

## Spring 1996 "The Wet Goose"

I've always had a fascination with the water. Growing up in California we had an in ground pool in the back yard and went to lots of family outings at the beach. While at the beach, I marveled at the sight of those shiny mahogany and chrome boats as they made their way out of the harbor at Santa Monica Beach on their way to an afternoon of cruising up and down the Pacific Coast. Little did I know from that moment on that boating and wooden boats would forever be in my blood. My interest further developed of which I can not recall the make. Summers were spent with my wife in her parents runabout skiing and exploring the hundreds of miles of sloughs in the Sacramento Delta area of northern California. This is where I fell in love with "woodies". My father in law taught me the toys (and the toil) of keeping mahogany beautiful.

Unbeknownst to me, my first meeting with the boat that would later called the "Wet Goose" occurred in 1966 when I was 18 years old. My parents had purchased the boat from a man in Chillcoot, California for the sum of \$500.00. It was a 1959 14' Sea King 40 horsepower outboard. During that period of my life, trout fishing was one of the things I enjoyed most, so a good, fishing boat came in handy. At this point I didn't even know what material the boat was made of, neither did I care. As a typical teenager I was not impressed. It got us where we needed to go so it served it's purpose.

I went on with my life and my parents, with their boat, did the same. The boat took on the name of the "Crazy Canucks", named after their fishing with friends in Canada. For ten years they boated the lakes, rivers, and ocean fishing friends in Canada. It has even been hi the ocean more than five miles off the Pacific Coast passing over deep swells while trolling for salmon and steelhead! One thing their boat, didn't do was ever leave them stranded. In 1976 the "Crazy Canucks" made her last trip into Canada. She was a good fishing boat, but her life was about to change.

I joined the Air Force in 1967, and my wife, two children and I were sent to Utah in 1977. This is when my parents asked me if we wanted the old boat. I remembered the good times I had spent in the Sacramento Delta and knew that boating can be a family experience. So, of course we said yes and they towed the boat from California. She was pretty weathered, but as a fishing boat, she served her purpose well. To make the transfer legal, we made out a bill of sale for one dollar and the boat changed into our hands. My parents really enjoyed their little boat, but they hadn't used it much those last few years. They knew we would get some use out it, even though my wife was a lime skeptical about putting our small children h1 such a lime boat. She didn't trust outboards for some reason. We did have a scare once when a thunderstorm squall came up while we were outing the middle of the lake. The swells were about three feet. I kept the power up just enough to keep the bow up. Water was coming over the bow and the kids were scared but the old engine never stuttered. It took about forty five minutes but we made it back with no problems. In another boat outing, we caught golden lake trout at the 1,000 foot level in Eastern Utah. The engine ran just as well as it did at sea level. The way this boat persevered made me realize that there must be more to the "Crazy Canucks" than just fishing boat.

As previously mentioned, the boat was weathered and covered with blue paint, so I decided it was time to strip off the old and apply a new coat. Once stripped, I realized that it was made from African Mahogany and resembled the beautiful wooden ski boat that belonged to my father in law years before. There was no damage to the hull. All she needed was a little sanding, some stain and finish and the "Crazy Canucks" didn't look the same. She took on a distinctive look of another year. One that she was proud of so long ago. One of elegance. The name "Crazy Canucks" just didn't fit anymore.

In 1981 we moved to Austin, Texas. The boat was garaged for a two years, and saw very little water. It was in 1984 that Sandie came into my life and the boat got another lease on life. If it wasn't for her it probably would have been sold. What it got instead was another refinishing. I also strengthened the transom by installing metal poles from inside of the ski tows and attached them to the bottom rib. The kids and us used it almost every weekend on the lakes of the Texas hill country. Instead of a fishing boat, it became a ski boat again. She even got a new name, the "Wet Goose". We showed the boat at the Wooden Boat Show at Lake Travis in 1985 and 1986.

During the fall of 1986 we were sent for a three year tour to the Philippines and ended up with an additional four year tour in Hawaii. We towed the boat back to California where it sat idle for those seven years. The only water she saw was the rain that happened to seep through the cover into the bottom. We returned in the summer of 1993 and towed her to Oklahoma, our new home. After seven years, cosmetically it didn't look to bad. But, since it had been nine years since the last refinishing, I figured I'd give her a fresh coat. Looking underneath however, I noticed a water stain coming from under the keel strip. Removal of the keel strip and an inside panel revealed severe wood deterioration. Rain water had got into the boat off and on for seven years and allowed the wood to rot. It was so bad in fact, that by the time I removed all the rot, I had a hole eight inches wide and four feet long. At this point I'm glad my chain saw was not running or I may have had some really "seasoned" wood for our fireplace the next winter! After soul searching for a year and a half and some encouragement from Sandie and our friends, I began the task of repair, not knowing what the outcome would be.

I talked to the people at Tollycraft in Kelso, Washington about the repair, however they hadn't made a wooden boat in thirty years so they were not much help. They did tell me that the bottom originally had a layer of fiberglass over the wood. I removed the bad portions and manufactured pieces for the repair. Once installed, I waited for curing and then applied fiberglass on the entire bottom inside and out to give it extra strength. A good friend supplied the fiberglass and the know how to guide me through. Once the fiberglass was cured, it was time for paint and finish. We all know that this is a task not to be taken lightly all the bad things show when the final coat is applied. Having done this three times before I tried to take my time, but after years I was a little anxious to get it hi the water. Since the engine had not been turned over since 1986, I took it to Brackets Marine to have it completely checked out. All it needed was a tune up, carburetor overhaul, and a new water pump. The interior got new carpet and the seats got new upholstery courtesy of our very good friends from our Corvette Club, Berry and Helen Lafferty. Everything came together one day before the 1995 Classic Boat Club of Oklahoma show at Thunderbird Lake. We started the engine in the drive way just to make sure we didn't encounter engine problems on the lake. That first time we put it in the water I had my fingers crossed that the repair would hold. Not only did it hold, but not one drop of water had seeped in! After nine years sitting idle, the "WET GOOSE" was on the water again.

We made the show at Thunderbird the next day and had a really good time visiting with other people with the same interests. We also towed the boat to Missouri in September to the wooden boat show at Lake of the Ozarks where we took the honor of "Best Outboard". Ours may be a small boat with an outboard but we enjoy our "woodie" and enjoy visiting with people that enjoy wooden boats. We don't ski behind her anymore but she may revert back to a fishing boat now and then on sunny afternoons.. What we enjoy most is just cruising the lakes and showing her off. Throughout her years, the "Wet Goose" was a family project with all four kids, Sandie and myself involved in her restoration and up-keep. She truly is a family boat. I guess it all goes to show you not to give up on a project, but to sit back and take another look at it. If I hadn't done that, and that chain saw was working. well .

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