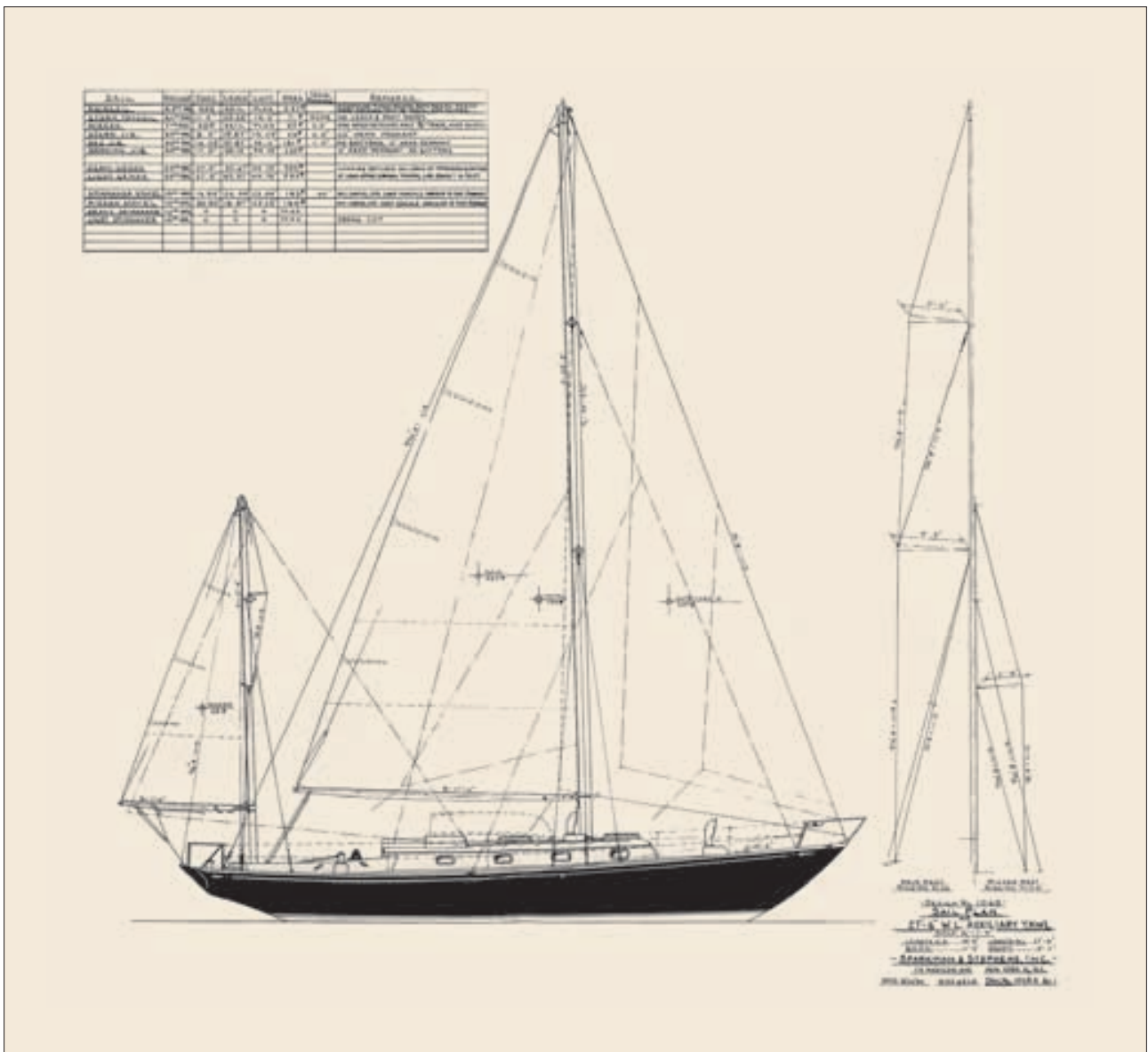


BONNE AMIE - A PERFECT RESTORATION PART 1

THE FIRST LAUNCHED OF THE 1956 NEVINS A YAWLS

(Design No. 1068)



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The Nevins Series A Yawls were designed in 1954 by *Sparkman & Stephens* for the Nevins Yacht Yard. The shoal draft cruising yawls were designed along similar lines to *Revonoc*, *White Mist* & *Finisterre* which had all proven hugely successful and fast cruising and deep water racing yachts.

Launched just two years after *Finisterre*, *Bonne Amie* was the first of the six new centerboard yawls to launch. Officially *Bonne Amie* would be hull number two, the distinction of owning hull number one being reserved for Colin Ratsey who would provide sails for all six yachts in the series.

Similar in many respects to *Finisterre* (1054), the Series A Yawls were equal in waterline length but gained more than a foot on deck. The centerboard was located well forward of *Finisterre*'s.

Plans were revealed in May 1955 by *Yachting* which would feature *Bonne Amie* the following year in an article following her launching.



ACCOMMODATIONS & LAYOUT

Each of the yachts provided full cruising accommodations for six in an uncrowded layout which made best advantage of the 11 foot 3 inch beam.

The forward stateroom features two berths with lockers and drawers underneath, and two full size hanging chart drawers. Aft to starboard is a roomy head complete with porcelain basin, ample lockers and stowage. Two lockers across from the head to port provide stowage for crew clothing and gear as well as the companionway splash boards. The hanging locker is illuminated by a Perko fig. 0555 dome fixture with an exterior pull switch located on the bookshelf above. The main salon features a beautiful gimbaled Mustang table with custom, chrome plated bronze hardware. Two built-in berths and two extension berths complete the accommodations.



Original photos of galley and saloon in 1955

Stove, sink and a full galley are just aft on the port side with two very large lockers for provisions. Primary access to the engine compartment is via matched locker doors on the forward facing edge of the galley.

A large ice box is direct to starboard with a top built to double as a full sized chart table. An additional hanging locker is just aft with secondary access to the engine compartment behind the companionway via a large locker door which also provides access to the electrical locker.

CONSTRUCTION

Six yachts were built on the same mold at Henry Nevins yard. A tremendous cost savings was accomplished by pre-cutting the lumber, fashioning their own solid bronze mast steps and centerboard trunks, using Nevins hardware and winches all without any sacrifice of quality. The yachts were offered, complete with a set of Ratsey & Lapthorn working sails for just \$36,500.

Bonne Amie was the first of the series. George Ernst ordered her in 1955 and specified numerous customizations on the yacht including solid teak cabintrunk, coamings, hatches, dorade boxes and toe rail in place of the standard mahogany. This made *Bonne Amie* somewhat unique among her sisters. After her launching *Bonne Amie* distinguished herself over a long and active life with the Ernst family. She was raced and cruised along the east coast of the United States for many years beating *Finisterre* on more than one occasion. She competed with great distinction in her early years, after which she was sold to a second owner who sailed the yacht for many more years in the Caribbean. In the 1970's she was resold to a new owner in San Francisco where high levels of stray electrical current in concert with an aluminum main spar stepped directly to the bronze step accelerated her deterioration.

In late 2004 she was purchased and shipped to Port Townsend, WA in the Pacific Northwest for what was to have been a brief refit lasting just under a year. Despite the deterioration, *Bonne Amie* was in extraordinary original condition. All her original fittings remained intact save for the loss of the original main spar and the original Nevins spinnaker pole fittings. A testament to her previous owners diligence in maintaining her as original.

What ensued was over two years that would see her completely rebuilt.

RESTORATION

A complete and detailed specification as supplied by *Sparkman & Stephens* was still on file in New York. The 40+ page document provides extraordinary detail on every aspect of construction. Every fitting, supplier, and screw is specified within the specification. This would prove invaluable in avoiding potential mistakes in the reconstruction of the yacht.

Bonne Amie arrived in Port Townsend late in November of 2004 and was immediately wooded and moved into the newly opened building for large scale projects at the Port Townsend Shipwright's Coop. The refit would be overseen by master shipwright Antonio Salguero, nephew of Gannon & Benjamin founder Joe Smith of Martha's Vinyard. Antonio grew up in the yacht yards of the eastern seaboard and was uniquely qualified to oversee a restoration of this magnitude.

Upon completion of the initial stripping of the hull it became sadly apparent that electrolysis damage to the planking noticed during her initial survey was far more extensive than originally thought. With a new horn timber, transom and a complete re-framing of the yacht to the aft bulkhead it was time to



Corroded engine beds



Decayed frame ends

begin a more extensive disassembly and re-assess the extent of the work. The intent had always been to restore her to original, using the exact techniques and materials wherever possible throughout. Small exceptions would be made where it made sense, the deck material, changes to the framing at the engine beds as indicated by Olin, replacement of the wheel with a tiller as originally drawn (one of the six had been converted from tiller to wheel leaving 4 wheel steered yachts in the series and only two tiller yachts, this restored the balance) and a windlass for deep water cruising along the Northwest coast of North America.

Workmanship throughout was found to be intricate and had clearly been executed by skilled craftsmen. The desire to follow the exact construction practices employed by Nevins required painstaking disassembly and documentation of every part of the yacht removed or replaced. Thousands of photographs were taken and each step of the reconstruction was carefully cataloged. It was agreed that work would proceed from the transom forward with the initial focus on renewing the yacht's internal structures, followed by careful reassembly or replacement of non structural components. As work on



Cockpit stripped



New cockpit box

the new horn timber proceeded additional compromised areas of the yacht were uncovered and the list continued to grow. All floors aft of the head required replacement. Aft bulkheads, aft salon bulkheads and the galley would all require extensive reconstruction. The aft of the cabin trunk would require complete replacement. Delignification of planking and frames under the icebox due to electrolysis was so extensive that the original oak and mahogany could be removed by hand. Slowly and carefully every other frame was removed and replaced to ensure *Bonne Amie* retained her shape. New floors were installed and the work progressed week by week. As the work progressed however, new areas were exposed and additional work found its way onto an ever growing list.

Because planking and frames under the icebox were so badly damaged they would all require replacement. This meant removal and replacement of the icebox as well.

It soon became clear that re-framing would be required well forward of our original estimate. By the time we had begun to un-hang planks extending forward into the main salon it was decided that we



New decking and beams



Aft of cockpit trunk



Under the galley obvious corrosion spot



New floors



Reframing



New frames and floors

would re-frame the entire yacht forward to the head on port and the forward hanging locker to starboard. Luckily, all frames forward of this were found to be intact as removal of additional planking forward revealed. The sheer strake was replaced, as were the garboards and an additional 2/5ths of the total planking which has been splined above the waterline in the same manner as *Dorade* and *Stormy Weather*.

Single piece toe rails would require extremely long lengths of teak to replace the original, badly worn toe rail which is only broken by a single chalk amidships. There are no scuppers, Nevins preferred to install drains at two points along the side deck and drain via plumbed fittings at the boot to prevent the pristine topsides from soiling.

The cockpit box had been holed so many times for various instruments and gages the only sensible option was complete replacement. A single piece of hand selected clear teak was purchased for the replacement. Using the original as a template, an exact replica was fashioned and installed after all new deck beams were installed aft of the house. An additional 12 deck beams amidships were hand fitted into the original notches in the carlin and bolted as original to the

clamp. By the time work on the structural elements of *Bonne Amie* were complete 50 frames had been replaced, 16 half floors in way of the centerboard trunk and 13 floors had been replaced. All of the hull strapping and chainplates had been refastened. The horn timber, transom and fashionwork are new as are the mizzen mast step and 14 deck frames amidships as are all deck frames aft of the cabin trunk. All of the below deck blocking was renewed and nearly half of her planking can now be said to be new including garboards and sheer strakes.

Diagonal strapping and chainplates have been refastened. The interior of the hull is now finished with grey bilgecoat below the bilge stringer and white above to protect the hull from staining and to prevent accidental spills from soaking into the planks and fouling the bilge.

Meanwhile all of the deck hardware was carefully removed and all the interior fittings were removed and cataloged prior to being sent to the chrome shop for complete restoration. Parts were sent to Queen City Plating in Mukilteo, WA. Queen City Plating specializes in re-chroming for rare auto restorations as well as new marine and aerospace application chroming for large clients including the Boeing Corporation. This mix of high quality restoration experience and marine hardware refinishing made them the perfect choice. Electrolysis had pitted the fixtures horribly and they required extensive work prior to re-chroming. Winch bases, bow chocks and all the exterior fittings required hundreds of hours of welding to fill pits that had developed over years of exposure. Every fitting on the yacht was restored, right down to the door pulls and hinges for every door, locker and drawer on the yacht. Queen City has exceeded all expectation. The workmanship is beyond words and fit for the Pebble Beach Concours d'Elegance.



Old cockpit box removed



New cockpit box fitted



Horn Timber renewed



Planked up and caulked



Old corroded Perko light fittings



Now better than new!



Little shiny masterpieces of engineering

The original stove was badly corroded and restoration was no longer a viable option. Luck provided the answer when reading through old CCA documents details on the stove were found in a description of another yacht. A new Luke Model H5 was ordered, in LP gas rather than alcohol for the restoration.

During this time new spars were being constructed from Sitka Spruce near Victoria, BC, Canada by master spar builder Ashley James. Original drawings for the spars were supplied by *Sparkman & Stephens* in New York. Ashley hand selected the finest Sitka Spruce for the new masts, booms and spinnaker poles. Each is being hand constructed to the original specification.

The original hatches and dorade ventilator boxes were badly worn and were fairly trivial to reconstruct using the originals as patterns. Original hardware has been restored including the original Wilcox and Crittenden hatch supports which were discovered wrapped in oiled cloth in a forgotten box after searching for original replacements for over 18 months.



While the original Nevins winches are available throughout, it has been decided to replace the aft primaries with self tailing Anderson winches. The dangerous reel halyard winches are being replaced with original Merriman halyard winches as modern halyards will replace the original wire throughout.

COMPLETION

Bonne Amie will relaunch this winter in Port Townsend after initial refinishing of her hull. She will be finished in Epifanes Bright White with Pettit Vivid White bottom paint and a Deep Blue boot stripe. As she has been out of the water for over two years we expect most of the initial finish on the hull to check and crack. Multiple coats of high build primer will be applied and the hull faired prior to application of 6 coats of topside enamel.

In the spring of 2007 she will once again be hauled, faired and fresh coats of enamel and bottom paint will be applied. Unlike many complete restorations, *Bonne Amie* will be noticed more for that which she lacks. A simple 12 volt electrical system will replace the original almost without change.

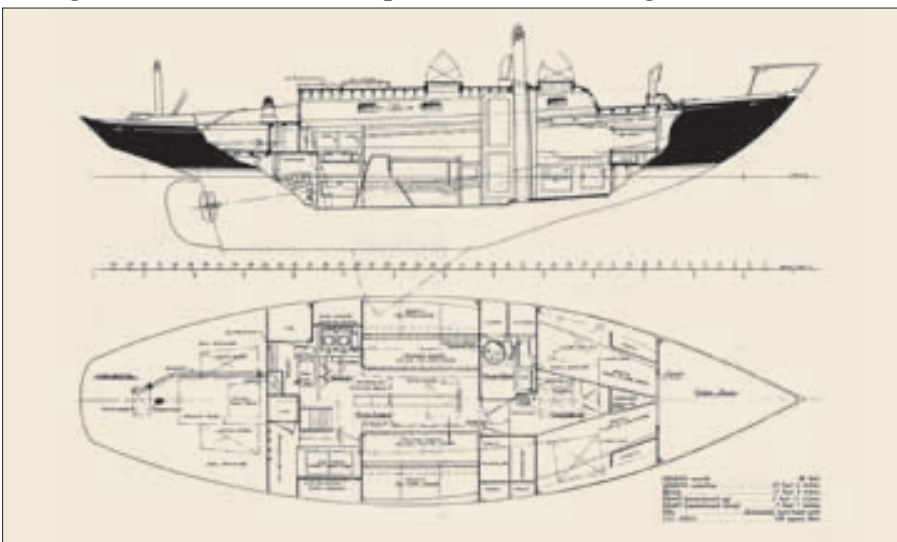
A Danforth Constellation compass with a six inch card in a beautiful, chromed original skylight will be mounted at the forward edge of the cockpit as drawn in the original plans. A Chelsea Clock and Barometer will complete the analogue instrumentation with a Chelsea Timemaster in the navigation station. Communications will be provided by Icom VHF and SSB radios mounted in the aft half of the locker above the icebox. A handheld VHF will provide backup for the fixed mount unit. A precision chronometer will share the radio locker along with a single B&G Full Function Display for the Instruments. The forward half of the locker will remain unchanged to provide space for storage of sailing directions, light lists, current tables and the like.

Brookes and Gatehouse Hydra instruments and pilot with analogue displays are to be mounted as original in the aft of the cabin truck. The analogue displays will provide boat speed, true wind speed



and magnified wind angle. A Simrad Navstation will be added and placed on the original folding mount for the original B&G depth sounder. The radar antennae will be mounted on the mizzen. The decision to add radar was a long and difficult one. There was no desire to add additional weight aloft or to complicate the instrument package in any way with unnecessary electronics. Electronics will always fail, and there has been no desire to make add additional electrical complication to the yacht. However, cruising along the western coast of the Pacific Northwest, in particular the Inside Passage, Southeast Alaska and the west coast of Vancouver Island is often plagued by heavy fog, large tides and strong currents. Safety and prudence on this lee shore is always the better part of valor.

Refrigeration will be via simple mechanical refrigeration with custom cold plates installed in the newly built ice box.



Nevis 40 body plan

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The restoration of *Bonne Amie* has been a long and difficult process. Much of the work was the result of unanticipated, hidden structural problems that revealed themselves only after partial disassembly of the yacht. A great deal of research and effort was required to maintain the original character of the workmanship throughout the restoration. Original construction specifications

proved an invaluable asset. Locating the original builder specifications should be a first priority for any owner contemplating such a project on another yacht.

Many opportunities presented themselves where modern methods could have provided a short cut to completion over original construction methods. These were resisted at every opportunity except where Olin specifically recommended changes or where original materials were simply unavailable (or illegal in some cases like the use of white lead on the decks). New hinges and handles for lockers and drawers throughout the interior could have easily replaced the originals, yet the restoration of the original hardware was chosen over replacement to help retain the absolute original character of the yacht.

In the end all of the effort is more than worth the cost in both time and money. *Bonne Amie* is a hallmark design from one of American yachting's greatest eras and designers. Her design is the natural evolution of the great centerboard yachts which preceded her. Once re-launched this winter she can look forward to many years and many tens of thousands of miles of cruising and racing. To follow progress on this project go to <http://www.gmp-vfx.com/www/investments/>



Bonne Amie soon after her original launching in 1956