

JIM MOORES RIVA & GUCCI INSURANCE WISDOM RESTORING INVADER

CLASSIC *Yacht*

ISSUE TWENTY FIVE

for those who love great boats

*Al Capone's
Secret Yacht*

ORBA:
*The Definitive Lake
Union Dream Boat*



The J-Class Returns!

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CLASSICYACHTMAG.COM

LEW'S LESSONS



I quit smoking cigarettes about twelve years ago. It's a bad habit I'm well rid of. As a dedicated non smoker I eagerly anticipate my visits aboard *ORBA* where I can enjoy a Winston with my friends, the Moens. Steve Moen tells me I am not alone in my dalliances. *ORBA* has been a gathering spot for smokers and non-smokers alike for many years since 1927 when she was built at Lake Union Dry Dock. Her warm period-perfect ambience and her expansive aft cabin that has, over time, become a regular feature of Dream Boats is a tribute to a design that spawned dozens of imitators. The Lake Union Dream Boat was so successful that the term

"Dreamboat" itself became a generic term for a type of vessel that defines a specific era of classic yacht design. What a great place to sneak a smoke! I also enjoy the Moen's ever present can of Almond Rocas, the ones I'm no longer permitted to eat due to my diet. There is simply no better place to enjoy forbidden pleasures than *ORBA*.

Yurio Moen is our friend and Steve's great wife. In what would mistakenly be considered hip-hop fashion, we all call her Yo. Except she has been "Yo" since long before hip hop hit the scene and Sean Combs became P Diddy. I love her for always laughing at my jokes. As

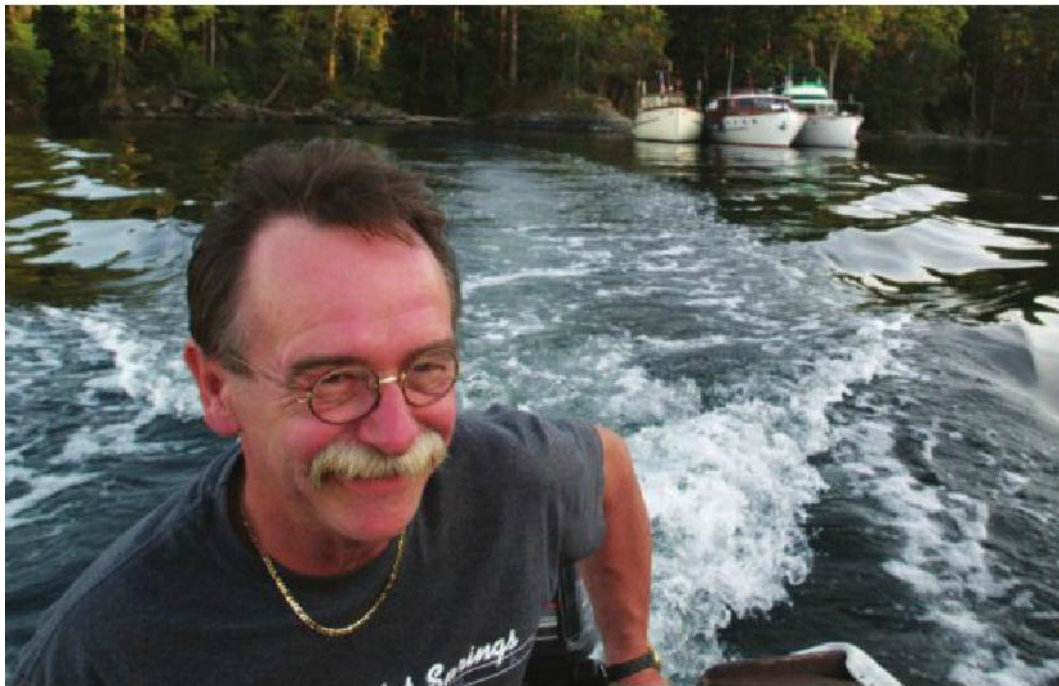


ORBA The Great



your gracious hostess, you too would find that once onboard *ORBA* Yo will invite you to sit for a spell. You'll enjoy *ORBA's* bottomless can of Almond Rocas and if you are a non-smoker as I am, perhaps you'll bum a Winston and maybe even sip a cold beer with her as good company. Once aboard one of the world's most accommodating and

that everyone who ever owned this boat probably had the same thought. Consider that this vessel is well on her way to completing nine decades of continuing service and has been owned by only three families since her keel was first laid in 1927 right here on Lake Union.



Ken and Steve, the brothers Moen, being the current custodians of *ORBA* acquired her in 1972. Forty years ago America was still deeply involved in the Vietnam war. MGBs would continue to be manufactured for another eight years. Gasoline was thirty-six cents a gallon. And yet, *ORBA*

comfortable small classic powerboat designs, what else could you ask for? The real question is "Why ever leave?" Pondering that, it might strike you

was already forty-five years old when the Moens acquired her. The design itself was by most accounts almost sixty years old even then. That's a nice

A Dream Boat remains a viable and pleasant cruising package with the added plus in today's world of providing great fuel economy along with commodious space and period style.



round one hundred years of pleasant cruising cover for smoking cigarettes and eating candy! Yet a Dream Boat remains a viable and pleasant cruising package with the added plus in today's world of providing great fuel economy along with commodious space and period style. *ORBA* is a fine example of the breed.

Steve and Ken have encyclopedic knowledge both of their own boat

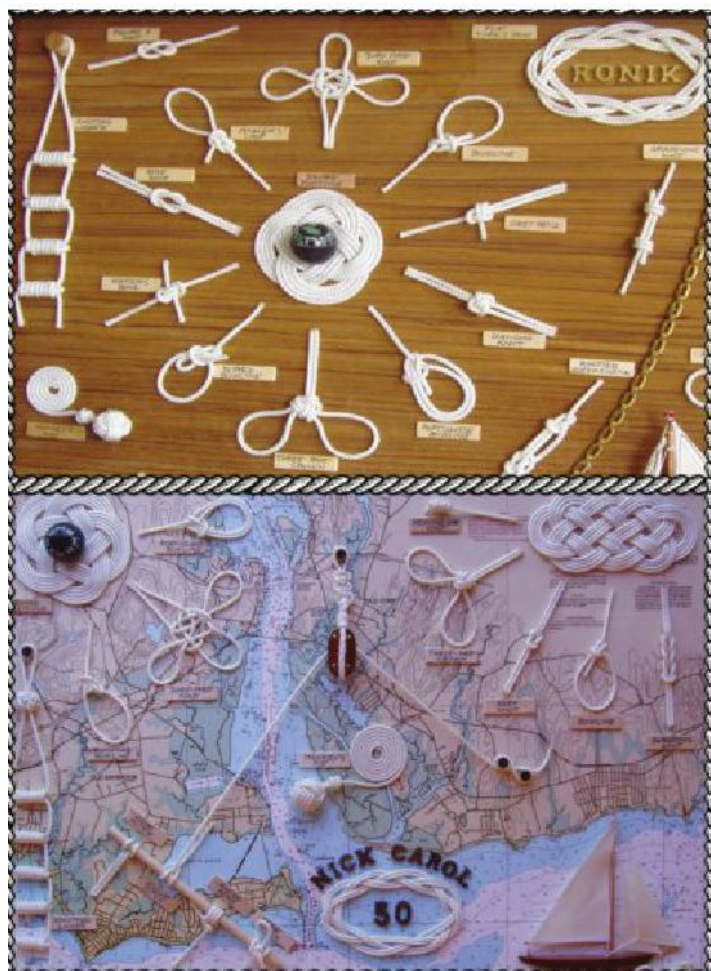
and of the origins of the class, so what follows is in large part a distillation of their knowledge and their dedication to the design and this boat. The first Dream Boat Steve and I are aware of, and one that like *ORBA* still exists, is *Lawana*. Although the design is often credited to Ted Geary, *Lawana*, and we will contend here that *Lawana* and all the Dream Boats to follow, were actually the brainchildren of Otis Cutting. Steve says that Geary gets "plenty of airtime" given the quantity and quality of classic power attributed to him so he much prefers to attribute the form and concept of the Lake Union Dream Boat to Otis Cutting. I'd agree with him.

ORBA's first owner was Kelly Price, who owned a company called Oregon Basin Development Company. In the fashion of the day, the name *ORBA* results from the contraction of that mouthful. Mr. Price owned her for fifteen years, but remarkably attains no particular distinction in respect to longevity of stewardship. In December of 1941, ownership transferred to B.T. McMinn, a professor and mechanical engineer at the University of Washington. Professor McMinn's first cruise on Lake Union

and pleasant cruising package with providing great fuel economy along ease and period style.

with his family was taken on that most infamous date, December 7, 1941. His daughter, hearing the terrible news of the day is said to have asked: "Does this mean we can't go boating?" McMinn assured her it did not. Professor McMinn managed to hold onto *ORBA* throughout the war and well beyond, a fate that eluded many of the yachts on this coast as most were commandeered for coastal patrol work.

Under the long term care of a distinguished engineer, *ORBA* flourished. The Professor designed and built his own auto pilot for her, a design so advanced that he was required to keep it's presence on the boat a secret for the duration of the conflict. He added refrigeration of his own design at a time when most boats went to sea with ice in a box. He also converted all her systems to 12-volt operation. The refrigeration system in particular was so robust that



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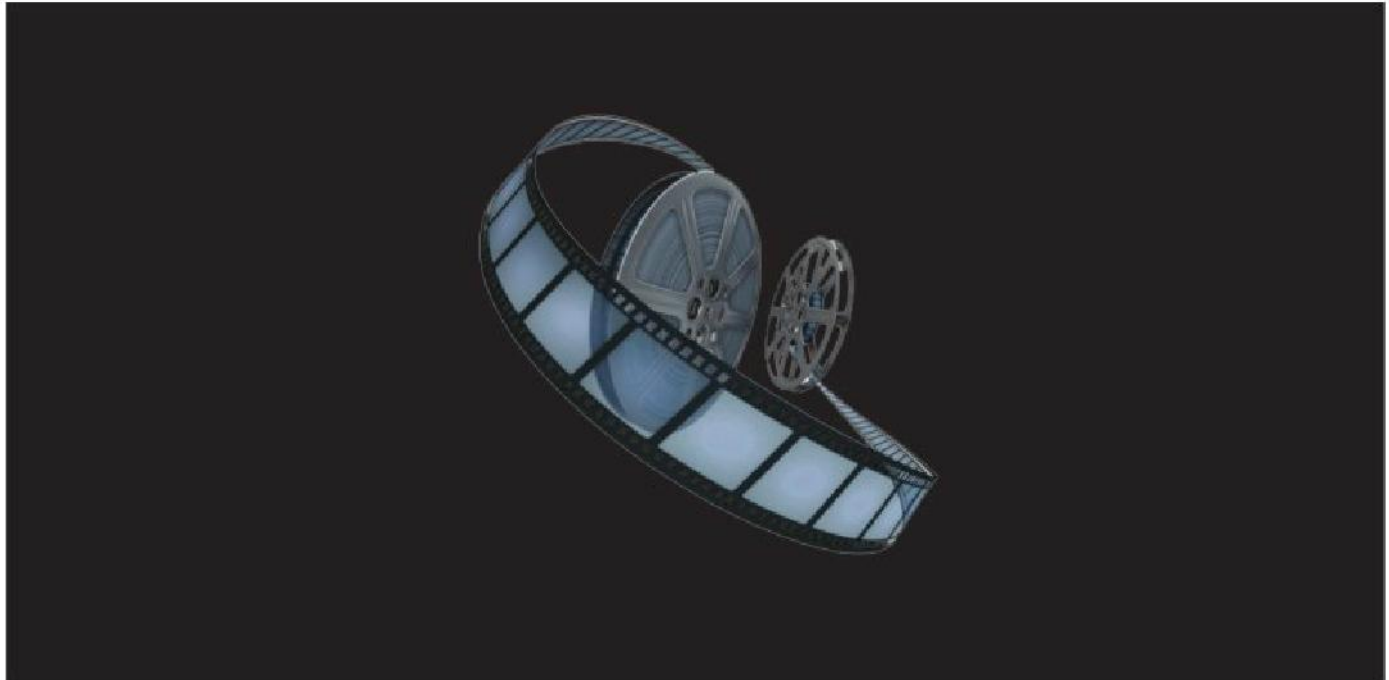
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While ORBA is not overly ornate,



the Moens ran it until a few years ago when it was finally replaced. Steve told me that he knew every refrigerator guy between Seattle and Desolation Sound but that the system always responded to repair. The Professor did replace the original sixty horsepower Kermath engine with an M7 Chrysler Crown. In 1964 that first Crown was replaced with a second one, this time an M47 "high power" version that was in the boat in 1972 when *ORBA* came to the Moens. It is that engine which the Moen Brothers rebuilt in 2008, when the motor finally demanded some real service.

It is the fashion of this boat that the work

is done by the owners. While *ORBA* is not overly ornate, it is in the small details that she really shines. Both Steve and Ken are, as my wife might say, "handy." Steve is a cabinetmaker by trade, and this accounts for some remarkably beautiful joiner work that is tastefully placed about the boat. In respect to the previously mentioned Crown, typically they removed it themselves and cleaned the resulting hole. The brothers rewired the boat while they were at it and after 50 years of service, they replaced that refrigerator with a new system. The Crown was sent out for machine work and was bored, balanced, and breathed all over and then returned to our guys.

it is in the small details that she really shines.

Newly revived, they put it back into the boat, aligned it and motored off. To see the motor today is to marvel at how simple, reliable and pretty older technologies can be. ORBA is ready for the next forty years of gentle but uncompromising use. She operates as a displacement type but when you see her out of the water, you will note that her hull flattens considerably as you scan aft. As she is usually operated below hull speed let's just call her a

displacement form and be done with it. Ready she is, but she looks unchanged from the days she was acquired from Professor McMinn. Which is not to say that she is precisely the same as she was when first built.

Original Dream Boats were delivered with a small, covered pilothouse and a generous open cockpit aft. Over time, virtually every Dream Boat has acquired a full covered and enclosed



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Boats less than forty feet long may be called "Dream Boats" but they aren't the real McCoy. Great and wonderful



saloon such as that seen on *ORBA* today. As the feature was universally added later, no two boats look exactly alike. This serves to confuse most casual observers who then understandably consider all similar raised deck cruisers of the era "Dream Boats." True Dream Boats are usually 42 feet in length. Boats smaller than 40 feet are not of the class. *Lawana* and a few of the earlier survivors may be forty feet long and infrequently a Dream Boat may be found to be a bit longer. The added length, like the saloon, is usually a later addition, as is the case with Greg Gilbert's *Winifred*. Boats less than forty feet long may be called "Dream Boats" but if so and especially if they weren't built at Lake Union Dry Dock, they aren't the real McCoy. Great and wonderful they may be, but Dream Boats they are not.

The bulk of the usual 42 foot length forward of the pilothouse is decked flush to the gunwale. The pilothouse appears more or less two thirds of the way aft of the bow which leaves a very long length of full-beam, "wall to wall" space forward in which to carry a galley, head and as many as two sleeping cabins. Most of these boats retain their two cabins forward, separated by a bulkhead, with sleeping accommodations for at least four people.

All this interior space is not gained without compromise however. Working the boat for docking or locking through from Lake Union to the sea requires either advanced planning or great dexterity and no small modicum of courage for those who would dare to go "on deck." With today's fully enclosed Dream Boats being the norm, there really is no easy access topside, making handling lines a challenge when nearing a dock. That's the price for all that delicious, fully enclosed space below. Dream Boat owners must accept this compromise in exchange for large and accommodating enclosed spaces. It makes Dreamboats a good live-aboard choice and excellent winter cruisers though, and damn fine party and smoking boats.

If so and especially if they weren't built at Lake Union Dry Dock, full they may be, but Dream Boats they are not.

One of life's important lessons, and certainly a lesson I hope to learn some day, is to make wise choices from the beginning. A good start is so important when it comes to things like classic boat ownership. Steve and I were sitting there chewing on Almond Rocas and smoking Winstons when Steve said something to me that I have often considered myself while sitting on my own boat. In fact, I think his thought must be universal for those of us who have worked hard and achieved something we have dreamed

about but that was a difficult stretch to attain. "The day we got ORBA home I looked around the cabin and I couldn't believe it. I still feel that way looking down the length of the boat and thinking I get to own her."

Believe it, Steve. We wish a very happy, smoking hot one hundred year anniversary to the Lake Union Dream Boat and all of the owners past and present who have kept them alive for us to enjoy.

