

Mahogany & CHROME

ISSUE 4, 2025



THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF HEARTLAND CLASSICS

A CHAPTER OF ACBS

WWW.HEARTLANDCLASSICS.ORG





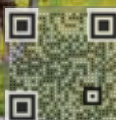
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From the Helm



We are heading toward the late Fall / Winter time of year. Boats are soon to be winterized if not already. Many people will be planning the off-season work to be done. We have the Grand Lake show in the rearview mirror. What a show that was. We had a record turnout of boats, members and public followed up by another great dinner event after. The weather was perfect and many took home nice auction items.

This is my last From the Helm article I will write as President of the Heartland Chapter. My 3 year term is up at the end of 2025. What a great last 3 years it has been. I want to thank you all for the support and trust you gave me during my term. The club board met and agreed on our officers and class of 2028 directors.

Kerry Jensen will be moving into the president role with Kevin Hogan moving to VP. Please help me welcome our new directors and officers. Also please thank those that continue in roles for us, Forrest Bryant, Kathy Parker, John Davenport and Sunday Carlson as they do the heavy lifting for our club.

During my term we have grown to seven events each year. With that many opportunities I hope you all can join one or more in 2026. I hope to see you soon at one of these.

Mark Engstrom, President



You've Got Mail ...

As a member of the Heartland Classics Chapter, you deserve to know the latest news as well as an occasional personal note.

Look for these email addresses in your received mail = hopefully in your inbox – but maybe in your junk mail. If it is in your junk or spam folder, please move it to inbox.



This email is sent through the ACBS portal to all Heartland Classics members' email addresses.



This email is sent from heartland-classics@hotmail.com with individual messages about your Chapter membership.

You are welcome to reply to either email with comments, concerns, suggestions, or with your own news.

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Welcome to our New Chapter Members

GW Groves of Yukon, OK
1971 Century 18' Resorter

Steve & Marika Nunnikhoven of Mediapolis, IA
1957 Milo Craft 16' Classic

Keith & Susan Shykes of Norman, OK
1956 Chris Craft 21' Capri

Issue 4, 2025 Contributors

Mark Engstrom, Kathy Parker, Kasey Rideout, David Vickers, Clay Thompson, Kally Bryant and Forrest Bryant.

Cover Image

Photo by Forrest Bryant - *Miss Thousand Islands III*, a 30' Hackercraft Triple owned by the Antique Boat Museum in Clayton, New York. *Miss Thousand Islands III* is used as a Tour Boat on the St. Lawrence River offering speedboat rides to the public.



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Ports of Call

WINTER WORKSHOP

Howard's Classic Boats, Vinita, OK
February 28, 2026

ACBS KEELS & WHEELS

Lakewood Yacht Club, Seabrook, TX
April 25-26, 2026

HOT SPRINGS CLASSIC

Lake Hamilton, Hot Springs, AR
April 30-May 2, 2026

LAKE OF THE OZARKS RENDEZVOUS

Hawk's Landing Resort, Camdenton, MO
May 14-17, 2026

CLASSICS CRUISIN' TABLE ROCK LAKE

Part of Kimberling Resort & Marina, Kimberling City, MO
May 28-31, 2026

LAKE TENKILLER RUNABOUT

Burnt Cabin Marina, Park Hill, OK
July 10-11, 2026

BEAVER LAKE RENDEZVOUS

Coppermine Lodge, Rogers, AR
August 6-9, 2026

ACBS ANNUAL MEETING & SHOW

Port Huron, Michigan
September 13-20, 2026

GRAND LAKE

Cherokee Yacht Club, Afton, OK
October 1-3, 2026

For additional information, please visit the Events page on www.heartlandclassics.org.

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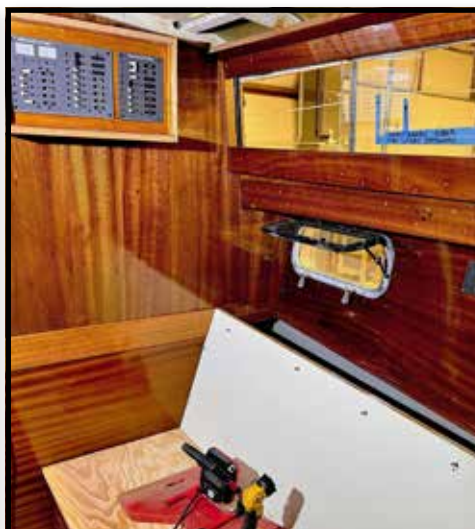


Renovations-One Item to Keel Up

RESTORATION UPDATE – Mahogany & Varnish



1957 Chris-Craft Futura 33'



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Steve Howard: 918.852.9883, stevehoward@live.com

4th Quarter Heartland Classics 2025 Membership Report

Active **Memberships** 197

Includes

341 individuals

Includes

474 listed boats

Of those 197 memberships, 46% participated in at least one 2025 Heartland event.

These four individuals attended all seven 2025 events:

Forrest & Kally Bryant, Chuck Gibbs & Kasey Rideout

Of those 197 memberships, this is the **duration** of the memberships:

More than 25 years	25	5 thru 9 years	32
20 thru 24 years	26	1 thru 4 years	54
15 thru 19 years	20	Less than 1 year	11
10 thru 14 years	29		

This is your ACBS and Heartland **Directory** – always up to date – available on your phone or computer.

Check on your own membership by logging into myacbs.org

Look at all the information available to you !!!

The screenshot shows the ACBS Member Directory website. The top navigation bar includes links for HOME, MEMBER DIRECTORY, BOATS, CHAPTERS, ACBS BOARD/COMMITTEES, CONTACT US, and RESOURCES. Below this is a 'MEMBERS ONLY AREA' section. The main content area is divided into two columns. The left column, titled 'My Profile', shows the user's ACBS # (16906), Member name (Donald Parker), Co-Member (Kathy Parker), and Address (510 Summer Rd, Kimberling City, MO 65866-8313). The right column, titled 'My Membership', shows the user's status (Active), Member Since (5/8/2000), Expiration (12/31/2027), Type (Annual), and Chapter (Heartland Classics (OK, KS, NE, MO, AR) (primary)). A red arrow points from the 'MEMBER DIRECTORY' link in the navigation bar to the 'My Profile' section. An orange arrow points from the 'RENEW' button in the 'My Membership' section to the text 'Easy place to RENEW'. A blue arrow points from the 'Chapter(s)' field to the text 'Click here for Chapter Info'. A red box at the bottom left contains the text 'Find contact information for any ACBS member !'.



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2025 MAHOGANY & CHROME RECAP

Story by Kasey Rideout
Photos by Forrest Bryant

Boat events come, and boat events go. Some of them are memorable, and some, not so much. The 2025 Mahogany & Chrome show was one for the record books. Changes were made for and during the show that made it even better than anticipated.

Changing the date from September to October was one made with more than just a little trepidation, but it turned out to be almost perfect. The temperature was in the upper 80s rather than over 100 degrees, there was a breeze, making it pretty much ideal boating weather.

Someone told me that a lot of the success of a show is dictated by the food. That ball was pretty much hit out of the park. Beginning with the pasta bar at Cherokee Yacht Club, Chef Matt and his crew turned out some excellent food at a cook station, preparing the food right in front of your eyes. For those too full to try the chocolate cake, that's really unfortunate because that is probably the best chocolate cake on the planet!

The lunch at Doc's (PHOTO 1) at Shangri La was also changed up a bit. Due to the significant increase in the number of people who signed up for the lunch, the group had to be divided into two. Because the orders were sent to them prior to the event, food was hot and ready. All reports said the food was better than ever!

Blind Swine also delivered on their promise for an outstanding experience (PHOTO 2). They changed things up a bit this year, focusing on the crab legs rather than the shrimp in their boil. Even though the crab legs weren't mentioned in the preparation details, they were a welcome addition and delicious surprise! Next year might see the event time pushed up 30 minutes or so due to the heat of the sun, making it an even better experience.

Cherokee, and Chef Matt continued to out due themselves Saturday with the Breakfast Buffet, Lunch Barbeque Buffet, the Burger Hut, and the Banquet Buffet. No complaints were heard except for being too full!

But the star of the weekend was the collection of boats. (PHOTO 3) M&C had the largest number of boats – and people in the show’s history! Ranging from a 1926 Chris Craft Triple Cockpit (PHOTO 4) to a 1989 Fiberglass Century (PHOTO 5), the age of boats was vast, and it was beautiful! Styles and materials were also interesting. Not only were there boats constructed of wood and fiberglass but there were aluminum boats that were fancy (Cadillac PHOTO 6) and industrial (Pete Seitz’s PHOTO 7). Boats were there that were projects of groups, such as the Wooden Boat Association of North Texas, and also boats that were family projects, such as *The Little Skipper*, restored by father and daughter team, Skip Bornmueller and Kelly Lubker. Every boat had a story and each Captain was more than willing and eager to tell the tale.

Boats were arranged in a way that made the public look forward to what was in the next slip. The folks from Texas made an excellent showing with their collection of Centurys, resulting in traffic jams throughout the day due to so many people stopped to look at the unique designs and interesting detail. A huge number of people from the area made their way down the docks, stopping to look at every inch of the boats, all exclaiming how fabulous and beautiful they all were. The sparkle of the chrome, and the gleam of the wood was so overwhelming, and everyone noticed as they admired the vessels.

Boats came from as close as Afton, Oklahoma to Frisco, Colorado! There were boats and folks in attendance from seven states – Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Texas, Arkansas, Colorado, and Nebraska! What a sight it must’ve been seeing these things of beauty rolling down the road!

(continued on next page)



Arrowhead Marina contributed to the collection by bringing new and modern boats to round out the display of classics, making the assembly of boats appealing to just about everyone.

AWARDS WERE HANDED OUT AT THE SATURDAY NIGHT BANQUET:

Best of Show – Non Wood:	Phil Wolff, '68
Best of Show – Preserved:	Buddy Butler, <i>Woodwind</i>
Best of Show – Restored:	Jim Wolfe, <i>Selah</i>
Best Resto-Mod:	John Markt, <i>In the Mood</i>
People's Choice:	John Markt, <i>In the Mood</i>

SILVER AWARDS

John Ables, *Prosperity*
 Craig Seiler, *Ronni Sue*
 Steve Murphy, *Boombastic*

GOLD AWARDS

James Donovan, *Charisma*
 Dick Moist, *Hannah Liegh*
 Aiden Hopper, *1957 Cadillac*
 Lane Fure, *19' Avon*
 John Markt, *In the Mood*
 Robert Aldrich, *Time*
 Keith Shykes, *Miss Amy*
 Brian Ruth, *What a Break*
 Scott Hendren, *Wax on Wax Off*
 Brian Ruth, *Eclectic Wave*

PLATINUM AWARDS

Buddy Butler, *Woodwind*
 Richard Wolff, *Boo Boo*
 Jim Wolfe, *Selah*
 Doug Heinsohm, *Simply Irresistible*
 Kit Jacobson, *My Fair Lady*
 David Sheets, *Hers*
 Phil Wolff, '68
 Callen Foster, *Poppy's Legacy*
 David Jones, *CVX20 Glastron*
 Chris Smithy, *Taco Express*
 Skip Bornmueller, *The Little Skipper*

The club/event also saw some transitions that will take place and affect the years to come. Mark Engstrom gave his thanks and farewells to all as he finished out his role as Club President (PHOTO 8). Mark also, with his right-hand person, Jenni announced they would be surrendering the management of the Ship Store (PHOTO 9). After more than 5 years of storing, ordering, managing, hauling, and maintaining the Store, it was time to call it a day. It's a very difficult and time-consuming job, and their work has not gone unnoticed! Many thanks go out to them for their hard work. Coming up? Changes, additions, and surprises!

So, now the focus is on 2026 and the tasks to organize for next year's event. It will be another one to look forward to and plan for, so keep a lookout for the announcement of next year's date! 🦋



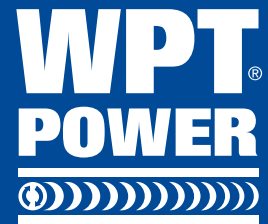
PHOTO 8



PHOTO 9



Details are Important.



Craftsmanship might seem simple at a first glance but further inspection reveals a master boat builder's countless hours in the details. They focused on the particulars creating something of value and quality from anchors to windshields. Decades later the workmanship is still appreciated and admired.

That is similar to how WPT Power builds its products for the Marine industry. We're not going to be found in the local boat yard or marina. That's because we design and manufacture quality clutches and brakes for industrial marine propulsion and offshore applications. WPT pays attention to the details which is why our products perform and last.

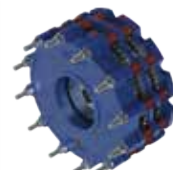
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2025

ACBS International Show

Clayton, New York



Story by Kally Bryant
Photos by Forrest Bryant



The 2025 Vintage Boat Week kicked off in picturesque Clayton, New York, at the Antique Boat Museum. The festivities began on Monday evening with a traditional 1000 Islands shore dinner, expertly prepared by the Clayton Fishing Guides Association. The meal featured fried fish from the Saint Lawrence river, corn on the cob, potatoes, and salad, followed by a amazing dessert of French toast drizzled with real maple syrup.

Tuesday morning was filled with cruising along the stunning Saint Lawrence River. After returning to the museum for lunch, participants once again returned to the Saint Lawrence for more boating on the beautiful river. Wednesday saw boats heading out on the river again, with a special stop to tour the historic Boldt Castle. The day concluded with the welcome reception at the 1000 Islands Harbor Hotel, where some of the Annual Chapter and perpetual awards were presented.



Thursday began with the Chapter Roundtable, followed by the ACBS Annual Membership and Board Meeting. Boats continued to arrive and were placed in preparation for the upcoming boat show. On Friday, perfect weather set the stage for the start of the International Boat Show, where over 100 pristine boats were polished and ready for display.

The evening's events featured the ACBS Annual Dinner and an auction at the 1000 Islands Harbor Hotel. The celebration concluded with a spectacular fireworks show over the Saint Lawrence River in honor of ACBS's 50th anniversary.

(continued on next page)



Saturday marked the second day of the boat show, which was paired with a car show on Main Street in downtown Clayton. Boat show awards were presented by Chief Judge Clay Thompson and Terry Fiest followed by the evening awards reception. The evening featured the Best of Show awards and a special dedication of the new ABM boat shop. Bob McQuinn and James Mader earned a platinum award in the Antique Runabout Restored category for their 1926 Dart "Duke".

The International Boat Show once again brought together a fantastic variety of boats. It's always a highlight to cruise in different boats, make new friends, and reconnect with old ones. The 2026 International Boat Show is already on the horizon, scheduled to take place on the beautiful shores of Lake Huron from September 13th to 20th. 🦋



Platinum Award for "Duke" a 1926 Dart owned by Bob McQuinn and James Mader ▼



Congratulations to Scott Wallace for earning the chapters President's Cup for 2025



Heartland Classics members attending show:

Forrest & Kally Bryant	Rick & Joan Penno
Brenden Jensen	Trey & Chandler Bull
Kerry Jensen	Lindy & Lisa Robinson
Paul & Linda Merryman	John Maddox
Bill & Charlotte Snyder	Bob Mc Quinn
Clay & Patty Thompson	James Mader



Renovations-One Item to Keel Up



CURRENT BOAT RESTORATION PROJECTS IN THE SHOP:

Bottom: 1999 Ford Craft 30' – Bottom Repair
Upper Left: 1957 CC Super Sport 26' – Everything
Upper Right: 1947 CC Double Stateroom 36' – Everything
Center: 1967 CC Connie 25' – Bottom Repair
Right: 1963 CC Cavalier Futura 26' – Engine, Bottom, Etc.

Brent Howard: 918.693.1855, bhoward@howardclassicboats.com
Steve Howard: 918.852.9883, stevehoward@live.com

the SAGA of a boat

AN ONGOING RESTORATION STORY – PART FOUR



“Ok, Now comes the fun part!”

Story by Kasey Rideout
Photos by Kasey Rideout

When we last met, progress had been made with replacing the bottom frames, the keel, the chines, the side boards, and the vertical frames. At this point, the boat really was a skeleton. It didn't take me long to realize that the process of restoring a wood boat is not really in the big steps, but in the details. Big steps such as placing the frames, or replacing the keel or chines were preceded by tasks of sanding, drilling holes, sanding some more, painting with penetrating epoxy, and finding either old boards to see what the original looked like, or finding bolts that would fit in the holes (when I originally took them out, I was sure I could remember where they were supposed to go). Sanding and grinding had to be done to the chines to allow for better fit of the bottom boards, boards had to be planed, and items had to be organized and found to begin placing the bottom boards.

Once I was shown the process of cutting, trimming, and sanding the inner planking boards, I set out on the task of placing all them in record time. I was making really good progress...until Chuck got in the boat – under the boards where I was working and saw daylight through them. The result was removing the boards and replacing them. There's not a lot that can be as sad as cutting and tearing out wood boards that you've spent hours working on to fit perfectly in place. Oh well, I learned to just grit my teeth and go on. As I was adhering the boards originally with 5200, it was a great idea – until I had to remove them. I think I've said before that a relationship with 5200 has a love/hate component. You love it when it sticks, and hate it when it sticks and you have to remove it. More sanding and grinding was needed to remove the 5200, and new boards were prepared with penetrating epoxy to be placed “tomorrow.” That “math” thing comes into play once again when determining what boards can be used, and where they can be placed. Cutting diagonals gives fitting a board a whole new dimension of a challenge. The angles that have to be cut makes measuring particularly challenging. Sticky notes, sorting, straight edges, angles, rulers were all needed to organize the boards for both sides to make sure there was enough wood to make every board to cover the entire bottom.



The holidays quickly approached, with choices to be made regarding if I should shop or if I should work on the boat. The boat usually won the toss. Football was coming to a close, so that distraction was going to soon be over, but now Thunder basketball is well underway, and those games had to be fit into the schedule. Thank goodness for DVR. Cold weather also moved in. With a wind chill of -6, it can be a challenge to work in a metal building, but with enough clothes and enough heaters around you, it can work.

After about a month, all the diagonal boards had been placed, and it was a thing of beauty. Once the diagonal boards were glued, screwed, and trimmed, the job of cutting and placing the battens started. Again – a process that was supposed to be easy ended up being a bigger chore than anticipated. Measurements, planing, sanding, grinding, filling holes, sanding holes, measuring some more, sanding some more... but eventually they were done! It really gave it some structure and an idea of how it would look (some day).

With the winter cold, it was time for the Winter Workshop at Brent Howard's shop. One of my goals was to have the inner planking and battens completed and placed to take her to the workshop. Since that had been completed, preparations were made to load her up and head to Brent's. There aren't enough ways to thank someone who comes out when the wind chill is almost zero to load a boat on a trailer. Dan, Dave, Lonnie, and Jeff showed up in their winter gear and got it loaded without a hint of trouble. I'm a lucky girl!

When we arrived at Brent's for the show, I was amazed at the interest in my boat. I got a lot of really good advice, some helpful hints, and quite a few pats on the back. For those who do not receive issues of Mahogany & Chrome, I presented a slide show with photos and a narrative to go along with describing the progress and hiccups associated with the process.

Spring finally arrived! No more snow, ice, or below zero wind chills to contend with. We've worked on lights for the shop, shelving and work benches, and starting the process of identifying wood for bottom boards. The process of placing the long boards (that's what I call them) is very similar to the diagonals, but with, of course, a much longer piece of wood. Original boards were used as patterns. Once they were identified (we had marked them when we removed them), they had to be cleaned by sanding and grinding all the gunk from the back so they could easily be placed on the new board for tracing and, eventually, cutting. Once again, shaping boards together so there is no gap isn't as easy as it sounds. More sanding, grinding and planing was required to get the edges just right.

We used several techniques to bend the boards so they would curve around at the bow the way they needed to. I found that wetting the board, "hanging" the end off a table and placing weights on it was a good start to making it easier to move. Steaming the board once it was off the table enabled us to use a little less brute strength to get it to a point we could clamp it down. It seems like this time is just a blur when I think about it....remembering only it seemed like on one had it went really quickly, and on the other, it took forever. Every piece had its challenges related to fit, but we eventually got them all in place.

Once the bottom was completely covered with new boards, came the process of filling all the screw holes. Using either bungs or bondo, it took a while, but all the holes were filled and eventually sanded down.

(continued on next page)



Spring progressed, and with it, boat shows! We committed to ourselves we would attend every Heartland Classics event of the season. We accomplished not only that, but I also took on the task of organizing a new show at Lake Tenkiller in July. It was so fun it will now be included in the roster of HC shows. All the fun of the other shows culminated in the final event of the season, the Mahogany & Chrome boat show at Grand Lake. With a full season of going to and preparing for shows, taking on jobs of my own at new companies, as well as other summer jaunts, the boat, unfortunately, took a back seat in terms of scheduling time to work on it. But now we're back on track!

I keep a notebook at the shop to show tasks that were done and any notes I need to make for myself. Included in the notes are dates, times, events, weather, who was present or visiting, and steps we've gone through during that day. Looking through my notebook, I see pages and pages of details about what we have done. Most of the entries include the words "sanding", "grinding", or "5200". But a lot of the time has been spent cutting and fitting boards for the first pieces to be placed in whatever location we're working on.

This was one of those jobs that is literally impossible for me to do alone. The boards were too long for me to hold in place long enough to measure, trace, make marks, or clamp. Luckily, my friend "Davey" comes to my rescue when I need muscles and know-how to get the job done. He also provides me with laughs – giggles and outright pain because I'm laughing so hard. It makes the work go by a little easier.

Now that all bottom planks have been secured with 5200 and screws, side boards are now my obsession. Once we get these placed, we can start the job of putting down epoxy, primer, and paint (I hope). Every time I finish a huge step in the restoration, I think I'm going to feel like I've accomplished something – but instead, I always think the same thing, "ok, what's next"? I anticipate the placement of the sides is going to be daunting and take a long time to complete. I'd like to have them in place in time for the Workshop in February. As I know from the other steps, and as I've said before, we never know because "it's always something." I can now, however, look back a year ago and actually see the difference in the boat, and the progress I've made. It's pretty amazing, that this is the same boat I started on almost a year and a half ago. I'm no longer going to make promises to myself about when she will be done, but I will continue to set goals and celebrate in their completion.

So, what's next? The first side board down from the bottom will be installed on both sides and both at bow and aft. The transom board will be placed, and then will come the finishing touches. Three coats of epoxy will be put on, a coat of primer, then the paint, including the water line will be applied. That will require some kind of paint tent to put up in order to have a dust free (Ha!) environment. That will really be an accomplishment if I can make all of that happen by the end of February.

There's also talk about taking her to the Tulsa Boat, Sport, & Travel Show. This show is held every February, and showcases all the latest and greatest boats, RVs, and other fun vacation and relaxation things. Heartland Classics is fortunate enough to have space provided to show off examples of our members' beautiful boats. The 2026 show will take place February 2 – 8 at Expo Square at the Tulsa Fairgrounds. I'm not sure how I feel about taking her in a state of restoration, but I guess anything is possible. If mine doesn't make it, there will be fabulous examples of what Heartland Classics is and does for everyone to enjoy. 🦋



October 19, 2024



October 25, 2025

Until next time... Dare I say it...? Will she be right side up and/or have all her side planks installed??? We'll all have to wait and see!

"The First" Well, hold on!

Was it *REALLY* the first?

Story by Clay Thompson

Photos by Forrest Bryant



We all seem to love to document things, the highest, the cheapest, the best, the biggest, most expensive, and even who did it first! I think we all just adore the guy who thought of it first, So for today, let's entertain ourselves with some firsts, and don't be too surprised if you find that what you thought was the first of something, was already done before! So read along, and I know, a lot of information here, but entertaining I hope. To keep things interesting, we shall have a look at mostly cars and boats. Most of the automobile information was provided by others, an older article in Hemmings Motor News, so that credit goes there.

Inventors are everywhere and, most times, it starts with a problem, and some heavy thinker solves it with a new way to do a given task. Sometimes companies have whole departments to improve products, having an edge on the competition.

The great Packard automobile company gave us several firsts over the years, such as, well, the tail lamp. Packard came out with it in 1900, that was when cars didn't even have windows, but they were also the first to give us power windows in 1940. And of all things first, the steering wheel. It was seen on a few French race cars, but Packard first used it on a passenger car. One day, out for a test drive in their horseless carriage, the Packard brothers hit a pothole and the steering TILLER swung and bashed James's knee. They knew then that something needed to be done, and the steering wheel was the result. Amazingly, it did not meet with immediate success, but caught on nicely. Early boats also had tillers for the rudder. The rudder offered directional control, and soon the steering wheel followed suit on boats, with most all boat builders adapting car steering wheels, columns, and gears to watercraft.

Power steering came out on the 1951 Chrysler Imperial as a first. We all know Henry Ford was first, and invented the automobile, ahhh... NOPE. But he did invent the assembly line, NOPE again, Oldsmobile was building cars with interchangeable

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parts, using an assembly line in 1900. What Ford did come up with is the MOVING assembly line. He got the idea from the slaughter houses, where they had a moving line for, well, disassembly, and Henry just reversed it! Chris-Craft was great at the production of boats, using pre cut parts, but they had no real moving assembly line, just various task departments with many men. But they were good at it, building boats large and small at a record pace. They were great innovators, having tried fiberglass on the sporty cobra fin and hatches in 1955, but they decided it had no real place in boat building. Wow! Most other boat builders catered to special orders, custom building boats one at a time, large and small.

The DODGE BROTHERS created a massively successful car company, but they started by supplying components to a lot of other companies, nearly owning Ford at one point, as Henry owed them so much money. They too, had many firsts, mostly with their driveline and chassis parts and pieces, but both brothers suffered from influenza complications in 1920. John Dodge died from this illness and Horace senior was making a slow to recovery, but then passed away the end of that year. Later, Horace Dodge Jr., at his mothers insistence, was urged to start a business. He loved boats and boat racing, so he began Dodge Boats in 1923. He had a lot of mom's money to throw at it, and he created a boat he called the Watercar, applying the high tech assembly line to building his Watercars in a new factory. He was not very successful till around 1928, by then making his best boats, but the stock market crash in 1929 really hurt any future progress.

Some think that Chrysler pioneered unibody construction of cars, but Lancia did it in 1922. In fact many things happened much earlier than we realize. E. L. Cord, owning Duesenburg and Auburn, built a car bearing his name. The L29 Cord, a true work of art, introduced in 1929, was the first production car to have front wheel drive, as many cars are today. The Germans used supercharging for more power on engines in WW1, now used on most race engines today, but those roots type blowers pumped fresh air in coal mines predating the automobile. Cadillac offered the self starter in 1908, and hydraulic brakes in 1912. While we are mentioning Cadillac, they gave us the first v8 in 1914, then later the v12, and even a v16 cylinder engine! All to create a powerful smooth running car. Then, A synchromesh shifting transmission in 1929, a sunroof in 1938, and auto dim headlights in 1952! They

offered air conditioning in 1941, but it did not really catch on till the 50's. We cannot imagine a car without cool air here in the west. What a company of innovation firsts. By the late 30's, all cars were much smoother and faster, and it follows that boats were, too.

The movement of boats through the water was a big area of innovation. In the early days of boating, vessels were displacement hulls, just parting the water and waves as it moved forward. Not much speed here, and it absorbed a lot of power. Cars were getting faster, so there must be a better way for boats. We have all seen the old photographs showing signs offering very popular SPEEDBOAT RIDES in the 20's. Well, they were not speedboats as we think of them today, but there is more to the story, those boats did have some new technology, the PLANING hull, as opposed to a displacement hull. George Crouch and John Hacker, nautical engineers, had a lot to do with this. Riding on "TOP" of the water like a racing boat, now many boats could achieve this, and people flocked to ride in a fast, planing hull, quite a thrilling ride. These hulls still had a mostly flat aft riding surface, it worked well, and something Chris Smith insisted on, but bless his heart, he was also very incorrect. In 1953, Raymond Hunt improved all boat hulls with the change from that flat design, to deep vee hulls, adding what is called deadrise, for a softer ride, and better tracking and turning. A big first that really improved all boat handling.

Many think disc brakes came out in the 70's, but Tucker did have them in the 40's, however, in England, Lanchester offered them in 1902. With boats, well, they just are much more simple than cars. Not much for headlights, or stoplights and, of course, the biggest thing is NO BRAKES! What's up with that? Seems no one has come up with much of anything in the way of brakes, just a little reverse maybe to stop forward motion. One must utilize judgment when approaching a dock, and when that judgment is poor, well, the results are well documented! There is a small gate on the jet pump that gives modern jet skis a reverse, kinda like a brake. But not too effective when off the throttle, not dependable like a car. Automatic transmissions are generally credited to Oldsmobile in 1940, but REO motorcars had a 2 speed auto in 1932. The transmission on an inboard boat is very simple, forward, neutral, and reverse, usually controlled by a large handle rising up from the floor. In 1949, Chris-Craft marketing showed many new buyers might be female, so they created a more user friendly dash push- pull handle, trying to simplify the shifting, then in the late 50's, Chris-Craft introduced the

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chris-o-matic hydraulic shift. Easy to use, but it was not perfect, it had an undesirable, and scary delay in response, and some renamed it the CRASH-o-matic.

We see the fabulous Ford Fairlane had the first really cool retractable hardtop in 1957, or did they, yes, Peugeot did it in 1935. And with boats, they are not even really convertibles, just open cockpit, but there were some tops offered in the 20's. The Kroh company had made tops for many early carriages, and these were adapted to boats. They were in the Chris-Craft catalog as early as 1925. Upscale automobiles used a top designed by the upscale DIETRICH company, and these showed up on boats starting around 1930. None were power, and quite a lot of trouble to use. The Century boat company had several hardtop, and interesting sliding top style boats in the 50's, very stylish construction, and they provided much needed shade. Some boats had windshield wipers, and the first ones were hand operated. Ford gave us the handy intermittent windshield wiper system in 1969. Ford was also the first to offer whitewall tires as an 11 dollar option in 1939.

More firsts were the anti fouling bottom paint to thwart barnacles and growth by the British inventor Francis Petitt, who in 1880 also happened to invent the first screw propeller. A great thinker indeed. And to hold the boat, Richard Danforth designed the first lightweight anchor that had great holding power in 1940. No more rotting hemp dock lines due to the invention of "nylon" line and rope, introduced at the 1939 worlds fair by Dupont.

Now for a 'super' first, FIBERGLASS. Used for cars and boats, it was discovered by the Corning Glass company in 1933, knowing it had to be useful, it was then paired with polyester resin



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by American Cyanamid in 1942. This was a game changer first for the boating world, now allowing all types of seamless shapes of watercraft, all from a mold, not wood frames and planks. It was a revolution! Along with the first electric starter on outboards in 1957, and small trailers to pull these boats around, the new fiberglass outboard boat was now in many driveways, and ready for weekends at the lake. Real family boating was born, and just in time for the fabulous 50's! Also, in 1952, Amrose Weeres of Minnesota welded barrels together end to end with a common platform and created the first pontoon boat. We all see how that turned out, pontoon things are everywhere! Sorry, did I call them a "thing" instead of a boat?

Still today, we have all kinds of innovations and "firsts," like the most talked about new electric car, except William Morrison created one in 1890. The Detroit Electric car was popular for a while in the 20's, and now the Tesla car is a success, although much is still left to be done for that battery technology. Now, are you ready for this? Driverless cars are here, but again, my brother in law

pioneered that 50 years ago when he got out and mistakenly left the car in gear and the car took off, rolling down the street a ways and over the curb into a ditch! However, that may have been a different technology.

The list of firsts is a long ongoing one, but hopefully we have covered many here to get you thinking. As I write this, it is winter and too cold out to go boating, but I don't think that problem can be solved by a first... 'til the *FIRST* of spring. ▼





WATCHING *the Master* AT WORK

Story by David Vickers
Photos by Forrest Bryant

If you're really in to classic wooden power boats, in your quietest moments you might imagine yourself looking over the shoulder of Chris Smith in the design studio in Algonac, or watching Gar Wood and his team working late into the night to reshape a hull to improve the odds for tomorrow's big race, or maybe sitting next to John Hacker's drafting table, watching as he quietly sketches out iconic lines with a pencil.

It's fun to imagine what it must have been like for icons of the boat building craft to transfer the visions in their minds to paper, then to wood and finally to water. But, aside from a few old photos or film reels, imagining is all we can do when it comes to envisioning the creative processes of these legendary designers. However, there is one visionary boatwright working today whose creative process gives us a glimpse into the beautiful mind of a boat building genius.

Kevin Fitzke, owner of Fitzke Boatworks, recently debuted his signature wood boat build and Hull No. 1, *Miss Moonshine*, at the International Show in Clayton, New York. This torpedo-hulled gentlemen's racer was inspired by the elegance and drama of boats that might have been used by Prohibition-era bootleggers to outrun the powerful, wooden patrol boats of the day, such as those built by Ditchburn. *Miss Moonshine* literally intoxicated the International boat show crowds, and evidently the judges, as she earned a Platinum award.

Not long ago, *Mahogany & Chrome*, both the magazine and the YouTube Channel, spent a memorable day watching Kevin apply his craft at Fitzke Boatworks in Winsted, Minnesota. Even though Kevin has mastered the most modern computer-aided design tools and materials, Chris Smith, Gar Wood and John Hacker would approve of his creative, mostly traditional approach to designing and building classic wooden power boat hulls. They may even take notes and learn a thing or two.





Quiet and unassuming, Kevin is just as comfortable using a state-of-the-art hand-held CNC machine to cut out structural components as he is using a humble spokeshave to finesse the radical, torpedo hull design of *Miss Moonshine*. Wooden boatbuilding and restoration allow one countless hours of solitude to reflect on the craft and its ultimate blending of woodworking, metal fabrication, movement and water.

After spending a day on the production floor with Kevin, it's clear he spends most of his waking hours reflecting on the philosophies of art, design, craftsmanship, branding, and self-determination, and he pours those reflections into his work. He's equally at ease building a marine engine, custom-designing gauges, or stitching leather upholstery on a century old sewing machine – all to his extremely high standards for quality and authenticity.

Kevin often uses the word “bespoke” when discussing his design aesthetic, meaning fully custom, completely hand-crafted, and generally unrivaled in quality and performance. On the water, *Miss Moonshine* delivers on Kevin's bespoke approach to the craft with an elegance and beauty rivaling nearly any century-old collectible boat displayed in adjacent slips and the finest classic boat collections.

Ultimately, no matter what Kevin Fitzke does in designing and building his boats, he makes it look easy. But this ease of execution masks countless hours spent researching centuries worth of boat plans and designs, tracking down vintage tools or fabricating them from pictures, building conceptual models of his designs, endless trial and error, and generally immersing himself in the boatbuilding art like few other wooden builders working today.

What really sets Fitzke Boatworks apart in the boatbuilding world is Kevin's deep respect for traditional boat building techniques and design aesthetics, and his unique ability to push the boundaries just enough to create truly original boat designs that seemingly defy the laws of physics, while still retaining all the desirable and familiar elements of classic boat construction: exquisite wood and metal work, attention to the finest details, elegance on the water, and Swiss watch functionality.

Kevin Fitzke is all about the details, and it shows in every square inch of *Miss Moonshine*, Kevin's other builds, and his award-winning Riva restorations.

If you've got a bucket list going, be sure to add seeing *Miss Moonshine* or any other build by Fitzke Boatworks where it belongs - on the water. Seeing a Fitzke in its element means truly appreciating the creative genius and talent of a rare and iconic, 21st Century classic boat designer and builder.



If you haven't yet, cruise on over to YouTube to watch the *Mahogany & Chrome*® episode featuring Fitzke Boatworks. Or, just type in to your browser: <https://www.youtube.com/@mahoganyandchromeshow> and look for the Fitzke episode. Please make sure to “Like” and Subscribe to our growing channel! 🐦

The Trading Dock

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