

# SKETCHBOOK

BY SAM DEVLIN

## From A Grumpy Workboat, A Comfortable Cruiser

Anyone who knows me is aware of the two women who are the loves of my life: my lovely wife and first mate, Soitza, and the little retired salmon troller *Josephine*. I have lived with this elderly lady (the troller, that is) for the past two decades. She has — at times with a grumpy demeanor — allowed me some fine adventures and, of course, many weeks of near-slave servitude while I madly try to get her ready to use each season.

Part of the work is related to her now 83-year-old hull, and part is simply the caretaking of a traditional wooden boat. This kind of labor is usually technically easy, from a shipwright's point of view, but there are certainly challenges when playing with a boat of this vintage. I doubt the builder ever entertained any notion that *Josephine* would still be cruising at her advanced age, but nevertheless there she is, stately and with a

grace all her own, bugging about our Northwest waters, having fun (for the most part) with her skipper and crew.

Living with a retired workboat has some distinct advantages. Many times while out on the water, I am reminded of how easy it is to use a boat that can take much abuse and still look modestly shipshape — even somewhat tidy. There is no wiping your feet or taking off your shoes when using *Josephine*; a wipe-down with a chamois of the morning dew on her cap rails might happen during a boat show, but with normal use she doesn't need much special care or consideration.

I remember working a TrawlerFest show with her a couple of years ago. Across the dock was a shiny powerboat about 55 feet in length. Every day, the boat's skipper spent the first couple of hours washing and wiping



Learn more about Sam Devlin in this video:  
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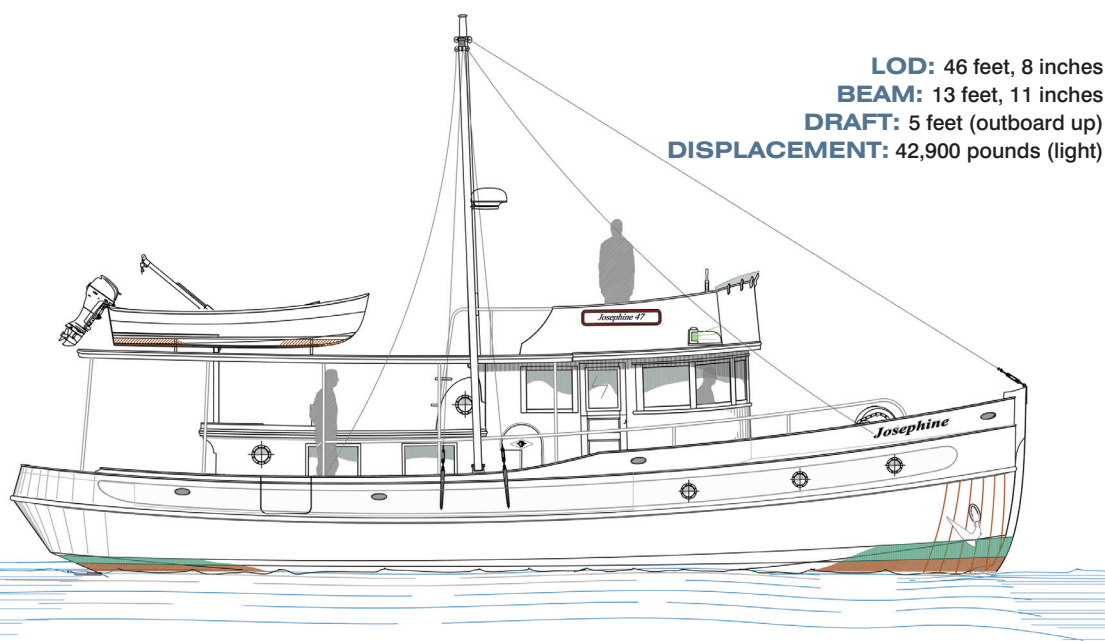
down in an attempt to keep his charge bright and shiny, in stunningly perfect condition. From my perspective aboard a somewhat moth-eaten old fishing boat, I appreciated the labor of this fellow. I figured it must have been Zen-like to keep her in such good shape.

I was wrong. On the third day of the show, the neighbor introduced himself. We soon were having a spirited conversation about boats and chores. It turned out he was sick and tired of having a boat that was so slick and shiny he had to remove his shoes and put on inside slippers every time he boarded.

He and his wife had spent a couple of months exploring the Queen Charlotte Islands in British Columbia and had enjoyed a great trip, but for one detail: He would take a skiff ashore for exploring and beachcombing almost daily, then would spend two to three hours cleaning the dinghy, the mothership and himself so he wouldn't dirty his sparkly palace of Spic and Span. It was a 1-to-1 ratio, with three hours spent exploring and three hours devoted to cleaning up.

I saw real envy in his eyes as he heard about the far less exhausting enjoyment of my humble workboat. He had a real appreciation for the lack of time it took me to keep her far from bright and shiny. In fact, his crystal palace was for sale, and he vowed to buy something simple and basic to replace her.

During the many-hours journey home from the boat show in little *Josephine*, I also mused about what-ifs. Anyone who lives with a converted commercial fishing vessel would



have to admit that these boats are mixed when it comes to being great cruisers; starting with a clean sheet of paper and building a boat from the keel up could easily produce a far better and more comfortable ride, one with no need to carry fish or ice and with better access to the living spaces.

There truly is something compelling about bobbing around in an 83-year-old boat, but I do often find myself thinking, *Perhaps my notion of a romantic cruise in an 83-year-old converted fishing boat might not be quite as romantic as I originally thought.* I love the one I am with, and I am committed to my old, grumpy *Josephine*, but my new design came from the musings of what I might do if I had the chance to build a new boat based on a similar concept of use — a boat of greater length and breadth and, hopefully, far more comfort.

My *Josephine 47* has a mid-pilothouse with the galley up, and a wonderful place for my crew and me to navigate my favorite waters. The fo'c'sle has staggered over/under bunks that allow a pack of people to sleep when I choose to cruise with company. The master stateroom is aft with a nice head and shower space, along with a queen-size berth. A smooth-running John Deere diesel is bunked

below the pilothouse sole, with a door from the fo'c'sle into its holy room.

Note the covered cockpit with lots of space to entertain or sit outside, out of the rain and mist that are so common in the Northwest. There is space on the overhead for a proper dinghy (my *Candlefish 13* is shown), and some solar panels will help keep the batteries charged. On crystal-clear and warm days, as rare as they might be, the flybridge would be the place to pilot her. It has warmth and visibility up the wazoo, and no one would be offended if I decided to light a cigar.

Plenty of the details that the smaller *Josephine*

inspired — trolling poles and paravane stabilizers to fly when the waters are rough, a drum windlass forward for proper ground tackle, single-part paints and finishes — would prevent her from becoming precious or too bright and shiny. This boat really starts to scratch the itch to live aboard with good space and comfort. Sure I may have to cruise without a workshop full of tools for my nervously busy hands, but this boat might be a really great idea as the perfect movable home and cruising platform.

I hope you enjoy the *Josephine 47* and, as always, fair winds. ■

