

Peter and Brenda Carr's KALUA Story

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After retiring and moving to the Saanich Peninsula, the allure of light cruising around the Southern Gulf Islands in a gloriously restored old wooden boat with gleaming varnish and polished metal was too strong to resist. I kept tabs on every wooden boat for sale along the Pacific west coast for several years. The already restored ones were too expensive, and most of the rest would be too much work and too expensive to restore. When the listing for KALUA appeared, I had to take a look, as it seemed to be about right at 41 feet with twin inboard engines. When I stepped into the boathouse and looked, I said "Ahh, this is the one!" Little did I know what I was in for.

The first few owners must have been thrilled with cruising about in such a beautiful, well-built, Edwin Monk, Sr. designed boat. The McQueen's Boat Works of Vancouver, BC construction and materials were top quality. The first owner was Mr. G. T. Cruise of West Vancouver, BC, who registered KALUA in 1957 in Vancouver, BC. She was registered again in Victoria, BC in 1969 to Mr. F.O Oliver and Mrs. P.O. Oliver of Victoria. The next registration change was in 1970 with ownership by Mr. M. O. Weston and Mr. P. W. Weston of Delta, BC. A further ownership change was registered in 1989 to five Weston family members of Victoria, BC. There is an unofficial record that Mr. M. Weston took ownership in 2004 and sold the boat in 2013 to Mr. C. D. Baird of Victoria, BC. We purchased the boat from Mr. Baird and registered it in our names in 2014, with the port of registry remaining as Victoria, BC.

Our pre-purchase surveys indicated that the machinery and hull were in good condition. I should have quit when the surveyor condemned it because all the sea cocks were frozen open. Being an Engineer with the attitude that almost everything can be fixed, I kept KALUA laid over for several days for Philbrooks Boatyard to replace the sea cocks and fix a few other things, and proceeded with the purchase. I wasn't too worried about the 30 foot long lake of seawater covering the garboard planks, as everyone knows that old boats leak. I then discovered that this lake was being refreshed many times a day. A poor caulking job resulted in the bilge pump removing 100 gallons a day. I became worried that an extended wintertime power outage would find the deck awash. Sorting that out was the beginning of a multi-year rescue operation.

The topsides had many layers of old, dull, chipped paint that was too big a job for me, so KALUA was hauled out at Abernethy and Gaudin Boatbuilders for stripping and repainting of the bottom and topsides, and fixing the leaks. Re-caulking the bottom seams wasn't going to be a reliable fix, so they wedge-seamed the carvel planking with splines. As is usually the case, they found rot in the hard-to-find places and damage from grounding. They opened up the stern and replaced the shaft logs and transom plank.

I found a machinist who made up new steering gear parts and a new prop shaft. He said "You know, I saved that boat from sinking once." He proceeded to tell me how he arrived at his shop early one morning to find a crew in a frantic search for a working bilge pump, and a partially submerged KALUA with the soles awash. He returned in a few minutes with a pump and they re-floated her. KALUA was

damaged when the boathouse roof collapsed under an extreme snow load in a storm over the winter of 1997-98. She was hauled out the next summer for repairs and sat out in the sun for a month. She was relaunched at the end of the day, and everyone went home, with no one checking on her. The bottom seams had opened excessively and the bilge pump could not keep up, or the battery gave out. Following this, the fuel and water tanks were replaced and the submerged engines also replaced. While at Abernethy's, I was asked, "Did this boat ever sink?" They showed me the water marks around the inside of the hull and cabinetry and I then related the machinist's story.

The engines were hard to start, idled poorly, and the oil was coal black. The exhausts barked like a couple of Harley's. I had various engine failures until both engines suffered catastrophic failures. When I dismantled the first engine for removal, I found that the spark plugs were mis-wired. Checking the port engine, I found that it was also mis-wired, but differently. That explained the poor running and noisy exhausts. That stressed the engines so much that they both eventually self-destructed. There is nothing like the experience of standing beside a running engine with a connecting rod that suddenly detached from the piston head and flailed around with an insanely loud metallic screeching and banging, punching holes through the engine block and oil pan. It all stopped instantaneously with a massive bang. The hot engine oil mixed with the boiling coolant to make a gooey milkshake that was blown out by all the steam, leaving an almost dry engine, and a horribly messed up engine compartment. KALUA now has its fourth set of engines, custom built, and dressed out like hot-rod engines.

New engines required new wiring as much of the old wiring, connectors, and switches were corroded, and there was a lot of abandoned wiring from previous upgrades. So many things just didn't work. There was no point in figuring out how the wiring worked first, as the workmanship was rather questionable, so I stripped out all the wiring. The auxiliary fuel tanks were bone dry. Investigation showed that the mis-wiring of the tank selectors prevented any fuel being drawn from those tanks so they had never worked since being replaced. Other things that didn't work were found to have their wiring accidentally cut during some other work. The new wiring system included adding relays, fuses, breakers, and switches. With a new radio, antenna, and chart plotters, a cold fridge, and 750 litres of useable fuel, we have been comfortably exploring the Southern Gulf Islands.

KALUA was hauled out again in 2018-2019 at Abernethy and Gaudin to have the bottom repainted. The varnished exterior woodwork had four different colours of stain from various periods, and the varnish was dull and peeling. This was much more work than I was prepared to take on myself. While still up on the ways, we asked A&G to strip all the exterior, bridge, and aft cockpit Honduran mahogany to bare wood, make a number of repairs, stain it all one colour, and re-varnish everything. It looks glorious.

The rescue part is over, but the restoration continues. All this so far has been three quarters of the work required. The freshwater piping is being replaced and the hydronic heating system is being made functional again. Up next is refreshing the interior woodwork finishing, and replacing the carpeting and ceiling tiles.

We don't expect to be here for KALUA's centennial celebrations, but we are doing our best to make sure that she will be.