

Dame and Her Delighted Co-Owners

Concordia #86 DAME (formerly DAME OF SARK) has been jointly owned since 2019 by Nick Baxter and yours truly Josh Goldberg. Thanks to the pandemic, along with additional considerations that have kept both of us quite busy, we haven't had a chance until now to update the Concordia community on our ownership of DAME. We'd like to begin by relating the tale of how we came to acquire this magnificent yawl. The adventure included an attempt to buy another type of boat altogether, before fate happily intervened and brought us into the Concordia camp.

The saga actually commenced a decade ago, with my decision to commission a plank-on-frame near-replica of a noted historic design, the wonderful Buzzards Bay 18 (29' LOA). This gaff-rigged daysailer was drawn in 1903 by Nathanael G. Herreshoff. As have so many, I fell in love early with the sleek lines and long overhangs of turn-of-the-century class boats: during childhood summers in Camden, I'd admired Dark Harbor knockabouts and Camden Class sloops. Yet I never considered owning such a boat until I was in my fifties. I did my research over several years, and in due

course I encountered Alec Brainerd, the founder of Artisan Boatworks in Rockport, Maine. Alec is a true craftsman as well as an authority on vintage wooden boats. One day he told me that he'd come across the original drawings for the BB 18 in the extensive Hart Nautical Collections at MIT. Captain Nat originally created this design for the Beverly Yacht Club (now located in Marion, Massachusetts), and his firm constructed a small fleet for members of the club.

Lovely as this gaff sloop was, however, it didn't catch on nearly as well as an earlier and smaller Herreshoff design, the Buzzards Bay 15 (25' LOA). Although the BB 18 is a faster and more versatile sloop, it was perhaps a bit too much boat for the style of racing being conducted by yacht clubs back then. No original has survived, and the design eventually slipped from view and lay dormant for more than a century. Alec kindly brought the BB 18 to my attention in 2013. Suitably impressed, I commissioned Artisan Boatworks to build one. I named her BESHORTE (pronounced B-shayrt), Yiddish for "fated partner" or "meant to be." For her intended purposes she is nearly perfect, and magically so.



I sailed BESHORTE casually for her first several years, around Cape Cod and also in Maine. Eventually I was joined by my captain friend Nick Baxter, who urged me to consider racing her in the various classic wooden boat regattas in Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. I wasn't at all interested. When I was a teenager in Marblehead and on Cape Cod, I often served as a lowly crew member in club racing events. My sense was that many of the participants had lost contact with the best parts of what sailing is all about: the meditative aspect, the joy of being on the water, the excitement of getting your boat to do her best. I also found all the screaming and thrashing about to be a bit silly.

Yet Nick assured me that the present-day classic wooden boat regattas were different. Thus we began racing BESHORTE in 2017. And I'm here to tell you that everything Nick said was true. We've met so many friendly and considerate sailors, whose passion isn't centered on winning every race, but instead lies in simply getting out on the water aboard their beloved wooden boats and sharing the delights of sailing. Yes, if you happen to go a little faster, it's certainly fun to get a modest trophy at the end. But if you don't, you're still every bit as welcome at the post-race party. An utterly unexpected surprise was that BESHORTE and her mighty crew of miscreants turned out to be rather successful. We even won our division three times at the Eggemoggin Reach Regatta, the mother of all wooden boat races—which was as great a shock to us as it was to our fellow sailors.

You might well ask what this has to do with Concordias and DAME. In sailing BESHORTE hither and yon, I unfortunately discovered was that she was no good in any kind of chop, or even in moderately sized swells. Captain Nat designed her for flat-water sailing in a breeze, at which she is phenomenal. But we found that she isn't at all suited to Cape Cod waters, as she is entirely unable to handle the chop in Nantucket Sound and Buzzards Bay. I found myself wanting a wooden sailboat that would let me bring more friends along, and also keep them dry. That would not be not a Buzzards Bay 18.

Being members of the snooty Herreshoff club, our first thought was to seek out a slightly larger Herreshoff. The collectible designs so beloved by the New York Yacht Club (the New York 30s, 40s, and 50s), were ridiculously overpriced, as were as the Buzzards Bay 30s and Bar Harbor 31s. Eventually we made note of a truly cool Herreshoff that bombed past us during one of the Eggemoggin races. It was a Fishers Island 31 (44' LOA), a relatively more modern creation dating from the late 1920s. And we learned that the surviving examples were much closer to our price range. These fine boats were designed not by the renowned Captain Nat, but instead by his son and successor Sidney. As a welcome bonus, the marconi-rig 31s are better-performing vessels than most of their more famous sisters from the earlier era, and they're distinctly easier to handle. We soon came across the beautiful 31 CIRRUS, which was sitting on the hard near Stonington, Connecticut. Yet as we examined her, it became clear that she needed a great deal of work. We all know just what that means when it comes to wooden boats: you think

you know how much you'll have to do, and then you open her up and the scope doubles. We soon realized that this would be the case with CIRRUS, meaning that a boat for sale at the price of a better Concordia 39 might end up costing us three times that much—or more.

That's when I had one of those epiphanies that seem to come out of nowhere, and perhaps from a mystical source. I'd grown up on Cape Cod, and had admired Concordias over my entire youth. But I'd essentially forgotten about them for decades. Then I saw two fine examples in Maine at the 2019 Eggemoggin Reach Regatta, namely MISTY and SNOWY OWL. It was renewed love at second sight! Over the next month, Nick and I looked at nearly every Concordia yawl that was for sale in the Northeast. Most were fine boats, but they weren't in the condition that we were seeking—meaning a yawl already having all the key improvements we believed a Concordia should receive. One day I came across an advertisement for DAME OF SARK, and the boat seemed to be exactly what we wanted. But when I called the broker, he told me that the ad in question was no longer valid, as the boat had been sold six months earlier. None of the other Concordias we considered seemed right for us, so we returned to negotiating for the Fishers Island 31.

Here is where fate and kismet intervened. We reached an agreement on a price for CIRRUS, even though we knew it was too high given the amount of work she would need. But we'd found ourselves addicted to the prospect of owning a rather unique Herreshoff. After we'd signed a purchase agreement subject to survey, our surveyor came back to us with sobering revelations. He'd found that a number of planks needed to be replaced, and that both deck and cockpit needed to be completely redone. Worse yet, it looked as if much of the backbone might have to be renewed, including the timber keel. Suddenly we were looking at a boat that might end up costing us three to four times the purchase price. That was money we didn't have. We proposed to the seller that if he would lower his price by half (to the appropriately modest sum he had paid for the boat just a few years earlier), we might consider the proposition. He turned us down immediately, and fortunately for us as it turned out.

Late one night soon thereafter, I sat quietly bereft, musing that my goal of purchasing a mid-sized classic wooden boat was slipping into the mist. I absentmindedly typed in yet another search for newly listed Concordias. Up came DAME OF SARK, and this time at a price substantially lower than the one stated in the earlier ad. This seemed impossible. I immediately dashed off an email to the broker, who replied at midnight to tell me that #86 had been relisted because the new owner, who'd carried out numerous upgrades and improvements, had decided he could not keep the boat. I told the broker that we would drive down to see the yawl in Stonington the very next morning—and if we liked it, we'd buy it. Nick and I made the trip, accompanied by Alec Brainerd. We happily discovered that DAME OF SARK was in even better shape than we'd expected. As all of you know, that is a most rare occurrence when shopping for old boats.

This Concordia was extraordinary: her finishes gleamed, and every minor flaw in the original design had been addressed. Her owners had even added improvements that hadn't occurred to us. She was truly gorgeous. So we didn't bargain, because the listing price was fair. We simply said that we'd pay what was asked, and we closed the deal then and there. That's how Nick and I became the owners of DAME.



Our yawl was constructed in 1961 for Bruce Barnard of Quissett, Massachusetts. He named her in honor of Dame Sibyl Hathaway, who ruled the fief of Sark from 1927 to 1974—and showed uncommon courage during the German occupation in World War II. Upon delivery, Concordia #86 sported a masthead rig and exquisite bright-finished mahogany topsides. Now well into his 80s, Bruce was still going strong last season and continuing to sail out of Quissett, one of the most beautiful harbors in the world. Bruce sold DAME after seven years, and she had six owners between 1968 and 2019—with home ports that included Marblehead, Stonington, Edgartown, and Santa Barbara. As the decades passed, the boat went through several stages of

upgrading and restoration work, much of it accomplished at Dodson Boatyard in Stonington. DAME was in nearly flawless condition when she came into our hands in 2019, a tribute to the yard and to her most recent owners. Beyond keeping up her remarkably pristine appearance, Dodson had also accomplished all the fixes that our boats generally require, including refastening, installation of new keelbolts and a new rudder, complete replacement of floor timbers, many frame end repairs, deck recovering with Dynel, and a comprehensive reinforcement of the mast step system. Most fortunately, the original timber keel has remained in good condition. Nick and I have now done our best to refine and upgrade DAME in order to optimize her for classic racing.

Inspired by a similar improvement we had seen on another Concordia, we elected to replace DAME's stock fixed-block mainsheet arrangement with a traveler system, using bronze components made by J. M. Reineck & Son. This required a partial rebuild of two original wooden sheet blocks, as well as the addition of a new three-sheave block at the base—which was ably created from scratch by Myles Thurlow, a talented rigger based on Martha's Vineyard. In addition to being attractive, the traveler setup significantly improves our boat's ability to point, and permits us to fine-tune the twist in the leech according to the strength of the breeze. Although this upgrade was admittedly pricey, it has been a significant enhancement, and we love playing and experimenting with it to see what it can do. In the same vein, and especially to simplify short-handed sailing, we replaced all the traditional winches with bronze self-tailing units.

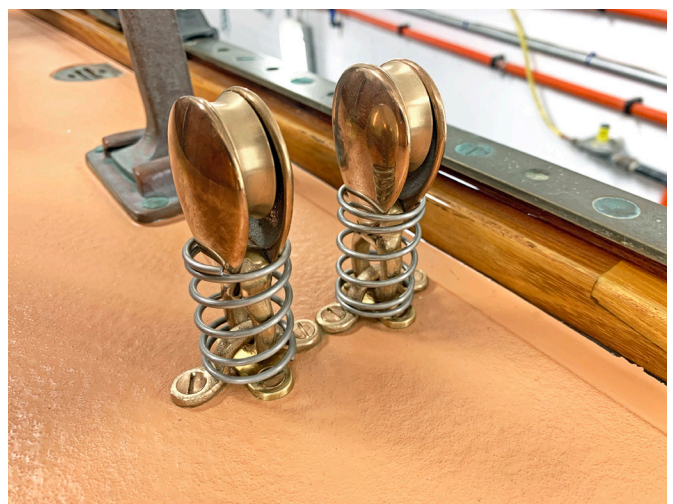


Are any of you bothered by the fact that when a Concordia is heeled over and moving at a good clip, the cockpit drain scuppers allow considerable inflow of water from the leeward side? I'm wondering whether Concordia cared about this or not. It is certainly a pain to find the cockpit filling to calf level as you're otherwise happily flying along. Our current plan to address this problem has been inspired by the owners of #97 SUMMER WIND: they installed drain traps like those you'd find under a landside sink. We're hoping that this will prevent backflow while still permitting water in the cockpit to drain out. But we're not too proud to ask if any of you out there has a better solution. [Editor's Note: see page 27.]

DAME came to us with no fewer than twenty sails, virtually all of which were in remarkably good condition. This might be the first time I've ever bought a used boat with sails that were in better shape than those on my newer everyday boat. But even that large inventory wasn't quite enough for us! We've added a most helpful light-air spinnaker, as well as two cool sails that only yawls and ketches can use: mizzen spinnaker and mizzen staysail. These allow us to add speed off the wind without having to fly a true spinnaker, which is a big plus when shorthanded—and under the classic boat handicapping system, we don't have to give up rating points. The beautifully designed cockpit backrests are much-loved feature of Concordias. We liked them so much that we



had Artisan Boatworks craft two additional versions that slide down over the port and starboard coamings (as seen above). Luxury! We have also installed an extensive B&G electronic nav system, with a color main screen mounted on a fold-away panel located at the companionway. To this we added an integrated B&G autopilot placed below decks, which performs quite well. Big props go to B&G, which has raised the bar of excellence and user-friendliness. I grew up a Raymarine fanatic, but I've been converted.



Both in racing and in delightful pleasure sailing, DAME has demonstrated to us what most of you already know: that Concordias perform admirably across a wide range of wind and sea conditions. DAME has also confirmed yet again that Ray Hunt's inspired hull design is one of the very finest at handling nasty chop. With each passing year, we're learning how to sail DAME just a bit better and just a bit smarter.

Yet much to our consternation, there are still a few Concordias that always seem to move along better than we do. Here we are obliged to single out ALLURE in particular. We actually suspect that her owners have secretly installed a small electric motor somewhere in her keel, since she not only tends to blow away all other Concordias, but also a bunch of non-Concordias that are ordinarily considered to be fast. Given the highly suspicious nature of ALLURE's consistent speediness (a factor all the more irritating given the notable amicability of her owners), we're happy to announce that the International Court of Justice has initiated a thorough inquiry, which will determine once and for all the basis for her quite mysterious swiftness. Just as soon as we receive the results, we shall most certainly report them to you—that is, unless ALLURE gives us the case of Johnnie Walker Black that we have demanded, in which case . . . well, never mind. Lest we offend by omission, we must also compliment SNOW FALCON, another top race performer among Concordias. She is usually skippered, and quite proficiently, by *WoodenBoat* co-owner and publisher Andrew Breece, who is likely one of the top experts in how best to sail our favorite vessels.

Levity aside, we feel privileged to be the current keepers of DAME. As all of us know, we don't really own our classic wooden boats. We're simply caretakers for future generations. Nick and I are fortunate that DAME has enjoyed so many wonderful stewards over the years. Our mission now is to live up to that admirable legacy.

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