

MEMORY MONDAYS 1



After MISTRESS launched in July of 2006, I sat Skip down and showed him the slide-show I'd made showing the work he did over the past six years to fully restore the hull, re-design and re-build everything else for long term cruising in classic style. I had a tape recorder running so I could capture his words. This first picture, I took when MISTRESS arrived in our back yard in May of 2000 after she was trucked in from Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His first words were, "She's a great looking boat". So many people came to see her shortly after she arrived in St. Augustine and I asked Skip if he remembered what others thought. He said, "They all just figured I was crazy. Except for Rick, I think he always knew she would sail again".

We first learned about MISTRESS from a small ad that read, "Schooner for Sale". Skip contacted the owner who sent four pictures of her. Excited at what we saw, he called again and asked if she could send a video of MISTRESS during the haul out scheduled for just a few weeks away. When we received it, we were certain this was the boat we had been waiting for. We flew to Milwaukee and found a beautiful wood Schooner with great lines, in need of work, and an interior we would not feel bad about tearing out. After explaining to the owner how Skip would rebuild and restore her, we agreed to purchase her. We knew Skip would be doing a major rebuild on any boat we found because our dream was to sail her around the world. Given that dream, he would want to make her strong enough for even the southern oceans. She had spent most of her seventy years sailing on the Great Lakes and even participated in many races. After forty years at the South Shore Yacht Club, arrangements were made to have her trucked to Florida to start a new chapter in her life and in ours.

Kathleen aboard

Schooner MISTRESS

MEMORY MONDAYS 2



About once a year, we invited great people to come to our home/backyard/boatyard telling them it was a working party and we would supply food and drink. Not everyone in the beginning understood what this meant, but being good friends and all, they came. Most of the time, all we needed was a collective effort for twenty minutes to an hour of their time to accomplish the task Skip had planned. This picture I shot at the first Mast Party we held, shortly after MISTRESS arrived. Everyone helped us lower the foremast and store it in the yard while the main was raised from the deck to act as a ridgepole for a tarp. When I showed Skip this slide, he commented on how fortunate we were to have good friends who gave many hours to help us over the six years it took to rebuild her. I asked him if he remembered during the fifth year when I insisted on having a party for our friends without any MISTRESS work. I told him, "Skip, people are starting to get afraid to come over here. Every time we offer food and drink, our friends want to know what work clothes are required to attend". He remembered the party well and said, "Yeah; that was a great party. We must have had over 500 years of boat building experience in the backyard that day".



When MISTRESS arrived, I was at work. Our son, Tim called and said she was in front of the house and the driver was talking with Skip. I said I would be right there and begged my boss to leave early. It took me just 25 minutes; however when I arrived I found that Skip, Tim, and the driver, Tommy Wagner had

unloaded her in twenty minutes and the driver was gone. Within the week, with a long clear hose with water in it, Skip, Tim, and some friends determined MISTRESS was bow up, by 6". Skip says, "It took a ¾" block under the forward keel block to level her right out".



Of all of Skip's talents, to me his ability for forethought and the way he handles prep work are some of his best strengths, especially when it came time to ask for help from the hands of good friends. He worked diligently beforehand to make sure everything was ready and our friends would not have to sit and wait to start on any project. He might put 10, 20, or even 40 hours into the prep of something so when the time came to do the job, that prep work would insure work was done as quickly and efficiently as possible. There are many stories, which I can tell where Skip spent more time on the prep, than the job itself. The flush chain plates and a handsome transom come to mind first, but we will save that for another time.

During this time, Skip was finishing up rebuilding our kitchen and he longed to work on MISTRESS, however the kitchen cabinets, which he made from select quarter sawn yellow pine had to be completed first. Once done, which took about a month or two, he was set free to be with his MISTRESS and I had my kitchen. The house, now completed, rarely saw Skip and his tools again. "The damn thing", he would say, meaning the house, "No matter how hard or long I work on it, it is never going to float".

MEMORY MONDAYS 3



This picture I took on October 1, 2000. Skip decided to work on the port side first because rot on this side was worse than the starboard side. He said, "I went around her hull with a claw hammer and pulled out all the bad stuff. You can see rot under the paint because it blisters. I ground off the paint to see how extensive the damage was and where paint shows blisters, there is funkiness going on and MISTRESS had funkiness going on all over the place". Nothing we didn't really understand when we took her on. "There were little bits and pieces, here and there, and patches on patches. I cut out the rot and many of the patches and

replaced it all with new. I started from the top and discovered mahogany planks, therefore; we purchased lots of mahogany. It was not until I started working below the waterline that I discovered her original planning was Douglas Fir. I guess over the seventy years of her life, whenever a plank needed replacing, mahogany had been used”.

Restoring the soul of this wooden boat turned out to be a race against time and the elements. Rot ravenously fed off the warm, wet Florida weather where they say old wood boats come to die. It almost proved to be more than Skip could handle. By the time Skip finished restoring the port side, the starboard side was in much worse shape.



During this time, Skip also gutted the interior and removed the gas engine, which would eventually be replaced with a new diesel engine.

MEMORY MONDAYS 4

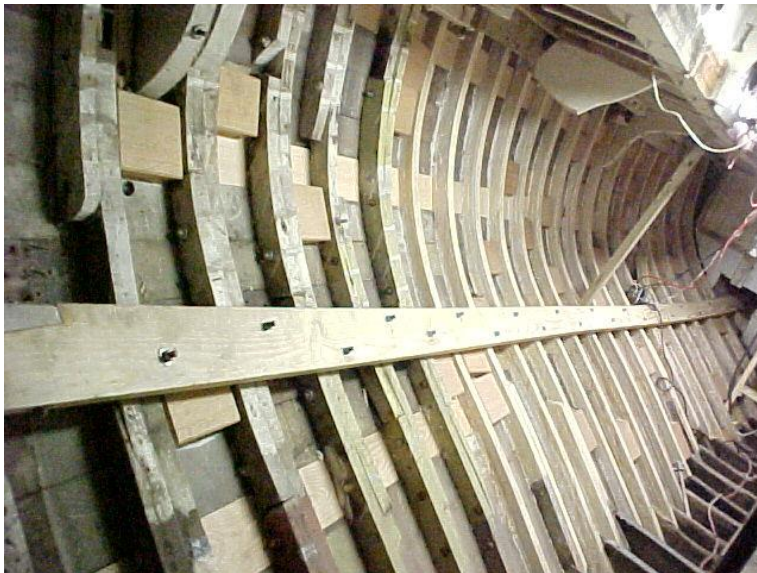


They say a picture is worth a thousand words. I think this picture near that of a novel, but I will elaborate none the less. This picture shows her starboard side. I took it about one year after her arrival just after Skip had finished the port side and was discovering what he would need to do to restore this side. This is also about the time I learned what a bung is and how to make them from mahogany. Certainly, this was a waste of Skip's time and talents and it was just a small thing I could do to help him along. Thousand, upon thousands of them were made, used to fill in all the fastener holes. Both Bjorn and Frisky, our labs, refused to help Skip. No matter how hard he tried to teach Bjorn to retrieve certain tools left on a workbench while Skip was up on scaffolding, it never came to fruition. Bjorn simply used the, "No opposable thumbs" excuse.

Skip says, "After one year of MISTRESS being in Florida she had deteriorated pretty quick where water had gotten into her". I asked, "Do you think it averaged about one year to restore each side, two years to restore the hull"? He answered this way, "Well, during those two years, she got new frames, planks, sheer clamp, bilge stringer; all new keel bolts, floor timbers, and her first transom. I also had to remove the deck back by the lazarette because there was not enough room for me to get into that area to fix those frames". Additionally, Skip was gutting the interior and fixing anything there that needed his attention. He said, "I was working on about five or six foot sections at a time. I would remove the interior, frame it, fix whatever else was wrong, and then move onto the next five or six feet. It worked out to be about eight hours for each frame. Remove one, fill all the holes, laminate up a new frame, and then fasten it into place. Eight hours a frame time about 48 frames a side". My calculations put that at 768 hours, just over 19 week's, worth of work for her frames, assuming you were working 40 hours a week.

The large, old, steel rudder he also removed during this time. It would receive a lot of his attention before it was returned to its rightful place. I showed Skip a picture of the old stern tube, but could not remember what it was for and asked him about it. He said, "That is the thing I worry about now where the shaft goes through". I remember what he means and will share it later, because it will be several years before he is back again working on that section of MISTRESS.

MEMORY MONDAYS 5



When visitors arrived during this time it was easy to see by the expressions on their faces, they thought Skip was crazy taking on such a large project. More than a few wanted to know if I was that good a wife or just as crazy as the Shipwright. There were some amazed expressions when they came to realize I was as into this as Skip and believed MISTRESS would sail around the world someday. In truth, only once during the six years Skip spent rebuilding her did I lose my faith. It was just one day. I had just finished shooting pictures and after pulling them up on the computer and looking over them, I was overcome with the magnitude of this project we had undertaken. When I should you that picture, you will easily recognize it and understand why I faltered. Later in the fifth year, it was hung at the top of the stairs leading to MISTRESS's transom as a reminder of just how far we had come.



You can also see the interior is gone, which made it rather precarious for Skip to work on until he put down a temporary cabin sole. All tools, fasteners, and even the Shipwright constantly slide into the bilge.



The three pictures with this week's Memory Mondays blog are mid-shop, port and starboard side, showing the interior work I spoke about last week and the sole or lack of a sole I should say. You can see that the frames, which were originally oak, are now ask and the planks are mahogany instead of the original Douglass Fir. The butt blocks are also mahogany. Originally fitted with iron fasteners, Skip replaced all of it with 304 stainless steel. During this time, Skip discovered all of MISTRESS's tie rods had been cut leaving nothing to stop her from racking. These he replaced with ½" stainless steel rod, which connected the house carlin to the hull. This was a comforting thing years later when we came into the Charleston, SC inlet and were taking big seas over the deck and house.

MEMORY MONDAYS 6



Photographs and the dates in which I took them, prove that Skip's and my memory are incorrect on how long it took to restore her hull. In fact, it took just one year to do all the work I have already mentioned. I guess it just felt like two years. Anyway, back to our story, he continued on the starboard side for some time. Skip was good and hooked by her charm, wanting to do every inch of her over well enough so she would sail for another 70 years. I believe he only took five or six days off for each year he worked on MISTRESS, saying the only thing that was certain was that if you did not work on her every day, nothing would be done. Those days he did take off were court ordered by the Admiral, insisting he needed time to rest. Of course, he spent most of those days sailing with others and talking about what he was up to with his MISTRESS. Although Skip was working at another boat yard, each evening he would come home and work on MISTRESS until the sun went down. Later, in her fairing days, he would mud her after dark under bright lights and fair her with a long board during the daylight hours. On Saturday's and Sunday's he was with her full time. Only food on the table, set out according to his schedule could drag him away from her.



In April of 2001, Skip brought in 700 board feet of Vertical Grain Atlantic White Cedar, which he would use to cold mold the deck and build the bulwarks. It would be some time before this material would be used, however he purchased it when the opportunity arrived and stored it all in the woodshed for later use.

Skip actually hand selected each of these boards from 12,000 boards. It took a while to pick through and inspect each of the boards, but there you have it. The best of 12,000 boards narrowed down to 700 board feet.



By August 2001, he had restored the hull inside and out. She was quite multi-colored by this time because Skip would paint over repairs to help protect it from the Florida climate. Soon, good friends would arrive to help us put up the Quonset Hut Skip was building to protect her from the elements so he could begin work on the deck.

MEMORY MONDAYS 7

August 2001



Once Skip restored the hull he wanted to move on to the deck and house, therefore MISTRESS needed a better cover. Each day for a week, Skip built two of these frames by putting wood blocks down in the ground and then bending them into shape. After that, he fastened the little blocks between to hold each frame together. We asked friends to come over that Saturday for a barn raising of sorts and before they arrived, Skip had the frame completed and ready for the new canvas top. As before, good friends showed up.



Within 30 minutes, everyone was under a cool, bright canvas cover enjoying a cold, drink. We were so pleased about the amount of light coming through and we expected it would be a tremendous help keeping all the leaves off of her.



In this photo, you can see her original house. It is about an inch or two lower than it is now and the camber is now slightly higher in the center. Note the winches at the forward end of the house. Many, if not all of her winches were made by the night crew at the Milwaukee Electric Plant, men skilled at metal work and who had been sailing on MISTRESS for 30 years. Once Skip started working topside, he would remove the entire deck and all frames except the original foredeck frames.

The canvas prove to be a bad investment. Inside of three weeks, the expensive canvas top blackened with mildew so bad it barely survived until its replacement, a new plastic tarp. Each tarp was 60' x 30'. By the time MISTRESS launched, we would go through six tarps and this initial canvas top. In 2005, the building would need several frames sistered after a strong westerly wind crushed them. For a temporary building it served us well in this project and lasted longer than we had hoped it would take to rebuild her, but that's how rebuilds go.

MEMORY MONDAYS 8

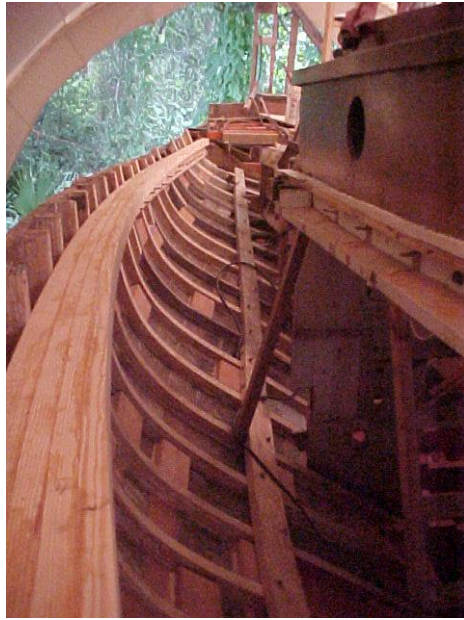


Next, Skip moved on to the engine room where he put in all new frames. Skip speaking, “There is no sheer clamp or bilge stringer here. I asked Skip how hard was it to work on her, at this time. He said, “It was when the whole interior was gone that is got bad. I took a couple of head first falls all the way to the floor timbers”.

Skip – “You can see the house is still there. That’s when the house was balanced there on a bunch of nothing. Finally, I took it down and brought it out the river for a good proper burning party.



He made from yellow pine her new starboard 46’ sheer clamp and shelf. It started as a 24’ long, 2 x 12. Her ripped it into two 24’ - 2x6’s. Then he scarfed it together to make a 46’ 2 x 6. It would be fastened into place with lots of clamps and bolts.



Skip's friend Rick came over to help Skip put the shelf in place. Here you can see the three inboard pieces, which make up the shelf and the outboard piece, which is the clamp. The bilge stringer is also new and in place. Later, when Skip would cut the cove stripe, every other bolt holding the sheer clamp and shelf in place would have to be removed and reset a quarter inch. As he began to cut into her and came across the bolts, he was very unhappy. Skip says it was a real pain in the,... well I am sure you get the picture.

Tim and I flew up to New York to go to the world's largest college fair, in late September 2001. This is what MISTRESS looked like when we left.



When we returned two days later, he had painted every inch of her hull interior with red lead. Skip says he had to lie fully extended with a putty knife in hand in order to reach the stem. I asked if he put the paintbrush on the end of the putty knife to reach there too; he said, "No I just took the deck off".

He then went on to making up these five beams. Most were laminated from White Ash, the others were made from Kauri. Ash is tough and strong, but it is also heavy. Kauri is still pretty, strong, however, it is much lighter. Skip was able to get long pieces of the Ash and he likes the strength of it so he says it was an easy decision for him.

MEMORY MONDAYS 9



By this point in our story, the floor timbers have been either, repaired or replaced. Watching Skip walk across these deck beams, which were not all yet fastened down appeared to me to be effortless and without concern. The lazarette, cockpit, and engine room hatchways were being framed up in this picture. The cockpit is much smaller than her original design to ward off against large amounts of water being held on deck. This new design would be much better for ocean sailing. The engine room hatch moved to port a bit to allow for more room for the companionway hatch not yet in place. Additionally, the red lead paint is now painted over with Awlgrip primer and Fleet White Awlgrip. Each of the deck beams was laminated and then cut to fit, then removed so Skip could put a quarter round on the lower edges, knowing he would hit his head on it someday, and then all was varnished prior to being fastened into place.





There is very little of the interior left and Skip has finally made himself a temporary cabin sole to stop himself from falling to the floor timbers. You can see a few sticks holding the house in place, the continuation of the Awlgrip paint, and can see the only deck beams left from her original build are just above and around the fore hatch. The shop vac in this picture did not last the whole six years and a half years. It gave its all, lasting about four years. It would be replaced with a dustless Fein Vacuum which did wonders to keep her clean during all the construction.

MISTRESS would end up with several layers of paint prior to any new construction below. She would receive two coats of red lead, 2 coats of Awlgrip primer, and then 2 final coats of Fleet White Awlgrip.