

FOR THE LOVE OF A DRAGON

By Captain Andrea McDonald

CAPRICE was once an American Olympic champion. Born in 1968, she was sailed hard to be accepted into the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany. She brought our country home a Bronze metal in what was to be the last year Dragons competed. Now, she is a very old and tired classic wood Dragon racing yacht. At one time nothing was too good for her and no expense spared, but she has spent the last 18 years on the hard, abandoned and unwanted.



1968 Dragon CAPRICE

When I came across the ad giving her away free, no one wanted her. It took me quite a while to get her to my house, and people thought I was crazy taking her home. I promised her I would return her to being one of the fastest and prettiest Dragons around, no matter what I had to do. The events that unfolded with this boat are mind-boggling and I am actually writing a book about her called "The Ghost of a Dragon." This one, rotten old boat has done so much, in such a short time for me, and others, in the Seattle area. Being single with kids I really did not have the money for such a big job. While I have restored other boats, this one I knew nothing about fixing. I had such a strong love for this boat and desire to fix her that events were set in motion that never would have materialized without her in my life. She was a catalyst and a strong motivating force.

I had been working on SEATIME for a 100-ton License, but no money for school. After sitting with her one day with tears pouring down my face trying to figure how I would keep this huge promise I made, it came to me. I wrote every Maritime school I could find. One wrote back. I do yacht painting and brightwork, and they agreed to let me work off the large tuition. I worked long days for the next 2 months. With 2 hours each way of transit time back and forth from my home, working on boats all day, then 4 hours of class at night, it was crazy. I had 5 kids at home, dogs, a house, and 4 other sailboats! I rarely had time to even study, but every time I was about to give up, I looked at CAPRICE sitting there alone in my driveway. I wanted her back in salt water where she belonged, so, I just kept working.

Meanwhile, I also did lots of Dragon research and found out we once had this huge fleet here in Seattle that has now been gone for over 25 years. No more Dragons, according to the IDA, were here. Only a few in the east were known to exist. WHAT? No Dragons? Well, this just won't work. Who is CAPRICE supposed to race when I get her done? So, I set out to find all those old Dragons. I am called "The Dragon Lady" and "The Dragon Hunter" now. I advertised on the web, I emailed, I made phone calls, I traveled to marinas and

boatyards. If they were out there, I was going to find them. And, find them I did!

Before long I had 10 on my list and I was put in contact with an awesome fellow named Vern from the Center for Wood boats here in Seattle. He, too, wanted to see the fleet restored. He also worked very hard organizing and we ended up getting 5 Dragons to come to the Blanchard regatta. We needed 4 boats for a fleet race. We did it! One of those boats was one of mine, US35, and it was such a thrill to be a part of the first Dragon start in 25 years. I sold that boat after the races. She lives at the Center for wood boats and takes people sailing. Now, it seemed we had created such an interest in these Dragons that I had people everywhere writing me and asking if I knew of one they could fix. One fellow even offered to buy CAPRICE from me -- the same boat a few months earlier they could not even give away for free. NO WAY would I sell her. Odd thing is that she is US244 and so is my very first sailboat that I still have, my little Columbia 23 Sweet Pea. Both have US244 sail numbers.

Now that we have all this Dragon interest going, we are planning a big Dragon race this coming July at the Center and all are invited. If you know of any Dragon sailors, please put them in contact with me! No Dragon will now be crushed or left to rot around here anyway. I'm still hunting down several more of the old boats and it's so sad when I find out one was burned or crushed. My heart actually hurts for them. Silly I guess.



1968 Dragon US35 Rounding the mark

BONE YARD BOAT LISTINGS ...



1927 William Atkins Sailing Vessel 44' -- AEGEAN SEA

1927 William Atkins Sailing Vessel 44'. AEGEAN SEA is a fine pedigree vessel, built in Kyle shipyards in City Island, NY in the year 1927. City Island Nautical Museum currently displays a photo of her in her glory days. 43 ft 6 inches, 14 foot beam, currently powered by the original Grey Marine gas engine which still runs. On the dry in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Will need a total refit, planks, hatches, decks, deckhouse needs restoration at minimum. All original hardware in tact -- beautiful ornate bronze ice box handles and manual water pumps, solid bronze portholes and deck hardware, mast boom interior excellent, keelbolts replaced about 12 years ago. Interested parties should be financially stable with plenty of time to spare, a good amount of tools and be a shipwright or know of one with a good amount of time under the belt. Also a good boatyard for storage purposes or where she can be restored (hopefully anyone reading this knows that already). This is a major project but when completed you will have a most comfortable well balanced pedigree blue water sailing vessel. Asking **FREE!** Email: AegeanC824@aol.com



1959 Owens Flagship 22'

1959 OWENS Flagship 22'. Owner says: "Lapstrake cruiser for sale. Wood is solid and just needs some repainting/varnishing as needed. The 1950's tandem trailer has good tires for trailering with no spare. The V8 original flagship motor looks good with original paint and has only 420+ hours - running condition is currently unknown. Top cabin windshield exists with all parts and was only removed for inside storing purposes." Asking \$3000 or best offer. Call (765) 430-7636 or Bestdaylilies@cs.com



1948 HUCKINS NEPTUNE 45'. 12' beam. Double planked mahogany. Needs a lot of TLC. Asking: \$1500. Location: Fernandina Beach, FL. Not sure if the boat is powered. Contact Karl at (904) 321-0900 or email at KAWELBACHER@COMCAST.NET



1954 Gravette Comet 22'

1954 Gravette Comet 22'. Owner says: "Only 6 of these boats were built for the Department of the Lands and Forest in Ontario, Canada. It has been at home on Long Point bay for all of it's life and has been boathouse kept for all of this time. This boat is awesome! She is tight and the motor has always been maintained by a professional yard since the last (3rd) owner has had her. The power is an inboard 283 Buchanan engine that is not the original but is a couple of years newer. There are manuals and documents that come with the boat and delivery can be arranged. You can buy this boat as is and finish her with varnish and paint yourself or I'll do it for you. I would expect a month worth of work to finish everything. The cost would be around 5 thousand CDN. This would include a minimum of 8 coats of varnish on all parts and 6 coats of marine paint for the topsides. The interior and the bilges would also need some attention. The motor is "perfect" according to the owner. We also have a reputable builder of trailers that would soon put a trailer under her to haul her anywhere. A custom cover would be about \$600 CDN. This gem in the rough won't last long. The older this boat gets, the more valuable she will be." Asking: \$8000 Canadian. Contact Jim Hammond at Inner Bay Boats in Langton, Ontario (Canada): (519) 875-3338 or jfhammond@kwic.com