



Photo © Florian Becht

Renovate and Update a Classic Plastic Yacht and pass the EU Post Construction Assessment Survey

This book may be of interest to anyone interested in buying a boat built outside the EU and importing that boat into the EU.

Details of suppliers, discounts for equipment and materials and tips accumulated from various advisors and years of research are described.

Skylark's original survey for US insurance, tips for clothing and personal comfort, preparing the boat for an Atlantic crossing to Europe and a report of one boat's experience meeting the EU regulations to obtain a CE mark for a US-built 1973 Pearson 36-1.

George DuBose is a well-known music photographer with over 300 record covers and over 50 gold or platinum plaques to his name. He is writing and designing a series of books that showcase his photography for groups' album covers and promotional portraits for groups as diverse as the B52's and the Notorious B.I.G.

In his spare time, he sails and works on his two Pearson yachts, a 1970 P26 and a 1973 P36-1.



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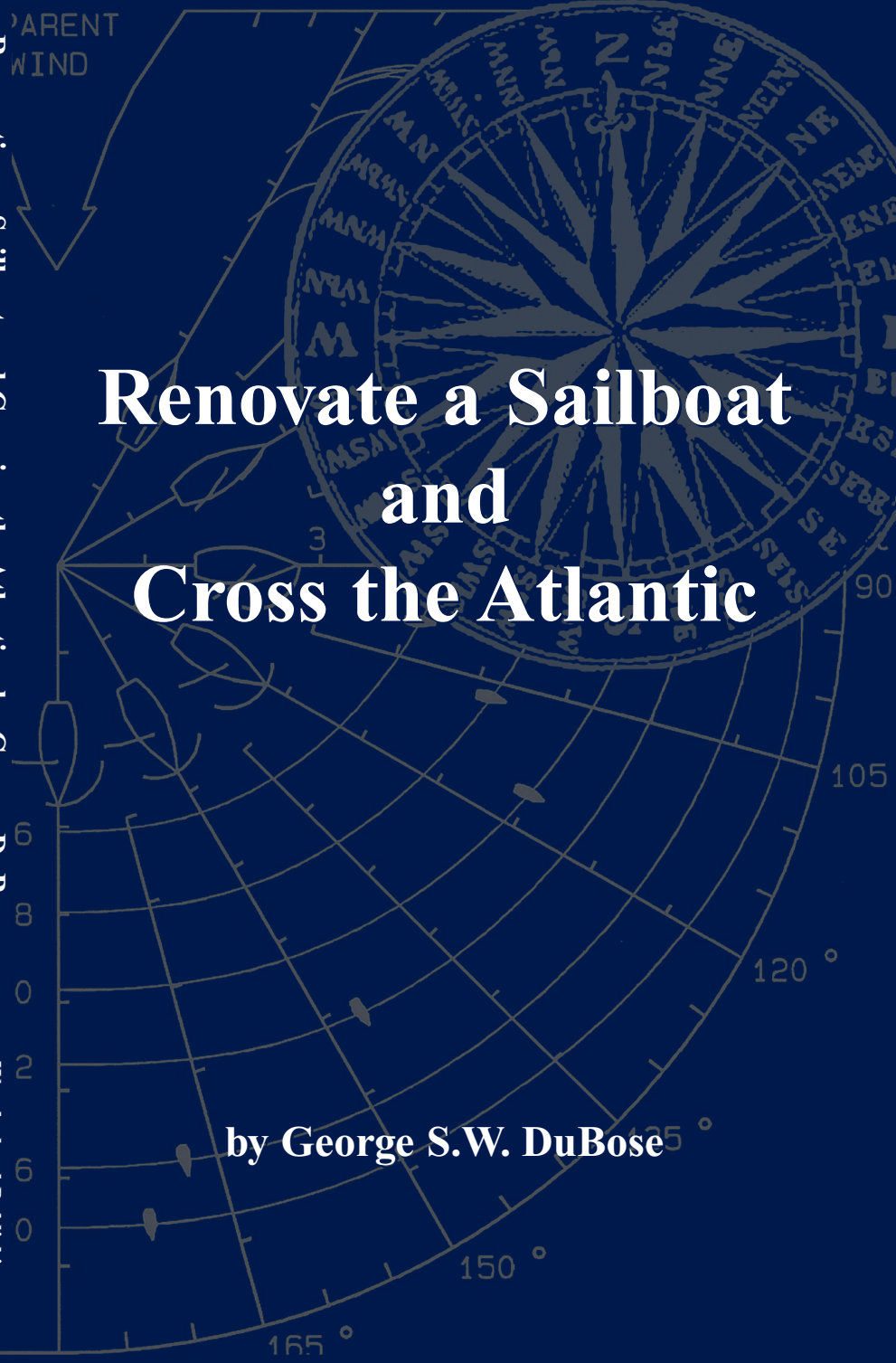


Renovating a Sailboat and Crossing the Atlantic by George DuBose

Wonderland Publishing

Renovate a Sailboat and Cross the Atlantic

by George S.W. DuBose



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**and thanks to those
who helped along the way:**

Don Vanderveer

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Foreword

As I was finishing this book, I happened to visit Amazon.com and searched the name of one of my favorite contemporary marine writers, Capt. Fatty Goodlander. Capt. Goodlander writes a monthly column for *Cruising World*, a US publication that used to be one of my favorite sailing magazines, until they started focussing on multi-million dollar catamarans and charter “dashes” through paradise.

Capt. Goodlander writes with a lot of humor and from the point of view of a sea gypsy. To my horror, I saw that the Captain had written a book about buying a boat on the cheap, renovating her and then sailing around the world. Practically the same topics of my long-planned book about buying, renovating and sailing *Skylark* across the Atlantic.

I had to buy Capt. Fatty’s book “*Buy, Outfit and Sail*”. Not only do I enjoy his style of writing and point of view, but wanted to see what he had actually had in mind.

I searched his book on Amazon.de, since I am living in Germany. Nada.

I searched Amazon.co.uk and “Voila!”, when I received his book purchased through Amazon.co.uk, I was surprised to see that it was printed in Germany by Amazon Distribution.

I have also been publishing on demand and have been using Amazon’s printing services of

Create Space to publish my books of music photography and the stories behind the photos.

To my relief, Capt. Goodlander's book isn't the same as this one, although the topics are similar, Capt. Fatty and I have different points of view and approach the same subject differently. The Good Captain illuminates how to find a damaged or derelict boat and how to negotiate the purchase. He tells how to "put out the word" that one is trying to get a bluewater boat put together without spending a dime, or not more than a "pocket full of pennies".

He gives explicit instructions about how to get discounts from chandleries, ways to use non-marine materials to replace expensive items for a few cents on the dollar. How to avoid overpaying for anything and obtain donations from other sailors who have too much redundant or unnecessary gear. Captain Fatty's book is very well written and a great read. He has been a professional sea gypsy and writer all his life and his career as a freelance writer has perhaps, forced him to be more creative and innovative in his renovations.

When I decided to buy a "new" boat and replace my Pearson 26, I knew I wanted a Pearson 36. There weren't many on the market, in fact there were only two. I had to spend more than a "pocket full of pennies" to get the boat of my dreams, but I had access to enough money to buy the boat and planned to spend an equal amount on the renovation. Rather than scrounge, beg and bor-

row a long list of equipment, time constraints, the great leaps in technology development led me to consider my purchases on the basis of quality and safety.

I was rebuilding *Skylark*, 35 years old at the time, to modern standards, preferring to replace equipment and appliances whose age and maintenance history was unknown. I was not only planning on crossing the Atlantic at least once to get her to Europe, I was planning on doing extensive cruising around Europe with my family and wanted *Skylark* to be able to “handle anything” that Mother Nature would throw at her. She certainly isn’t over-equipped, but she does have systems that require diligence and observation.

When my extensive research led me to consider a piece of safety equipment, ie. liferaft, storm sails, sea anchors and drogues, jacklines and harnesses, price was never considered. Of course, when I had decided on a particular piece of equipment, however pricey, I would shop the world over for the cheapest price or deepest discount.

Since you have already bought this book, I can’t recommend any book as highly as Capt. Fatty Goodlander’s “Buy, Outfit and Sail”. That doesn’t preclude, “Upgrading the Cruising Sailboat” by Dan Spurr, “This Old Boat” by Dan Casey or any books by Dan Casey or Nigel Calder.

Unless you are having your refit done at Derecktor’s Shipyard and have access to the

highly trained and experienced staff there, do what I did and read, read, read and then read some more.

Besides reading all of these books cover to cover more than once, I had access to several “mentors” at the boatyard in East Hampton, NY. Don Vanderveer, the owner of Three Mile Marina on Three Mile Harbor had been working on boats since he worked on ships at the Brooklyn Navy Yard during WWII, Charles Schwendler, a Mercedes, boat and certified airplane mechanic, Bennett Jucofsky, a marine equipment salesman and Sam Story, the owner of Three Mile Harbor Marina.

The extensive electrical renovations were led by Andrew Heermans, an audio engineer who also had a good knowledge of electronics, their circuits and he has extremely professional working practices. The unnamed, self-designated first Mate, Jerry Hodgens, the ocean tug captain, my college pal Rick Doherty, Omar Hernandez, who dove under *Skylark* when a milk crate full of new stainless steel deck fittings slid off the deck into the water, all deserve a big thank you. Bill Craig and Bob DuBose, who fed me and my crew after our 12-14 hour work marathons and many of my friends at the boatyard, who were of infinite help. I want to thank all of these guys for helping me make a safe boat even safer.

**Acquisition
and
Renovation**

The Purchase

I moved to Europe in 1998, leaving my 1970 Pearson 26 in a boatyard on Long Island. After a few years of shuttling back and forth in the summer to visit the boat, I decided it was time to upgrade to a larger vessel in order to make room for my German wife and two young boys. We needed a boat in Europe that could accommodate all four of us, allow us to cook on board and I thought the possibility of having a hot shower on board would be a big wife pleaser.

Being a big fan of Pearsons and well aware of their potential for speed and famous robust construction, I began searching for a Pearson 36-1. There are a number of yacht manufacturers that built yachts capable of crossing oceans and the price for a 70s-era boat was well within my budget. Pearson, Bristol, Catalina, are just a few of the builders that have been around for quite a while and a search for a fixer-upper will find something for every budget and level of refitting skills.

I found *Skylark*, a Pearson 36-1 on eBay in 2007, there was only one other sister-ship on the market at that time and my decision was between a 1972 and a 1973 model. The '72 was listed for \$25,000 and had an original Atomic Four gasoline engine and the 1973 was listed at \$40,000 and had a new Yanmar diesel. The cost of installing a diesel made the boats about equal in price and I had doubts about my skill level of engine installation. I had refit my Pearson 26 in 1990 and am

fairly handy with fiberglass work, caulking and wood work, so finding a slightly abused boat wouldn't put me off.

Skylark was lying in Connecticut and through Boat/US, I contacted a surveyor located near the 1973 Pearson. Before he sent me the results of the survey, he emailed me and asked me to call him before he wrote up his survey. He told me that the boat had a lot of problems. When pressed for details, he told me that none of the "advertised" electronics were connected and he wasn't able to test any of them. He went on to say that the chainplates had been leaking for sometime and there was water damage to the interior.

When I got the survey and carefully read the details, I realized that 1.) all the electronics were quite dated and the new technology with radar and other electronics had made a quantum leap since the 70s, 2.) leaking chainplates could be re-caulked, 3.) the standing rigging was going to be replaced anyway. So without even seeing *Skylark* myself, I bought the boat. Didn't even dicker on the price. I will never forget the previous owner telling me to hold off on the pickup, because he wanted to put the carpeting back in the cabin. I told him not to bother.

A couple of buddies picked up the boat in Connecticut and sailed her over to the Three Mile Boatyard in Long Island's Three Mile Harbor, north of East Hampton, NY.

When I arrived in July 2007, a month after buying the boat and before I even entered the

cabin, I saw that the old non-selftailing Lewmar winches were going to be the first things to be replaced. I put no limit on the budget for new electronics, sails or to replace dated equipment. I guesstimated that I would be spending at least what I paid for the boat, but I knew that a tweaked P-36 would be an awesome boat and worth whatever money I spent on the renovation.

The first thing I did was contact Defender Marine and West Marine, two of the biggest online chandleries in the US. I knew from some of the professional shipwrights that if you contacted these companies and told them that you were going to be spending in excess of \$10,000 with them, they would give trade discounts on top of their already discounted prices.

I also knew that the euro vs. the US dollar exchange rate, plus the fact that marine supplies are severely overpriced in Europe, meant that my best bet was going to be; buy everything for the refit and do all the work in the US. Purchases from these US online chandleries also meant that on top of the deep discounts, there would be no sales tax. In Europe, the sales tax is between 19% and 25% on top of the manufacturer's suggested retail prices. I figured I would be saving half of what this work would cost me in Europe.

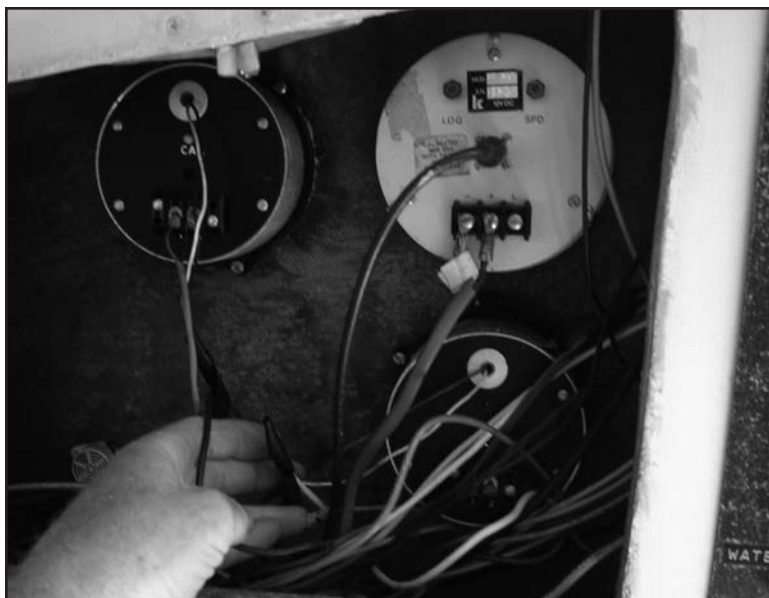
The to-do list was longer than both my arms. An obvious priority was to replace the original Perko circuit panel that used fuses. I contacted Andy Heermans, who was a recording engineer,



The only thing new about Skylark was her Awlgrip® paint job. The locks in The Netherlands and Scotland's Caledonian Canal soon took care of that.



Actually, the Yanmar 3GM30F had only 100 hours and was five years old. The PO didn't travel.



All the wiring was old and technically outdated. We pulled every wire and cable out of the boat and replaced it all with high quality material from Pacer Marine.

but I knew was also a crack electrician. When he surveyed the electrical system, he pointed out that all the original wiring was 35 years old and the copper strands were quite large and untinned.

He found Pacer Marine, a new company that offered a product line that was equal to or better - but less expensive - than the popular, but overpriced Ancor electric products. We decided to replace all the wiring on the entire boat with a larger gauge, finer and tinned strands.

The connectors that Pacer offers have built-in heat shrink tubing and when connected actually snap together producing a waterproof connection.

The original alcohol oven had been replaced



The original circuit panel used glass fuses and had seen better days. It was replaced with a modular circuit panel by Blue Sea with an amp meter to measure current draw.



The new Blue Sea circuit panel developed a loose contact in one of the circuit breakers and Blue Sea FedEx'd me a new one overnight to Germany! That's service!

with a small household icebox that was totally unsuitable for use in a seaway. If you opened the door on a starboard tack, the icebox would have emptied itself all over the cabin sole. An Eno Gasgone three burner stove and oven was installed in its place.

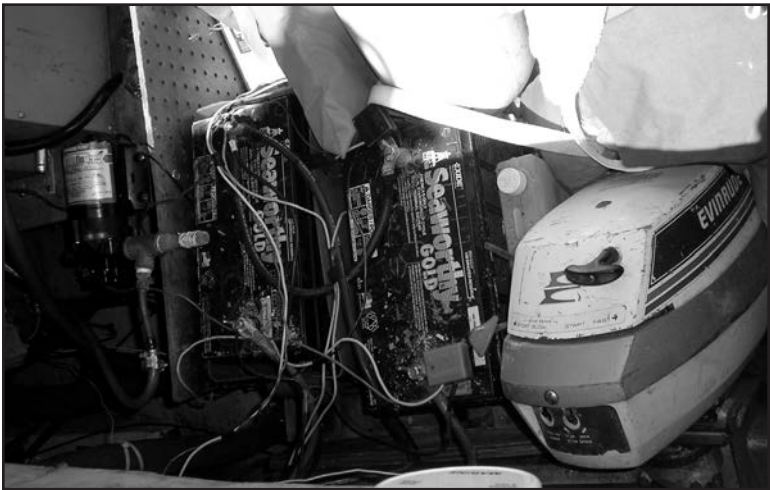
The original water heater was not even tested, it was replaced with an Isomat 6 gallon unit that was plumbed to the engine for heating the water with the hot water from the engine and as the unit was available in 120 or 220 volts, all that would be necessary to convert to 220v would be to change a \$40 heating coil. A holding tank was installed with a "Y" connection.

The house batteries were a story of their own. When I first saw the two auto batteries on their "shelf", I wondered how difficult it was going to be to get rid of that shelf. After lifting the batteries out, noticing that there were no tie downs or straps securing them, the shelf just lifted as well. I was shocked. The thin Masonite particle board that separate the lazarette storage from the fuel tank, steering cables and engine was gone, one good heel to port and the batteries would have tumbled onto the engine or the stuffing box.

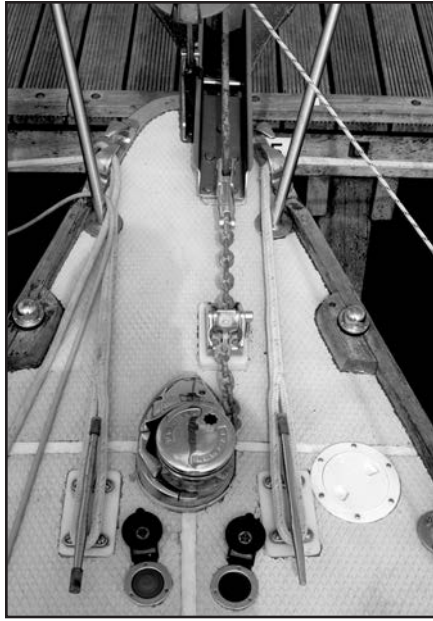
I bought some 3/4" 11-ply plywood and epoxied pieces for a new battery shelf together, effectively doubling the thickness of the new shelf to 1-1/2". This shelf was bolted to the bulkhead and glassed to the hull. The shelf would also support the new bolted down water heater. One of my



Open this home style refrigerator on starboard tack and one would see the contents all over the cabin sole.



These batteries were not tied to the battery shelf and the battery shelf was not fixed to the boat at all. One sharp heel to port and the batteries would be on the engine.



Skylark's new deck layout is strong and well backed under the deck by the original hardspot and 1/2" HDPE. All the foredeck fittings survived a tow for 23 hours against the Rhine river current from Tiel, NL to Cologne, Germany, with no problem.

advisors made me aware of Optima AGM sealed batteries that could be mounted in any position and are spill-proof. A search on the internet and I found stainless steel trays for racing motorboats with rods and cross bars to hold the batteries in position in the event of a rollover.

One overnight hanging off the old 40lb Danforth anchor well set in the harbor mud, necessitating a break out and handing a 40lb Danforth anchor on board quickly told me that I wanted a windlass. A Lewmar V2 windlass was installed on the conveniently placed "hard spot" in the middle



Two pieces of 11-ply 3/4" plywood were epoxied together, racing battery holddowns were installed. Sealed Optima AGM batteries won't leak, even in a rollover.

of the bow where the original single bow cleat had been. I removed the Marinium bow chocks and replaced them with stainless steel chocks several sizes larger and two 12" Herreshoff cleats were mounted on either side of the windlass. 100 feet of 3/8" chain, 200 feet of 12 plait 5/8" anchor line now falls neatly into the forepeak.

I took a chance on a new product and ordered a new-to-the-market Manson Supreme 45lb anchor, one size larger than specified for a 36' boat.

One tip here: I used a 4" hole saw and an old Craftsman 1/2 hp 1/2" drill to cut the hole for the windlass. I drilled a pilot hole and then positioned the small bit of the hole saw and began to cut through the Treadmaster and the fiberglass of



The original foredeck had only one cleat and very small Skene chocks. Not a good arrangement for serious cruising.

the deck. All went well until I cut through the fiberglass. When the 4" hole saw reached the 3/4" plywood of the "hard spot", the hole saw bit into the plywood and stopped, but the good ol' Craftsman continued to turn, taking me with it. I was almost thrown off the boat and had a severe sprain in my wrist. When I later complained to Don, the boatyard owner, he told me I should have run the hole saw backwards, so the teeth didn't bite. Why didn't he tell me that to begin with? It was a couple of years before the pain in my wrist went away.

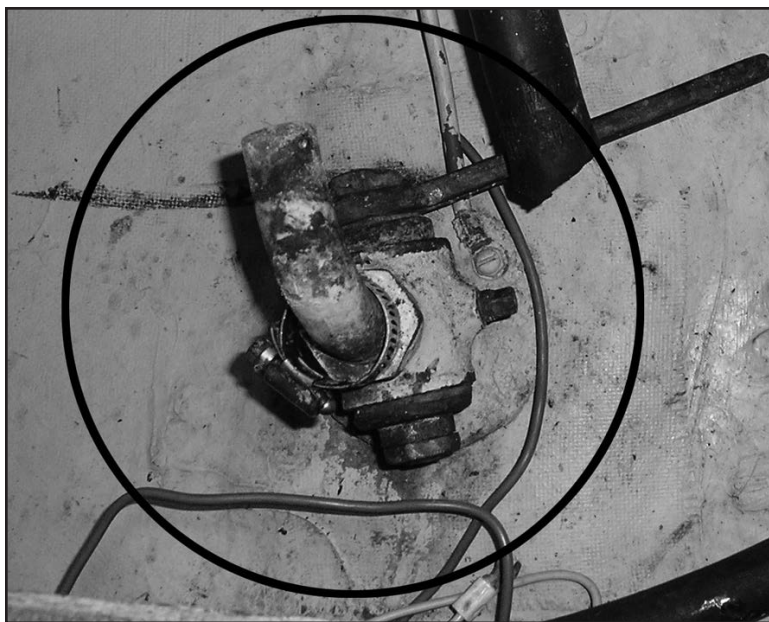
The winter of 2007, I had to take *Skylark* to Uhlien's Marina in Montauk, Long Island. *Skylark* was too heavy for the old cranes at the boatyard to lift. Uhlien's had a travel lift that could lift

Skylark. In my negotiations with Henry Uhlein, I learned that I would be able to work on *Skylark's* interior and her exterior, but I would not be allowed to paint her bottom. Sounded good to me.

One of the members of my boatyard had a 40 foot motor boat that he lived on every summer while he was renting his house to summer tenants. I knew that he only moved his motor boat a few times a year. I once asked him how he kept his bottom so clean of barnacles and he told me that he used expensive International Micron bottom paint and only painted his bottom every five years.

The first project I tackled with Andy, the electrician, was to remove the 37 year old Wilcox-Crittenden marine bronze seacocks. These seacocks have a tapered cone inside and are massive. All four seacocks were frozen open. I knew the previous owner's poor maintenance habits and was sure that the seacocks hadn't been greased or cleaned since Noah retired.

Inside the hull holding the seacock with a large wrench, I tried to turn it off of the thru-hull. With a lot of force, I was able to spin the whole assembly, but the seacock wouldn't turn off the thru-hull. I asked Andy to turn the wrench and seacock while I went under the boat and tried to hold the thru-hull. No go. I thought I should just take a saber saw and cut out the thru-hulls and cover the hole with fiberglass and cut a new hole and mount a new thru-hull. I called Don, the boatyard owner to discuss my plan. As he often had



The original 40 year old Wilcox-Crittenden naval bronze seacocks cleaned up beautifully and will last longer than me or the boat.

better ideas, having worked in shipyards as a young boy during WWII, I was happy to learn that he had experience with stubborn seacocks. He told me to get a “burr”, a carbide rotary file, chuck it into a drill. Then carefully grind the edge of the hole in the thru-hull until I cut around where the flange met the threaded pipe.

The first thru-hull took me 15 minute to cut the flange away. The flange fell to the ground and Andy inside the boat just lifted the seacock out of the hull. The second thru-hull took 10 minutes and by the time I got to the fourth and smallest seacock, I had it cut out in 5 minutes. I took all four seacocks, 3 were 1-1/2” and one was 3/4”, to