

Autumn 2015

# RiversWest News

Inspiring the crafting and use of low-impact boats

## President's Corner



Fellow Members,

Our energetic and dedicated members of RiversWest have done a considerable amount of boating activities this summer.

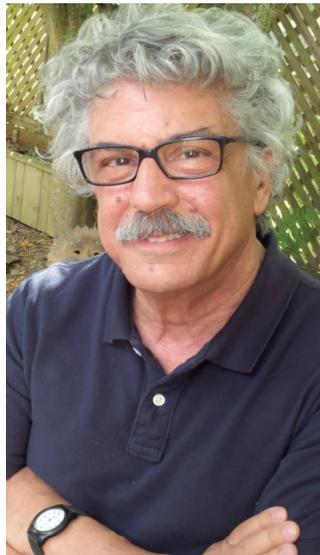
With our warm—well, sometimes hot—days, we kicked off the season with our 3rd Annual Hagg Lake messabout in June. It was a great day for socializing, boating and enjoying the great burgers cooked by our master griller, Mike Simmons.

The Family Boat Build in July was expanded to include 13 families working together to build a 12-ft. wooden boat, the Salt Bay Skiff. What makes this event so pleasing is watching the joy on the children's and parents' faces as they launch their boats on the Willamette River. I do think the Family Boat Build is the premier event that RiversWest sponsors, in partnership with the Willamette River Sailing Club. Bringing the whole family together for a weekend, sharing work, deciphering boat plans and just being together outdoors is the basis for fond memories.

Catlin Gabel students also built two more Salt Bay Skiff's two weeks after the Family Boat Build. These boats were configured with sails so the students could both row and sail. Sailing is a great skill to learn and once mastered, can offer a lifetime of pleasant marine experiences.

Chuck Stuckey is the founder and continuing manager of both the Family Boat Build and the Catlin Gabel boat building classes. These are just a few reasons why he was presented with the RiversWest Founders Award for 2015. Thank you again, Chuck, for your valuable contributions to RiversWest, and more importantly, to our community.

Our hard-working boat builders have completed and launched a relatively large number of small craft this summer: Craig Bryant's Scamp, John Whitehouse's interesting cutoff sailboat, Steve Najjar's



kayak, Mark Ramsby's Mojo (an 18-ft. center console power boat), and Russ Smith's 18-ft. glued lapstrake dory. This is truly a milestone in RiversWest crafting of small boats. Perhaps a champagne party at the shop in celebration of this is in order! One important thing to remember: We at RiversWest do not waste a bottle of good champagne by breaking it on the bow of a boat at launching. We do what every sane and astute mariner does from time immemorial—we drink it!

As mentioned in our last newsletter, Jim Litton has donated many valuable and useful tools to our club. We sorted through these and decided what to keep and what to sell. We hosted a members-only sale of these tools on Saturday, September 19, at our shop. We sold approximately \$600 of Jim's tools to our members. The remaining unsold tools will be sold on Craigslist to the general public. Thank you again, Jim, for your generous contribution.

In addition to the many activities RiversWest is engaged in, we are also an educational organization. Our volunteer members donate their time and skills in educating us on various maritime craft. This follows in the ancient maritime tradition of passing on knowledge to our next generation. Randy Torgerson continues to do a great job in coordinating these ongoing workshops. And a thanks to all our members who, with energy and

patience, guide us in the hands-on skills of marine craft, including the mysteries of birds mouth spars.

Our Book Club is enjoying some remarkable books. To date we've vicariously experienced two authors' voyages on the waters off British Columbia, a single-handed voyage around the world, a wacky journey through the South Pacific, and the founding of Astoria. Oh, and an interesting and controversial "fictional-biography" of a boyhood in Wales. It may seem oxymoronic, a fictional-biography(?), but hey, that's what makes reading so enjoyable. Our next "voyage" is Jack London's "Sea Wolf," an adventure tale that has few equals.

Happy Boating!



## French Frigate “L’Hermione”

Stu Whitcomb

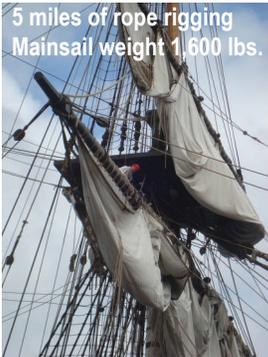
Entering Castine, ME  
7/14/15, Bastille Day



Festivities & parade  
await L’Hermione



5 miles of rope rigging  
Mainsail weight 1,600 lbs.



Captain & crew  
in period dress



The stern shows her  
attention to detail



Tug assisted  
docking



In 1780, with a top speed of over 12 knots, the recently launched *L’Hermione* sped the Marquis de Lafayette across the Atlantic, along with a fleet of ships and 5,000 troops, to relieve the beleaguered forces of General Washington. She was the pride of France and their newly re-energized navy. She could out-sail and out-gun any British ship of her class.

In 2012, after 17 years and \$23 million in planning and replicating every detail, the new *L’Hermione*, was launched in Rochefort, France. This past summer she made her American Journey. The ship’s 11 ports-of-call were along the East Coast starting at Yorktown, VA and finishing, on Bastille Day, in Castine, ME, a short drive from our summer place. It was an honor to be able to see 200 years of live naval history within reach and hear the retorts of her cannons saluting America.

### “L’Hermione”

Concorde-Class “frigate of 12”, meaning her 26-12 pound principal guns & 6- 6 pounders.

LOA: 145’ Beam: 36’11” Draft: 16’4” Disp: 1,166 tons Sail area: 10,764 sq.ft.

## RiversWest Small Craft Center

### Open House - First and Third Saturdays

Our boat shop is open to visitors on the first and third Saturday of every month. Stop by in the morning and have a free cup of coffee and a donut. Take the opportunity to meet the members who are a friendly group of boating enthusiasts. We will take you on a tour of our facility which includes our wood shop, boat building spaces which are available for members to rent and our livery of boats. You can even browse through our extensive lending library including our collection of *WoodenBoat* Magazines.



### Boat Shop

Our boat shop is equipped with the necessary equipment to build your boat. Many members who are building their boats at home take advantage of our complete wood shop, saving the cost of renting or purchasing their own tools. Fellow members can provide free advice and helping hands when you need it.



### Bay Rentals

Our boat shop is configured with bays that members can use for restoring or building their dream boat. Available for rent on a monthly basis, these bays, 10x23 feet, offer a dedicated workspace with light, electrical power and immediate access to our wood shop. And best of all, there are plenty of friendly and experienced craftsmen available to offer advice on the techniques of building a boat.



**When you’re a member of RiversWest, you don’t need to be a shipwright, own a shop full of tools or have a large space at home to build your dream boat. We have it all.**

[riverswest.org](http://riverswest.org)



## Catlin Gabel School Summer Boat Camp



From July 20 to July 31, Catlin Gabel School held a Summer Boat Camp. RiversWest supplied two kits and parts for two sailing rigs. Nine 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders were in the camp. Two days per week were devoted to boat building. The remaining three days of the week included field trips.

During the two weeks, students built two Salt Bay Skiffs and fitted them out to sail,

under the guidance of their teacher, his assistant and RiversWest members, both on site and behind the scenes.

Although the skiffs had identical hull designs, their sailing rigs were different. One was fitted out with a centerboard following the design of Phil Bolger's "Cartopper," while the other had a dagger board, which accepted a modified leeboard. Both boats were fitted with kick-up rudders following the Mirror Dinghy concept. The mast steps and partners were moved forward making them cat rigs. The balanced lugsail made by Chuck Stuckey and Mark Newhaus is shown. The students made a boomed sprit sail for the other rig, using Polysail tarp. John Bouwsma helped students carve stars into the transoms of both boats. John Ost, Art Wilson and Mike Carrico were the RiversWest members who guided the students in the boat build.

## John Ost

There were two field trips. One of these trips was to Clark Park on the Tualatin River. Columbia River Keepers provided a 29' canoe which took all for a two hour paddle on the Tualatin. The other field trip was to Willamette Park. A rowing version of the Salt Bay Skiff, which had been built in March as another Catlin Gabel/RiversWest boat build project, was launched and rowed by the kids.



## Summer Family Boat Build



The week end of July 11-12 saw yet another successful Family Boat Build as part of the Portland Wooden Boat Festival. This year marked the sixth year in a row for this wonderful family and community event. RiversWest had sponsored a similar event many years ago and it was decided to give it new life, and what a great success it has become. What started as a modest five boat build on the downtown waterfront has grown each year at the Willamette Sailing Club. Over those years, families have built

64 Salt Bay Skiffs.

Wow, can you believe it!

This year we had 13 families build the boats. An all-women team from the Oregon Women's Sailing Association built one and will auction theirs off as a fund

raiser for a charity of their choice. A family from Friends of the Children was also there and had a wonderful time, as well as a youth group from the Salvation Army. It was quite a thrill to see these kids build and then launch their very own boat.

Thanks must go out to our wonderful corporate sponsors—Greenbrier and Zidell. These two are new sponsors for us and we certainly hope to have them involved in the coming years. We could not have had such

## Chuck Stuckey

a successful event without their generous support. As in years past, the comments from the families were all positive: "This is so much fun." "I didn't think we could do it." "I learned what a plane is." "Best time I ever had with my kids"...and it went on and on. Several visitors to the festival asked how they could sign up for next year. So, another year down and we start planning for the next one. Thanks to all the RW members who put so many hours to get us ready.



**Launching Annie B****Craig Bryant**

So, lets see...Sail rig seems to be ready. Trailer, check. Rudder, check. Centerboard, check. Weather, check. So, I think it may be time to get her wet!

On a fairly calm (as it turned out) Thursday late morning (8/27/15), friends, some RiversWest members and family gathered at Willamette Park in Portland to see if the cute little boat would float, and even more improbably, sail. Much-practiced setting up of the sail was performed yet again, without incident.

Discussions ensued whilst waiting for a few stragglers. Time was spent thanking passers-by for their kind comments on A) the beautiful boat and/or B) the cute little boat—something that continues at subsequent launchings, and heck, even stopped at stoplights!

And, finally after 2-1/2 years in the making, she finally is afloat! The owner/builder could be seen checking various hidden places for water where it wasn't supposed to be, and for places where it should be. All was well, so the group assembled for the christening

ceremony without fear of a sinking mid-christen.

The appropriate beverage was used for a toast to the new boat, and its ability to keep its skipper and crew safe, and always bring them back to port. And some was poured on her bows, and some offered up to Neptune.

And, she was launched into a 0-3 knot breeze. This shot was taken by Keith Nasman, who works not too far from the park, and who happened to notice a familiar sail and hull profile while on his lunch break. We pulled in and chatted a bit, while he admired the newly launched and not yet banged up boat.

After taking a few more folks out for rides, the wind died and we got to row ANNIE B. Turns out, I had neglected to install the sleeves and stops on the two part oars, so rowing was a bit more difficult than it otherwise would be.

Since the maiden voyage on the 27<sup>th</sup>, I have taken ANNIE B out on the Willamette again, this time with winds just below 10 knots,



gusting in the low teens, and to Waldo Lake, also gusting in the low teens. She has performed very well, and I am pleased so far with her performance. Grins all around.

Some of the above launch day pictures were taken by Richard Blakeslee. Thanks Richard!



## Cosine Wherry Modified



She began as a Cosine Wherry but along the way I decided to shorten her into a little skiff. I cut off the aft end and made a 14-ft. boat into a 9'8" rowing dinghy. Over the course of a year I added thwarts and a keel; then took her out for a trial row. She was very tender, being all vee at the rear, with no flat area at the bottom and no rocker at the rear.



So I cut a new shape in the hull, added a new keel, and *now* she had both primary and secondary stability. She rowed well.



But by now I was convinced that I really needed a sailboat instead of a rowboat. I had found a rotted out Sailfish with decent gear still attached, so I had an aluminum mast, lateen sail, with a mahogany rudder, tiller and

daggerboard. I put a foredeck on the truncated wherry, added a mast step and daggerboard trunk, and finished off the inner gunwales with scuppers. Now she was taking shape.

The original Sailfish had about 6" or 8" to attach the rudder. I had a 20" tall transom. So I had to build a rudder extension. I found that more recent Sunfish had a neat kickup rudder maintained by stainless springs. So I decided to build my own version. (You can do almost anything with marine ply and fiberglass, right?) After I had all the hardware attached, my new rudder kicks up or down like a champ. The daggerboard moves smoothly.

At the end of this summer I raised the sail for the first time and mounted cleats and a block, retying the lines so they fit my little boat. I had intended to cut the sail down (the lower boom of the lateen sail is 13'8", longer than the boat). But now I'm not sure—it looks good! The next step is to get her on the water under sail and decide how much I want to learn about sailing. More news will follow.



## Building two kayaks for my two granddaughters, Lela and Sydney

**Steve Najjar**



*Although Lela was the first to launch her kayak a couple of years ago, Sydney got to launch hers on the sunny afternoon of Sept. 20th.*

The idea came from a chapter in *WoodenBoat Magazine's Small Boats 2011*, "Building the Newt." I read the article, studied the photos and a bit of the plans, and thought that a pair of the 11-ft. kayaks would be perfect for them. Two boats could be built from three sheets of plywood, plus some lumber for the frames, the chines, gunwales, and breast hooks.

As Christmas presents a few years ago, I built a pair of scale models, and promised to build each of my granddaughters a kayak. Given the vagaries of my health, and an unheated garage that is often too hot or too cold to work in, it took me several years to build both of them.

The first one for Lela is bright yellow on the outside and varnished on the inside. The second one for Sydney is varnished inside and out, with a 3-in. wide white stripe on the outside.

What is most gratifying in building these two kayaks is seeing in each of them the sense of freedom and exploration that comes with being the captain of one's own ship.

Initial article: <http://jordanwoodboats.com/perch/resources/smallboats2011newt.pdf>.

Plans from the builder: <http://jordanwoodboats.com/>

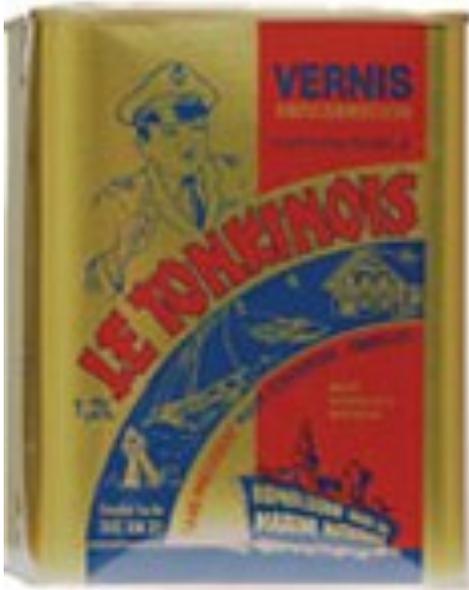


**Practical Sailor gives Le Tonkinois Original varnish good marks****Mark Ramsby**

As I started thinking about finishing my PT Skiff, the conversation turned to varnishes. I have used a lot of varnish over the years, lots of brands and lots of methods of applying it. All with mixed results. The thinning and additives—it all seemed like alchemy.

I was talking to my friend John about varnish. John has a classic motor yacht with nearly perfect varnish over acres of mahogany. He said that he had been using LeTonkinois (Le-TON-kin-wa) Original for several years and really loved it. I ordered a liter can from American Rope and Tar to see what was different about this stuff.

The instructions told me NEVER to thin it, to clean up my tools with white spirits and to apply it to a clean, sanded finish straight from the can. I had a couple of sapele hatch covers and some floor grates to do. The hatch covers were fiberglassed, coated with epoxy and sanded to 220. The floor grates were CVG Fir coated with three coats of epoxy and machine sanded to 240. I filtered some varnish into a clean tray, then rolled it with a 3/16" foam roller and tipped with a foam brush.



The first thing that I noticed was that the varnish had a much thinner consistency than the varnishes I have used in the past. The roll out was very smooth and with just a drag of the brush it produced a flat surface. Three coats went on in three days. The second coat was applied directly over the first; then after it dried, I flattened it with 320

before coating with the third coat. The resulting finish was more beautiful than three coats should have been. Absolutely the best spar varnish work that I had ever done. It seemed that when I opened the can, I became a better varnisher.

Later, I was able to coat the interior of the hull working in the same way, using brush work around all of the detail work without producing runs and sags. The varnish maintains a wet edge for a long time, bonds to itself and flattens out beautifully.

This varnish should be of particular interest to RiversWest, in our quest to build low-impact boats, as it is claimed to be a "green" product. To produce this product, a combination of tung, linseed and tropical oils are used and no solvents are present in the Original formula, making it safer to work with in an enclosed shop.

A recent review by Practical Sailor gives Le Tonkinois Original good marks for workability and durability. As with all varnishes, more coats mean better protection.

If you are not completely happy with your current varnish, this is one to try. For more information: <http://www.tarsmell.com>



**Book Nook: An introduction to the colorful author Tristan Jones****Art Wilson**

Your Book Nook editor missed the Summer edition of the RW Newsletter and in my absence our president informed you of our Nauti Book Club selection up to then.

One final word on "A Steady Trade" by Tristan Jones. As Sal pointed out, Captain Jones is not all he seems to be. Born an orphan he only passed the sixth form of the English grammar school system, before he joined the Royal Navy at sixteen. Not the first time he lied about his age or his true identity. After about twenty years, he was mustered out, "as unfit for duty" due to alcoholism. However, in those twenty-odd years he had read every classic book on western culture and traditions worth reading.

Not to become redundant, he earned a masters license from the school of hard knocks and hired out to transport boats as the skipper. Tristan was seeking his fame and fortune. Since many other small sail boats had circumnavigated the earth for an adventure, he talked

a client into sailing the his yacht on the lowest sea and the highest lake in the world. They did the Dead Sea and ferried the yacht from Israel to Lake Titicaca in Peru. Unfortunately, the vessel's owner died at home in New York City.

Undeterred, Tristan completed the journey, solo, with his own 19-ft. boat several years later and had something worth telling the world about.

He rented a garret in Greenwich Village, NY and wrote "The Incredible Voyage," in which the facts have been greatly embellished. As a double leg amputee, he published more than twenty books. He was a great yarner, often using other peoples adventures and claims as his own. However, he writes with great style, always in the first person, so you feel you are escaping with him on his voyages. Tristan ventured and died in Thailand. Pick up and read either of these two books...you will not be disappointed.

**What's happening at the Nauti Book Club****Art Wilson**

We meet every fourth Monday of the month at the host member's home. This occurs in an inverse alphabetical rotation by the membership. So far membership is limited to eight, who include:

<b>Member Author</b>	<b>Book</b>	<b>Chosen</b>
Art Wilson	"A Steady Trade"	Tristan Jones
Peter Wilcox	"Spirited Waters"	Jennifer Hahn
Richard Stover	"The Happy Isles of Oceania: Paddling the Pacific"	Paul Theroux
Carl Petterson	"The Curve of Time"	Wylie Blanchet
Dan Pence	"Astoria"	Peter Stark
Bruce Goodrich	"Around the World Single-Handed: The Cruise of the "Islander"	Harry Pidgeon
Ric Fry	Membership pending - Jan 1, 2016	
Sal DiGrande	"The Sea-Wolf"	Jack London

I have read these all with great pleasure for the topic being presented, because they transported me away from the here and

now, although with much reservation about the style or quality of the some of the writers' art. I have a confession, as I have not been a reader for pleasure. Now, in retirement, I am reading two to four books a month and I am particularly pleased that Sal chose "The Sea-Wolf" for our first venture into a literary classic. I have only read nine of the thirty-nine chapters in it and I am hooked on London's style.

In college, I took a creative writing class reading among others Hemingway and Fitzgerald, in an attempt to understand and develop my own style. Those two I enjoyed, others were hard or difficult to enjoy, let alone assimilate. London provides a great adventure story, only better. He writes with a purpose. In "The Sea-Wolf," he assumes the narrator's role in order to be the foil to Wolf Larsen's (the captain of the sealing schooner "Ghost") god and devil character. To what purpose? To sound the depths of his soul and debate with him the great questions that face mankind: life and death; the value of a single human's life; justice and non-justice; right from wrong; and many more before the voyage draws to its close, I am sure.

Next time I'll update my thoughts on Jack London as a writer worth a place in your library. Keep reading!



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**Membership Form**

RiversWest is a non-profit membership organization whose mission is to encourage personal involvement in the construction of small recreational wooden craft and their accessories.

**Membership Benefits:**

Members receive the RiversWest newsletter  
Access to RiversWest boat shop and space rentals  
Invitation to all RiversWest boating and social functions  
Right to vote for officers and board members  
Discounts at Crosscut Hardwood

Please return the following with your check to the address above,  
or sign up online at [riverswest.org](http://riverswest.org)

New member  Renewing member  Change of information  Additional donation

Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Youth (17 and under) \$30  General Membership \$50  
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Annual dues and donations to RiversWest qualify for tax deductions. Ask your tax advisor.



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