

Head:

Sailing between the moon and stars

Cutaway:

Wizard's owners agree that Karl Anderson from Harwich has been the man behind the curtain, conjuring the magic needed to maintain the nearly 50-year-old wooden sailboat.

Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn't do than by the ones you did do. So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbor. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.

-- Mark Twain

By Maureen Hourihan

Don't bother looking for Padanaram on a map. You won't find it.

Five nautical miles southwest of New Bedford, the village originally named Ponogansett after the Apponogansett River became the property of Plymouth colonists when they traded blankets, shoes, tools, and "eight moose skins" to the Indians for what would become their 61-acre settlement.

In the mid-18th century, a prosperous ship-builder named Laban Thatcher reminded townspeople of the Biblical Laban, who lived in a Syrian village called Padan-Aram; the town's name was changed. Its official moniker is South Dartmouth.

Maptech cruising guide promises smooth sailing if you avoid Bent's Ledge and Dumpling Rock's Light. A flashing red beacon marks the jetty; keep the red nuns starboard. With any luck, a gentle current and prevailing southwest wind will deliver you safely to the harbor as the sun sets just west of swing bridge. The guide doesn't mention any other unusual sights.

The guide is wrong.

In the harbor, stars begin to make up -- silver, blue, gold -- resembling starfish. Your gaze drifts to the stern of each sailboat, where crescent moons bookend the hull.

Concordias!

In another harbor, these sights would be rare, but here, in what's often referred to as New England's hidden treasure, the celestial bodies are no surprise. Padanaram is home to the world-famous Concordia Company, Inc., builder of the classic Concordia Yawls, founded by Llewellyn Howland in 1926.

In 1932, Howland sold the company to his son, Waldo, and Waldo's business partner, Ray Hunt.

When the pilot boat *Escape* was destroyed in the hurricane of '38, Llewellyn Howland commissioned the pair to design and build a racing, cruising sailboat that could withstand the choppy seas and stiff breezes of Buzzards Bay.

In 1939, the Concordia Yawl was born.

Waldo, author of several books on Concordias, designed Concordia Company, Inc.'s trademark; moon and stars on the port and starboard covelines of the boats' hulls.

Bill Pinney bought the company in 1969 and continued building fine sailboats, including the popular Beetle Cat. Jackie Kennedy shipped one to Greece in 1969 so John Jr. could learn to sail. But the name Concordia is most often associated with the yawl: two-masted, second mast half the size of the first, stepped aft of the rudderpost.

A total of 103 were built, 99 by Abeking & Rasmussen in Germany, and shipped to Padanaram for final commissioning at a time when business was built on trust; final payment was sent after the completed boat arrived stateside. Hull #75 arrived with a ship-sized Crackerjack surprise: a replica Concordia Yawl tucked into the hull.

The Concordia website lists the names of the yawls built between 1938 and 1966. All 103 survive, most clustered on

New England's East Coast, many gammed up near their birthplace.

Brodie MacGregor purchased the company in 1981 and carries on the Concordia legacy with his son, Stuart, who explains the enduring appeal of the yachts, calling them "incredibly beautiful while sailing and at rest, but also incredibly well-designed."

Stuart recently delivered a yawl to the Wooden Boat Show in Mystic. It's "something about the design," he says, that makes this boat a treat to sail, "very forgiving in bad weather ... lots of ways to maneuver."

Hull #74 is *Wizard*, owned in part since 1983 by Karl Anderson, professional racer and owner of Karl's Boatyard in Harwich. Henry Dane came aboard in 1988, Chris and Dyanne Cooney a couple years later. Newest owner Bill Scatchard was aboard with Karl, Henry, Chris and this year's crew -- Bob Curtin, Greg Hunter and Tom Olson -- when they took first place in the famous Figawi race to and from Nantucket.

Wizard: one who conjures or practices magic.

Wizard's owners agree that Anderson has been the man behind the curtain, conjuring the magic needed to maintain the nearly 50-year-old wooden sailboat. It features a fair entry, hour-glass stern, the tell-tale star and crescent moon, and a small brass plaque affixed to the cockpit: Built by Abeking + Rasmussen, Lemwerder, I.O. - Germany, Constructed 5478 Built 1959, Concordia Company, Inc., S. Dartmouth, Mass, Made in Germany.

Maintenance is ongoing: eye-catching teak seats, cockpit and floorboards; African mahogany coamings; sitka spruce masts; locust cleats and tiller. Below deck is a coal stove, galley, swing-up pipe berths, head, chart tables and a small Volvo diesel engine.

Anderson says this year they focused on structural issues; “keel bolts, re-fastening the entire hull, picking every bone and re-fastening every screw, that’s about 6000.” As to the potential for cracking ribs, “The ribs are laminated, we’ve inspected what we can, and we’re pretty confident that they’re all intact.”

He says they’ve also refurbished some floor timbers and next year they’ll focus on bringing cosmetics up to snuff. Cooney estimates 180 to 200 hours of “general maintenance” per year, accomplished at Northside Marina in Sesuit Harbor.

Is it worth it?

“Nothing feels as good as a wooden boat going through the water ... the quiet roar of the hull breaking the water, the wind in the sails ...”

His voice trails off; he’d rather be on the water than talk about it.

Suzanne Leahy, owner of Marine Restoration & Salvage, likens constructing a wooden sailboat to building an incredible puzzle: “It has to be done perfectly or it leaks and sinks.”

While a wooden boat will always be an expensive proposition, she concurs with Cooney that the cost is worth “the perceptible difference in how they handle.”

The web site www.yachtworld.com lists several Concordias available. *Memory*, Hull #35 built in 1955, needs work and can be had for \$35,000. At the other end of the spectrum, *Dame of Sark*, Hull #86 built in 1961, has been meticulously maintained and can be yours for \$285,000.

No one can deny the allure of Cape Cod sailing -- beautiful seas, wind in the sails, camaraderie as strong as the tides. The sight of our own Senator Ted Kennedy sailing *Mya*, his Concordia-designed, 50-foot schooner, pulled at the heartstrings of everyone who wished him good luck, clear skies,

fair winds. Seems he's found his own best medicine on Nantucket Sound.

So take Twain's advice, choose kayak or Whaler, sloop or schooner, but go. Throw off the bowlines. When you do, keep your eyes open. The blur that left you in its wake?

It may be a shooting star -- carved into the hull of a Concordia.