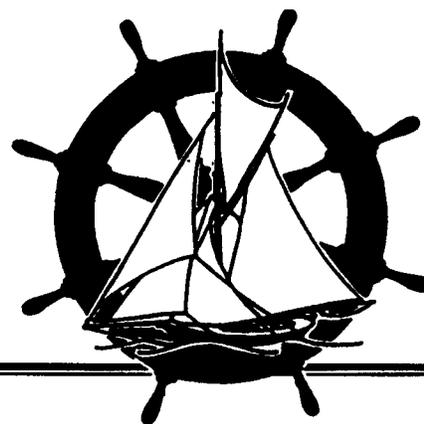


# THE HELM

Spring, 2006 - Volume 24, No. 1



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## A PUBLICATION OF THE CLASSIC YACHT RESTORATION GUILD, INC.

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*Elf*, past and future

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### President's Message

Transitions . . .

Or,

**“If the work is good,**

**you better save some for tomorrow.”\***

. . . by Rick Carrion

**W**hile I was sanding several cherry boat parts the other day, I let my mind wander, and came to the realization that the finish is as important as the start. I really hate to spend hours sanding objects but I know that it is critical for a fine finish. Of course, the start and planning of a project is of equal or greater importance. Without a carefully planned start, the outcome may not meet expectations. I am glad that we began with a good plan and we maintained our standards throughout the restoration project. Only the best of materials and artisanship have gone into the effort. Now that I'm finishing the sanding, painting and varnishing, I am glad that we have worked hard to adhere to a museum quality restoration.

You might be thinking: “Why are you not finished yet? Will it take global warming to float her off her stands again?!” I just want to say that it has been an interesting journey that started in 1991, when *Elf* was transported to my back yard. At that time, I had my back to the wall to start the project or lose significant grant money. I had hoped to have more of the overall cost banked before the start-up time. So the first year we worked under the blue poly tarps, running a power cord out from the house. Graham persevered into the winter, making great progress as the weather allowed.

Now we have the luxury of working in an enclosed workshop that I built around *Elf* the following year.

Over the years, we have had several periods of great progress

interspersed with seemingly dormant periods. One of my favorite comments of Graham's is: “We work until the money runs out, then go out and make more money for the next phase of the project.” And, over the years, Graham has had other clients that needed his expertise to help restore their vessels. Now I am happy to report that Graham has cleared his schedule to work on the final phase of *Elf*'s restoration, and I hope the money does not run out before re-launching. During the slow times, I spend a great deal of time on fundraising efforts: grant-writing, event planning, making contacts, mailings..... the list goes on.....

I have to thank all of the members and friends of the Guild for your shared enthusiasm, which has given me inspiration and helped to make the dream come true – that of seeing *Elf* restored to her original condition to museum quality standards. Wow! And now we are honestly nearing completion with a 2006 re-launch. How exciting is that? We are truly close to a major transition – putting the work behind us and setting out on sailing adventures and antique vessel sailing races. For me, it is a point in time similar to when I purchased *Elf* in 1971. I had to learn to sail a large vessel, and now I will have to develop a new understanding of the intricacies of the big rig. As my friend John Brady said, “There are going to be a lot more strings coming down from the top of the mast.” *Elf*'s Marconi rig only had three lines coming down from the top of the mast. Now, with the recreation of the original rig, we will have 15 or more lines coming down from the top. (See article describing *Elf*'s various rigs elsewhere in this newsletter. For those who do not know, we are returning to the massive original rig which allowed *Elf* to carry 2100 feet of sail, as shown in the 1888-1890 photographs.)

Another one of my favorite sayings is one that I first heard while rebuilding a rudder, as part of a wooden boat crew, at Clarendetown, Long Island in the Bahamas in 1973 – “If the work is good, you better save some for tomorrow.” In boating, there will always be good work to do tomorrow, as every sailor knows! It will be mixed, though, with much memorable sailing and adventure.

As we begin to see the light at the end of the tunnel, I can use every bit of help offered. We will have the workshop most weekends and a pot luck dinner afterwards. We plan to post details weekly on our website: **CYRG.org**. (But call or e-mail ahead to be sure that my girlfriend/editor hasn't dragged me

away to something that she thinks is better than working on the boat.)

The other form of help that is crucial at this point is, of course, funding. Your help in the past has been put to good use, which you have seen first-hand. Your increased commitment at this juncture will help to ensure that *Elf* will sail again — THIS SUMMER – WITH YOU ABOARD!! Please don't let us run out of money again so close to the end! Your donation represents a contribution to the preservation of a beautiful piece of American history. Finally, as CYRG is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, all contributions are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law. Please – today – renew your membership and add whatever donation you are able to make. Thank you!

\* Old island saying.



*Photo courtesy of Francis Russell Hart Collection - MIT*

*Photo shows Elf's original massive rig that she will soon carry again.*

*"Lawley Built"*

## Graham's Letter

### All Wooden Boats are Workboats

I am sitting in front of my shop in front of the wood stove. Behind me is the mould for a new Steve Redmond designed 16' lightweight rowing skiff. Its finally cold outside. The last time I spoke to Rick, he was off to have hand surgery done, and I hope that went well.

I love to build these rowing skiffs and what a great function they can serve in this modern age. Wooden boats are still viable vessels; they are not relics by any means. Perhaps more expensive than a gym membership, but more beautiful than a "bow flex", and instead of sitting in one spot, your full body workout transports you to all sorts of beautiful places. Each workout can be an adventure. This is what I love about wooden boats. They are like living things, they have work to do, and no other boat needs work to do more than a wooden boat. I know I have talked about this before, but it cannot be stressed too often.

I recently completed overseeing major work on a 65' Chesapeake oyster buy boat that we hauled out down the bay in Galesville, MD. I restored her some years ago. It was extensive and expensive. I remember thinking "what a lucky boat." With no more oyster work to do the only hope for these few remaining buy boats is to be bought, restored, and maintained by people who can afford to do it.

However, she was not as lucky as I thought. The owner is busy and the boat sat idle most of the time. Idleness will kill a wooden boat faster than the most punishing work ever will, and it did. In only a matter of five or six years, rot had gotten a foothold in various places. Consider the difference in life style. When the boat was actively in the oyster trade, people's livelihoods depended on her. She was a working boat owned by working people. She was out on the lower Chesapeake Bay sun up to sun down, day in and day out. Every seam, check and crack was constantly soaked in brine, fish oil and salty slime. It is very hard for rot spores to survive in an environment like that. Salt is a preservative and seams swelled tight are closed to rot spores and mildew.

Even this boat would have faired better had she been rotated in her slip, but she presented such a pretty picture head on at the dock. The shady side of her hull went to HELL, while the sunny side faired much better. These are old lessons that are all but lost today. The best materials and the best work cannot hold up against the elements and idleness.

So you see, a wooden boat like ELF needs a job to do. She needs to be sailed hard and often, and have a crew devoted to constant vigilance and maintenance. This is all good news for guild members, who have hung in there for so long, as we rapidly approach launch day. The more she has sailed, the better off she will be. Maintenance activity will be a constant and ongoing process as well as an education in skills and methods that are rapidly being forgotten. Now the future for ELF and Guild members is more clearly defined. It will soon be time to hoist the sails and seek new adventures.



**Elf's Shipwright**

# Wish Upon a Star, Pick a Destination

## Perspectives on Celestial Navigation

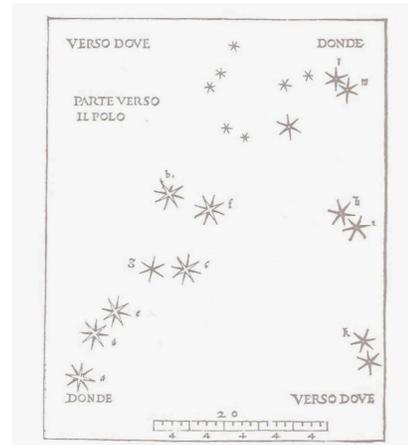
. . . by Brian McCandless

**O**ur world is a sea of sights and sounds, overloaded with perceptions. By day we plainly see our world and hear its bustle; by night we see neon signs, vague halos and passing shadows as we drive home from work. As we walk our dog through the neighborhood we find ourselves deciphering codes of streetlamps and porch lights. But out on the water it's another matter. As constellations of dock lights flicker on the horizons of crowded ports, constellations of stars glimmer steadfastly overhead, harboring ancient information that lets us figure where we are and where we're going. For those who grew up in an older time, this horizon-to-horizon show is a world of peace, solitude and security. For others, accustomed to this age of GPS and other acronymic navigational aids, it can seem daunting, archaic, and confusing. It is important to remember that technology isn't an excuse to forget the why's and wherefore's of this world! Rather, technology simply makes it easier to access and manipulate the basic facts, which haven't changed.

So what is to be taken from these orbs, stars and planets that persistently show their faces in our sky? Despite humanity's best efforts to drown them out, these pin-point posts that actually guided our forbears as they plied the earth's waters on their way to expand their noble realms and settle new lands can still be of service. In this series, I hope to provide a survey of the evening sky each season, conveying to you a sense of history and hopefully, some navigational sense, as practiced by our sea-going forbears. In a general sense, we must accept the dynamical aspect of the heavens and that the movement of the sun, moon, and stars are always in concert with the seasons, the tides and our location on the surface of the planet about which they pass. The navigator who truly understands this can find meaning in the numbers provided on the output device of his navigational sensors.

Now let's start at the beginning, which in the northern latitudes leads us to the star that remains in nearly the same place all year – Polaris, the north star, around which all the other stars and planets rotate, counterclockwise, as the evening proceeds. As a navigational aid, its value can't be overstated; the angle of Polaris above your horizon is equal to your latitude, regardless of the time of year (get out your sextant and prove it!). From day-to-day, the stars also move a little more westerly each day, so that they are seen rising earlier as the year moves forward. Against this framework, the moon moves ever eastward, rising and setting later each day. Periods of clear days let you notice that the moon exhibits the greatest motion, while Polaris stays in one place. For navigators since 1767 (the first year of lunar ephemerides), that is enough information, since Polaris gives latitude and the moon gives longitude. The classic way to find Polaris is by following the so-called "pointer stars" of the Big Dipper, an asterism of the constellation Ursa Major, the Big Bear (latin, *ursa* = bear). Below is

a star chart showing Ursa Major, with the Big Dipper, from Piccolomini's star atlas *De le Stelle Fisse* published in 1540.



In the springtime, in the northern hemisphere, the sun rises earlier and sets later each day. This is due to the elliptical orbit of Earth about the Sun and the tilt of the Earth's orbit with respect to its axis of revolution. As we move through the vernal equinox (1:27 PM EST on 20 March 2006), the evening sky in the mid-latitudes has Cassiopeia setting in the west, pushing down Cepheus. To the south, Orion, with its belt and sword and bright stars Betgeuse (upper left, red star) and Rigel (lower right, blue star), is tilted westerly and skips across the horizon, setting around midnight. In the east, the handle of the big Dipper curves southward to Regulus in Leo and further towards Spica in Virgo rising after midnight. Overhead, Auriga the charioteer, with its bright star Capella, moves westward across the meridian, following the Pleiades and Taurus, with its vee-shaped asterism called the Hyades, marked by bright red Aldebaran. Gemini with the twin stars Castor and Pollux, will soon lie across the meridian, making way for Leo, whose lion's head is clearly visible as a reversed question mark, as asterism called the sickle.

Planets abound this spring. Mars sets in the west, a red object between Auriga and Gemini. Saturn, a bright yellow object, lies about halfway between Gemini and the sickle of Leo. In the late evening, Jupiter rises in the east, the brightest object in the relatively empty field of stars known as Libra. The inner planets will appear as morning stars this spring. Mercury makes an appearance in the April twilight and reaches its greatest western elongation, farthest from the sun, on April 8<sup>th</sup>. Mercury is hard to find and is not considered a reliable navigational star. Venus on the other hand rises brightly in the east-southeast, in Aquarius, at 5 AM and is the brightest morning object! I hope you'll take note of your sky and use the free data provided by the cosmic show to get where you're going!

### SHARE THE HELM WITH FRIENDS

Send your email address to:  
[elf1888@earthlink.net](mailto:elf1888@earthlink.net)

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# Sail Plan and Ballast Keel... AKU AKU

... by Rick Carrion

I must start with the thought that from the start of the *ELF* restoration project, I have always wanted to recreate the original vessel. Over the years, we have worked hard to restore and/or duplicate all original equipment, structures, and general features with exacting detail to museum quality standards. The most recent efforts involve putting *ELF*'s original massive rig and sail plan back.

When designed and built in 1888 as a racing yacht there were no penalties for flying extra sails. The racing classes were set by the vessels water line length. At that time the popular racing classes were the thirties, footers, and forty-six footers. *ELF* being a member of the thirty-footer class had a 28' 8" waterline. In addition, at that time *ELF* flew about two thousand square foot of sail, an amazing amount for a small yacht.

Over the years, many changes have occurred, and it is very important to note that during World War I *ELF* gave up her lead ballast keel to support the war efforts. Eventually she was re-ballasted with iron of the same shape and size, which was 1.2 tons lighter than the original. In order to carry the massive gaff rig we need to put the 5 tons of lead back on the bottom. The decision was made to have the lead cast using the iron as a model. Easier said than done! Then the question... Just how do you take almost 4 tons of iron off and move it out of the shop and load and ship it to the foundry?

After a lot of reading, brainstorming and review of plans A to Z, we started. We knew that to move that kind of weight safely every move had to be slow and carefully thought out well in advance. Thanks to John Hesler, Bill Hamilton, Greg DeCowski and myself we devised a plan. First, we re-supported the hull and ballast keel separately. We cut and fashioned large locust timbers

and placed them for optimal supports with freedom of movement to move the keel out from underneath. Then we placed several large hydraulic jacks under the iron. Then we made and attached balance feet to prevent the iron from falling over on its side, which would potentially hurt someone and/or damage the boat.

Next, we cut the keel bolts to free the iron to move. Then using 20-ton jacks, we slowly lowered the iron down onto large locust trunks that served as rollers. Once we had the weight on the rollers, it was time to inch by inch move it forward. A slight downhill slope in front of the boat actually helped, but we had to slow the forward motion for safety. On the locust rollers, we could actually move the weight by a simple pull, and had to be careful it did not go too fast. By dusk, we were each celebrating the safe removal and movement of nearly 4 tons of iron.

In addition, thanks to Henry Colie and Bill Nutzle the ballast keel is in Providence, RI. We again used jacks and locust rollers to load the ballast onto their trailer, which also went surprisingly well. Once the lead is cast, it will be delivered to the boatyard where *ELF* will be launched. Then we will transport *ELF* to the boatyard, and attach the new lead keel. Then we will be ready to paint the bottom and launch. Once the seams swell and we are operational, we will motor *ELF* up to Independence Seaport Museum in Philadelphia, PA to have the new rig installed. John Brady and team are working on every detail of the rig, building the spars, bow sprit, designing bronze castings and having them made. Every inch of rigging, all the turning blocks, castings, and sails, mast, spars and bowsprit will be newly made to traditional designs and standards. Once rigged, *ELF* will look more original than she has in over a hundred years!

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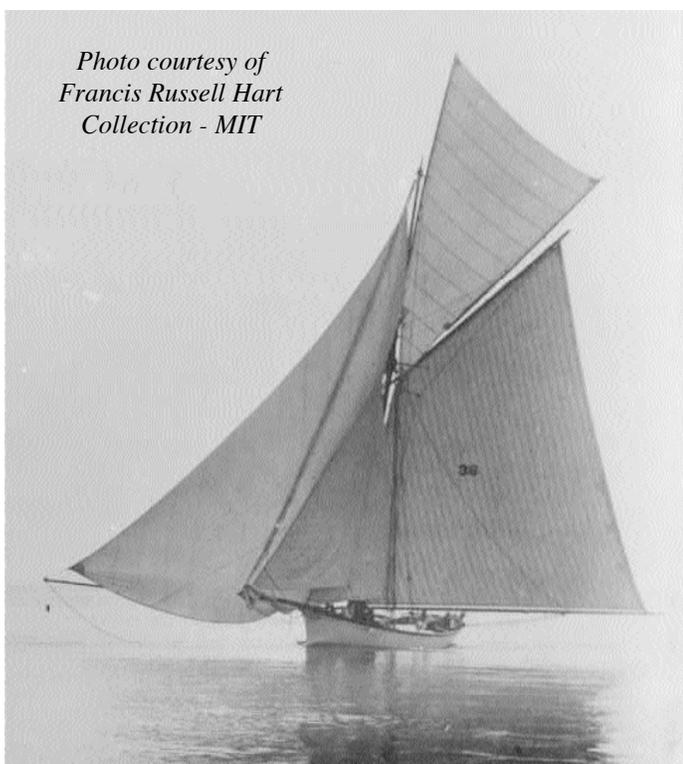
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## Membership Update Alert!

**Please realize that we are in a critical need now for funds to finalize the *ELF* restoration before re-launch. We ask that you to please consider-making your largest tax--deductible membership contribution to date. Your additional support will go directly to funding the materials and services necessary to re-float *ELF* and have her sailing proudly again after many years in the shop. We know that some past members have been reluctant to support a project that has taken such a long time to complete. We ask that you validate our efforts with renewed interest and contributions.**

**Unfortunately, due to insurance issues, only paid members will be allowed aboard any of our vessels. We hope to be sailing soon and be able to welcome you on board *ELF* for an historic sail.**

*Photo courtesy of  
Francis Russell Hart  
Collection - MIT*



# Impressions of a Weekend Sail on *Elf*

... by William Sonntag

**I**n over 20 years of sailing, the magic of the vessel *Elf* manifested itself in many ways. The solid feel of her decks at rest, the ability to ghost along in the lightest breeze, the full crunch as she shoulders any Chesapeake sea with a good wind are all a part of many memories. Each of these impressions in turn is part of any sail aboard this antique with a history now spanning three centuries. Here are a few impressions of a summer sail on the Sassafras River and Northern Chesapeake Bay, *Elf*'s home through the late decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

We anchored for a few hours just inside Ordinary Point on the Sassafras. After libations, a swim, and great dinner we sailed off into the sunset just before seven. We sailed with a favorable tide and on a port tack down the Sassafras towards Howell Point, on a beam reach to close reach at a very comfortable pace. The breeze felt like the tropics at their best. As we moved along, it became apparent that given the favorable tide, the breeze, and our schedule on Sunday, we should arrive at Still Pond on the Eastern Shore after sunset, an easy approach and anchorage in the dark.

After some lovely night sailing, we arrived in pitch dark heading into a beautiful little constellation of masthead anchor lights. We quickly found a good anchor spot, dropped the hook and in ten minutes were in the cockpit with the candles flickering in a sweet breeze that kept the bugs away. We all slept well; the breeze

stayed up all night.

On Sunday we awoke to find the same south by south easterly breeze building before eight bells. We sailed off the anchor on a fine port broad reach headed north, north west. With the tide against us we opted for a long broad reach to the western shore, a gybe (jibe) and another long reach on a starboard tack giving Howell Point, the tide swept southern entrance to the Sassafras River, a wide berth. We stayed in the long fetch of the Bay to catch fair wind on the north side of the Sassafras hoping the wind would bend with the southern headland. On this course we more than paced a modern 30 footer on a dead downwind spinnaker run sailing straight up the Eastern Shore side of the Bay. We watched from afar as he worked up the Bay against the strong tide currents along the shore, his blue and green spinnaker collapsed in the breeze from the Sassafras that favored *Elf* but headed him. We crossed his stern by less than a quarter mile. We had dodged most of the tide, had superior boat speed, and "the weather gage".

That one gybe early in the morning was the last of the day. We stayed on a starboard tack for just under three hours always sailing like fury during a few of the puffs. We beam and close reached all the way to the bridge at Georgetown, making it in just before noon. We had a fabulous evening and morning sail on a weekend that once again brought out the best in the fabled *Elf*!

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## Guild Vision

**T**he Classic Yacht Restoration Guild is a non-profit membership organization dedicated to the preservation of traditional watercraft, both power and sail. Yacht restorations are accomplished through a combination of member donated skills and resources. A cooperative educational setting is provided by the Guild for all members who wish to acquire or sharpen boat maintenance and restoration skills. Our membership is diverse. Each member can participate either as an instructor, a student of restoration techniques, a participant in Guild sailing events and cruises or as a supporter through dues and donations. The Guild also offers a variety of resources and skilled professionals who are qualified and interested in helping you connect with the right people to assist with your project.

Work on our flagship *Elf* currently involves restoration of the original rig, deck, and cabin configurations. In addition, the Guild has received donations of many small craft which are used as demonstration and education projects. Ships carpentry, rigging, mechanics, and fine wood finishing are all topics covered by peri-

odic workshops held while restoration projects are underway.

Once a Guild vessel is made seaworthy, the true pleasure of operating historic or significant small craft begins. Members are encouraged to sail Guild vessels with emphasis on instruction of boating safety, piloting, navigation, and the maritime history of the Chesapeake Bay. The Guild plans several cruises to maritime and waterfront festivals every season. Members serve as crew and staff displays at these events.

As a non-profit organization, the Guild always welcomes tax-deductible contributions. For example, the Guild received a 1963 vintage Lightning class racing sailboat and a large library of titles on boat building, maintenance, and maritime history. Also, donation of items used for restoration or fund raising are also tax deductible.

With a growing membership, the Classic Yacht Restoration Guild looks forward to increasing activity and good times. Please ask a member for further information and details.

## Matching Contributions

We encourage all members to ask their employers if they match contributions made to non-profit organizations. If so, please send along the necessary paperwork with your contribution. We want to thank SAP and CHASE for matching contributions made by their employees. If your employer will participate, we will be able to double your contribution. I will fill out any necessary paperwork. Please talk to your employer. It could get us into the water much faster!

## Request for Recipes for Boating *Elf* Cookbook

You will receive credit for your recipe and a free cookbook!

*Bad cooking is responsible for more trouble at sea than all other things put together.*

... Thomas Fleming Day

**Crab Feast/BBQ and Silent Auction  
September 9, 2006**

It is time to think of gathering items for our annual silent auction (*ELF* fund raiser). Please consider donating items that will help us move toward our goal of \$50,000 to re-launch *ELF*, the approximate amount needed to finish *ELF*'s restoration. We need friends to help plan, organize, and work at the Crab Feast. Just email Rick to let him know how you can help.

**elf1888@earthlink.net**



**Request for Submissions**

Please consider writing an article for our next newsletter. It can be about any aspect of boating, cooking aboard, boat maintenance, or any area of sailing that excites your passion. It may be submitted in writing, or by email to:

**elf1888@earthlink.net.**

**The deadline for the next newsletter is July 29.**

**LOOK FOR OUR WEBSITE!**

We are trying to update our website weekly with photos and work party schedules along with other important news. Please view:

**www.CYRG.ORG**

**THE HELM**



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