among the most number of sailors. For folks new to Dickerson racing a conservative provisional handicap that was based on the performance of his Classes low handicapper (i.e. 37, 41 etc.) was used. As soon as two years of racing results were obtained a sailor would get a handicap based on his individual performance.

Joe and I presented our results to the others of the committee and Dick Young and Commodore Barry Creighton. There were a few suggestions which we incorporated and then we all reached agreement to use the handicap system for 2011.

The new handicap worked well at the Rendezvous and the Western Shore Roundup. At the Rendezvous, Dave Fahmeir won the 41 Class and John Freal won the 35, 36 Class. However, it looks like we didn't change the handicaps enough to keep Bill Toth, a frequent winner, from becoming Commodore once again. At the Western Shore Roundup Pat Ewing, a newer Dickerson sailor, won the top honors of "Sheriff of the Western Shore".

We plan to use the handicap system again in 2012. We will incorporate the 2011 results in the handicap computation and we might tweak the formula a bit. If anyone has comments or suggestions on the handicapping please contact me or Joe.

Randy Bruns, "Rhythms in Blue".

SOUTHERN BAY ADVENTURES

The 2011 US Sailboat Show

We've all seen the bumper stickers that read, "I'd Rather Be Sailing" and my bet is that Dickerson sailors embrace that adage more than most, but sometimes we can string events together that take us to even better times. Take last several weeks for example.

It all started out on Thursday, 6 October with the opening of the 2011 US Sailboat Show in Annapolis. Judy and I drove up early and the traffic was so light that I decided to park the car at the US Naval Academy. (Pretty gutsy since I have an Air Force Academy license plate and Air Force had beaten Navy in overtime the week before.) We bought our tickets and entered the gate promptly at the firing of the opening cannon expecting to see D and Don Wogaman checking tickets as they have done for several years. But, no D and Don in sight. Not to worry, we knew that Bob and Sarah Shelton would soon be there after getting snarled in some traffic just short of Annapolis. And sure enough they arrived—Judy had just enough time to check out the Tilley hat booth. (surprise, surprise no new hat this year—yet). The four of us split up to visit the vendors on our respective lists before joining up for a wonderful lunch together, as is our tradition.

I learned that you meet a LOT of people if you wear your Dickerson sweatshirt to the boat show. We saw Ruth Christie, SpinSheet cruising editor and met the owners of D37 “Andomeda” who keep her on the Rhode River. And I was amazed how many people “know someone who had owned”, or “always wanted to own”, or “just would love to see”. Needless to say, we visited every booth, bought some trinkets and collected literature for winter improvement projects.

As for me, I went aboard one boat, a new Tartan 37, and it was another reaffirmation of how much I love my Dickerson. In the travels around the show grounds we finally did see D and Don—so happy that they came all the way up from North Carolina. It was a wonderful day (and no, the car wasn’t vandalized).

The Dickerson Southern Bay Rendezvous

Our schedule wouldn’t allow us to sail “Crew Rest” up to the Piankatank River for the 1st Southern Bay Rendezvous on Saturday, 8 October but we had a gracious invitation from the Shelton’s to join them aboard “Aequanimitas” for the sail over from Healy Creek to Queens Creek (go get our your charts and have a look) and the new Burry Estate (I kid not--) and the Rendezvous. So we packed up the car early on Saturday morning for the two-hour drive.



The trip from Virginia Beach to Deltaville takes us right by “Crew Rest” at Old Point Comfort, so I stopped in and looted the wine locker for our hosts.



The drive up was very pleasant with a stop at the “Homemade Ice Cream” shop in Gloucester for sustenance. We arrived right on time in beautiful Healy Creek and we were warmly welcomed by “Aequanimitas’ Captain and Embarked Admiral (Bob and Sarah) and we stowed our gear.



We were actually a little ahead of schedule allowing us to hop in the car and drive a few miles to the boat yard where Malone Williams and Rob Meredith were hard at work on their restoration of D36 “Lothlorien” (formerly “Laura Isabel”). They are making great strides and have become expert rot removers. She will be in great shape for their second Rendezvous in June.



(Have you noticed the beautiful day, yet?) I digress. Back to “Aequanimitas” and casting off lines. Sailing on her is very different than “Crew Rest”. While we have few creature comforts, no dodger, no cockpit cushions, etc., etc., “Aequanimitas” has EVERYTHING. Next June in Oxford, check out Bob’s main sheeting system and Hoyt jib boom and butterfly hatch AND and custom davits and caned helm seats. Everything is easily controlled from the comfort of a protected cockpit. And----when Sarah brought out the embroidered pillows, we could only smile---what comfort! (BTW, she slips along very nicely at 6.5k.)



Maneuvering out of Healy Creek requires a little “local knowledge” and our captain has plenty so we set sails in no time. Queens Creek, on the other hand, was new water and the charts didn’t make it look any friendlier. But we pressed on and greatly appreciated the “pilot boat” as Chris and Bill Burry and D and Don Wogaman came out in the Burry’s Grady White to safely guide us in. Once inside the creek entrance, the water opened up to reveal a spectacular setting fitting for the Burry’s post civil war property. We were

greeted at the Burry's dock by the most qualified deck hands I've ever seen and the party started.



Pretty cool to see a pair of Dickerson yachts together. Here "Aequanimitas" joins "Plover".





The rest of the afternoon and evening was a case study in friendship and fellowship. Bill and Arlene Dodson and their Newfoundland “puppy” joined us as they arrived by land and we all cemented our relationships that are built around the love and respect for each other and these great boats.



Chris had prepared a wonderful Virginia Ham and we all gathered for dinner around the table. Yum—yum. More stories, some of them true! We did our best at figuring out how to work our cameras so that we could capture the good times—but pictures just can’t do the event justice.



The sky was clear, full of stars, the moon almost full and the air still has our hosts boarded the “pilot boat” once again to thread us on our route out of Queens Creek. After only a few shrieks of “Go to Starboard!” we arrived back to the safety of Healy Creek.

This may not be Heaven, but we got a glimpse of it.

I Digress (Again)



Two weeks later, this Captain got a call from my slip neighbor in Hampton to see if I was available to help position a boat from the Seaford Yacht Club to Hampton Creek as that boat, a Fountaine Pajot Orana 44 catamaran, “Alethia” was preparing for the Caribbean 1500 race. “Well of course!” Now this was an interesting experience—first time I’d sailed a boat with a 24 foot beam. It was more like moving a Holiday Inn suite down the Bay than beating “Crew Rest” hard on the wind to make a Rendezvous. I mean---3 air conditioners and an ice cream maker?

But, we had a great day on the Southern Bay and “Alethia” went on to place 2nd in the race to the Bahamas. {By the way, I had a last minute offer to crew during the race but had to decline because my passport had expired-----{note to self---}}

In summary, it has been a great close to the 2011 sailing season. As we add the anti-freeze and change the oil—these memories will sustain us as we prepare to take back the Dickerson Cup in 2012.

WHAT AN ADVENTURE

Barry Creighton
D37 “Crew Rest”

HAPPY NEW YEAR

2012 will be an exciting year with the Rendezvous on Fathers Day weekend, June 15-17, celebrating the Dickerson Boatbuilders, and the fall Western Shore Round Up and New England Gathering. The word is getting out. Visit the Dickerson web site <http://dickersonowners.org/> , SpinSheet www.spinsheet.com , Good Old Boat www.goodoldboat.com , or the web site on rebuilding the “Laura Isabel” <http://lothloriendickerson36ketch.weebly.com/> and you will find Dickerson activity in videos or write ups. Also please do not be bashful. We want to hear from you about your Dickerson adventures, maintenance issues or just some good stories. E mail us at jws2827@aol.com

Have a very happy and healthful 2012.

Edited by Bruce Franz

Membership Committee Joe Slavin, Barry Creighton, and John Freal