

Ship Report Transcript

Tuesday, July 2, 2024

By Joanne Rideout

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It's time for the Ship Report the show about all things maritime. I'm Joanne Rideout. It's Tuesday, July 2nd, 2024.

Well, today I thought I'd talk with you about something personal to me. I don't usually talk much about myself on the show. I'd rather talk about other things.

But this past weekend, something kind of extraordinary and nautical happened in my world. And since I have written about this in my Ship Report blog on my website a few times and people have asked me about it, I thought it would be good to talk about it here.

What happened was that this past Friday afternoon, a boat that I've been working on, on and off for the past 16 years finally went in the water. It's a long and involved story, so I hardly know what to say exactly to do it justice.

But my boat named Passage is a lovely little 22-foot sloop originally rigged as a cutter with two head sails that sat in a berth in the Warrenton Marina for many years before I bought her. I'd admired her for a long time from afar because she had such lovely lines and just sat so pretty in the water. I knew her owner, a man named Dan Eid.

Occasionally I'd see him on the Astoria Riverwalk and ask him about his beautiful boat. One day in 2008, I ran into him again and complimented him again on his lovely boat. Abruptly, he asked me if I wanted to buy her. It turned out that she needed a bit of work and he really had no time for her and didn't want her to fall totally into ruin.

Now, I'm not a shipwright or a carpenter, but I had a dad who was. I brought him down to the dock. We climbed around on the boat and she was indeed kind of a sorry sight. Rotted decks with a hole you could see through. When you went inside the cabin, you could smell the whiff of dry rot. But still, she was a beautiful boat. And I felt that sort of giddy feeling that people get, often a foolhardy thing, that happens to them when they fall in love with boats.

I remember Dad standing on the dock and saying, We can do this. And on the strength of his word (this is the guy who built our first boat from scratch and extensively restored another sloop), I paid Dan a small amount and she was mine.

During those first weeks before I had her hauled out of the water, it was during the rainy spring and I used to go down to the dock with Chinese food for lunch and spend my lunch hour eating shrimp fried rice and pumping the rainwater out of her bilge. Then we hauled her out and she went to the barn at my dad's house in Burnside.

Over the ensuing years, Dad made good on his promise. He built a huge scaffold around the boat so he could get at her easily to work. He tore out the old decks and replaced them. Fitted new cabin sides. Fiberglassed it all with the West System and painted the boat. He put her back together structurally, so she looked like a boat again.

Then life ensued. He had a heart attack. I got hired as KMUN's manager, which was at the time an overwhelming job that left me little free time.

I got hit by a car as a pedestrian and had to recover from that. Dad aged and developed other health issues. The boat sat in the barn; a little work got done on her here and there.

To make a long story short. Dad died in 2019 at the age of 98. The pandemic ensued shortly after. I was grieving and overwhelmed at the thought of selling his house, which was full of furniture and clutter and memories.

And then there was my our boat sitting in the barn like an unfulfilled promise. It was nagging at me. Then one day, about three years ago, toward the end of the pandemic, I drove down to the house and went into the barn. There she stood on her trailer, surrounded by that sturdy scaffold covered in dust and dirt. No port lights (hose are windows) - a relic that was far from ready.

I stood on the scaffold and looked at her. My boat, our boat, my dream, and thought, I guess this is gone. I guess I have lost this opportunity. I should sell her or give her away to someone who will be able to get this done.

And in the midst of that pragmatic thought, I felt such a wave of grief wash over me that I wept out loud. I felt such a sense of loss. All the work that Dad had done, for me, all for nothing.

So I had this crazy thought. Maybe I could finish her. Maybe I could make a way through this mess. Maybe I could finish what he started. I had no idea what I was talking about, but I had some faith in myself.

After all, I was Stu Rideout's daughter, and had grown up alongside him in his workshop. As a kid. I knew how to use tools and I was a pretty MacGyvery sort of person. And I like to figure things out.

I called a friend, Albert Smith, and said, I'm thinking I might try to finish the boat myself. What do you think? He paused and said, "Well, you're the captain's daughter and I think you'll be fine."

So I decided to give it a go. I don't have time here to go into all the details of everything that I did to the boat. Let's just say that I learned a lot. I read a lot of great books and magazines. And YouTube is a great resource.

Last week I scraped, sanded and painted her bottom with bottom paint. Then last Friday, with the help of wonderful friends, the boatyard stepped the mast. We hooked her up. We started the engine, thank God. And they launched her. And somehow I actually have a boat.

I want to thank some folks for this, to whom I will be forever deeply grateful:

To my dad. Stu, of course. I hope you're looking down on this with pride. My dad's brother Richard, who came all the way from his home on the East Coast to help in the heavy construction phase. To Rich Green, the person who built Passage, who now lives inland but was and is happy to offer advice and answer my questions a great help.

To Ray Merritt, who helped me bring passage around from the Warrenton Marina to Astoria to haul her out so many years ago. To Albert Smith, who was a sounding board and advisor to me here and there, to Ed Overbay, fine woodworker who made passages new cabin sides.

To Mark Erickson, who hauled her to the barn and ultimately back to the Port of Astoria again after so many years, closing that circle for me. To Bill Cook, who hauled her out of the barn and up on the paved driveway.

To Bob Lennon and Dale Clark, who helped so much at various times, including helping me get the standing rigging hooked up properly this past Friday. And to my dear friends Tori, Lynn, Trina and Beth, who came down to witness the whole thing and broke out the champagne, flowers and hors d'oeuvres when we got to the dock.

Now my boat is in the water and I am so happy about this that I can hardly contain myself. On Saturday, I went down to see her to make sure I didn't dream it. Just sitting on her in the marina makes me so happy.

It's a rare thing, I think, to have a dream, work hard to fulfill it against what feels like overwhelming odds and then have it be even better than you thought it would be. There's still more to do before she's ready to sail, but I love messing about in my boat, so it's all a joy.

So that's the short story version of me and my boat passage. I love her to the moon and back, and she's still really beautiful to me, even more so because of all that went in to make her what she is now. Deep thanks to all my friends. You are a treasure. And I'm so grateful for you. And thanks to my husband, Jerry, who's endured my endless obsession with this odd project, with his unwavering love and support.

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