



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA SUNDQUIST



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA SUNDQUIST



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN HEIN



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN HEIN



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN HEIN



living creature that a man can make with his hands'. We tend to agree and take our task seriously."

Each year judges comprise boat builders, sailors, restoration specialists and wood enthusiasts. They are placed in teams, handed a clipboard containing a list of boats to visit, then given half a day to uncover the secrets that lie within each hull. Owners are prompted to share their boats' stories, often expanded by a left-field question from an inquisitive judge. Aboard Ross Gannon's *Eleda* in 2014, he was asked about his leather settee cushion covers, which led to an entertaining explanation on deer conservation on Martha's Vineyard. Judges are privy to hidden compartments, special staterooms, treasured artwork and hidden bars. They know to look beyond the crystal decanters and floral arrangements. They are treated to what John Steele termed, "the Cook's Tour."

When they reconvene to share discovery and some crazy stories, lively discussions ensue in a poker game of opinion. Overall Winners some years are obvious; other times hard

to determine. The 2019 winner, *Arrluuk*, could have earned it on beauty alone but it was her status as an impeccable cruising home for a family of four that sealed the deal.

Equal in importance is the Arne Frizzell Trophy, named after an infamous past Concours judge and awarded for seaworthiness and timeless tradition. Past winners include a list of boats laden with character and well-worn by sea miles.

Entering the Concours d'Elégance is simple: just sign on when you register your boat – there is no extra cost. No prep is necessary but if varnishing is your pastime, lay it on thick. You might want to tidy the galley but no need to dig out the silver and china. Some captains have used obscure psychology by setting out freshly baked cookies or charging the air with 'eau de bacon'. The winning details are already all there, built within the hull, polished by time and loved by those who sailed hard to reach this world class Regatta.

Many thanks to the Admiral's Inn for sponsoring the 2019 event and to South Point Restaurant for providing an excellent lunch for the Judges (with a drop or two of rosé!).



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN HEIN



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA SUNDQUIST



PHOTOGRAPH BY JAN HEIN



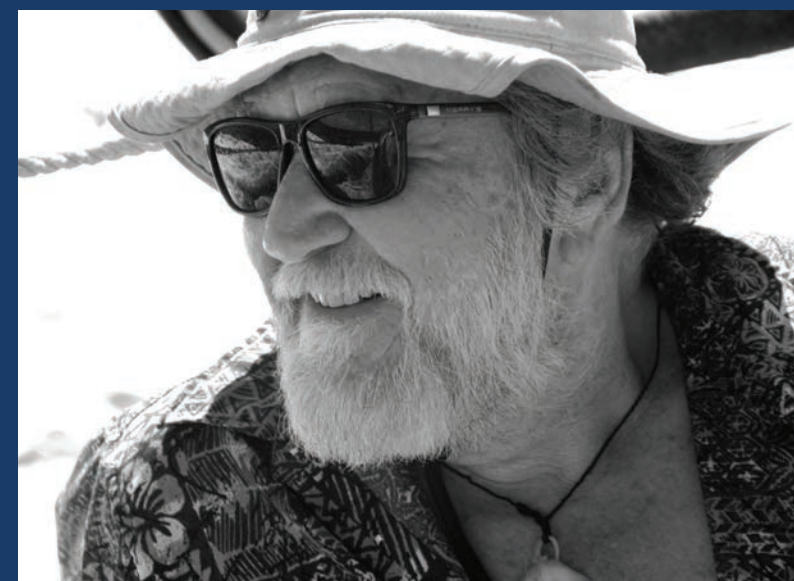
PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA SUNDQUIST



PHOTOGRAPH BY ANNA SUNDQUIST

SCHOONER TOM AND THE MIGHTY *Avenger*

TEXT & PHOTOGRAPHS BY LUCY TULLOCH



Well it's going to be a hard not to write this article on the great man that is Tom Gallant, as opposed to his inspiring Nova Scotian schooner *Avenger*...it's not easy to talk about one without the other. The two are so intertwined, that they are almost as one. I think you'll see what I mean.

"I wanted to go sailing from when I first saw a boat," Tom Gallant tells me with feeling, "something about it just went right through me".

In his youth, he sailed with a family friend in his 30ft sloop. "I could see the wind. I knew where it was from very early on," he realised. Tom had been drawing schooners in his school books since Grade 1 and both his uncles were passionate sailors from Nova Scotia and regularly took him down the river to catch cod. Seeing the schooners, he remembers saying to himself, "I'm going to have one of those one day".

Meanwhile, a 38 year old, Nova Scotian farmer, David Stevens, was embarking on a new career as a boatbuilder. With his 5 sheds on the beach at Second Peninsula, Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, he would go on to build some of the fastest schooners

on the Atlantic coast, 89 in total and nearly all his own designs. He designed and built the sporty 47ft Gaff schooner *Avenger* for Dr Ken McIntyre. She was built of oak frames, mahogany planks with copper rivets and ash deck beams.

At that time of his life, Tom lived in a very different world... He was a singer-songwriter of national reputation in Canada, an award-winning writer of plays, poetry, short stories and novels. He was writing music for theatre, radio and TV as well as acting and directing both theatre and film.

Making good money from screen and stage plays, he was particularly well-known for one successful Friday night TV show and earned quickly. "Something gets hot for a while. I was pretty young. It was a piece of cake. I got famous. I didn't like it. I felt like I had spinach between my teeth or my fly



was open you know?" Tom wanted to be taken seriously as an artist, a writer, an actor. But the more money they paid him, the more trivial the work was. He was approached by a huge agency in Hollywood who promised to make him a big name in the US. They detailed the plan: dates, touring, big money, 277 nights in hotels...

Fame and Hollywood... Tom tells me that how hard it is to give up your obscurity. "Sailing into a port, you are unknown. Opinions are based upon your behaviour."

He turned it down and returned to Nova Scotia. He lived in an old VW van and wrote radio plays. He resolved not to do trivial acting work anymore. "Best things I've done in life haven't made me a ton of money. There are so many things more important than money".

Then, in 1979, Tom saw Avenger, she was at that time 9 years old. "I thought: Holy Gold, that's my boat." A hurricane had taken Avenger's shed and blown it into a nearby field. That's why he could see her. Rig was in the next door shed, so unhurt.

He got to know David Stevens and so began their lifelong friendship.

"He was the best sailor that I ever saw," Tom declares. One time, Tom went to David with a broken spreader and was told to bring it to the shop. Then he instructed Tom to trace it and then take it over to the band saw and cut it out. Then to chamfer the edges. "He was bringing me along... he taught me everything".

Living on-board and getting to know the boat, his writing was a success and he went on to become the Artist in Residence at the Neptune Theatre, Halifax. He wrote a play

with music that he opened the season with and toured the Maritimes. It was a huge hit with a marvellous cast and great production and he describes it as being one of the happiest times of his life.

"I would never have called a schooner Avenger – it's too aggressive. I told David I was going to change her name and he looked like I'd kicked him in the gut. David told him that he built that boat for Doctor Ken McIntyre and it was he who saved David's granddaughter's life when she was a baby with Scarlet Fever. Dr McIntyre sat up with her for 3 nights, with iced towels bringing her fever down and he saved her life. Later, Dr McIntyre was lost off Kitchen Shoals, Bemuda, in the wreck of the Ramona. So her name stayed.

She was launched on Thursday, rigged on Friday and his first sail was on Saturday before joining Sunday's Schooner Race Week. They were nowhere near qualified but Dave Stevens insisted and Tom had to prize the helm from the proud grip of his old Uncle John.

Over the next 10 years, Tom and Melissa cruised and learnt and loved and wrote and created and worked on some modifications on Avenger to make her comfortable for living aboard and deep-water cruising. They were thoughtful designs and Tom made a mock up with plywood every time. The rig was raised, the decks changed from canvas to teak, adjustments to the interior, the size of the cockpit was too big and held an outrageous volume of water at sea, so it was shortened. A bridge deck was added and gained volume below. Tom felt the sheer could take some of his creativity... She had been built in the shop and David Stevens couldn't get far enough away to see the full length of the sheer. Ingeniously, Tom raised the 2" toe rail to 6" on the bow, to 5" on the stern, and running a batten down the deck made a sweet curve. Then he put a cap rail on top and made the rub rail match so no one knew. The boat isn't changed at all.

He thought the dog house looked too high and so, he changed from canvas with moulding on top to fiberglass top to toughen and then rounded edges and dropped moulding down 2", painting everything above white, so it disappeared. The cabin now looked lower. Like magic!

A tragic car accident changed their lives suddenly, leaving Melissa severely disabled. Tom cared for her for the next 20 years without hesitation. "Love is the willingness to give up everything with no expectation," he says. Then one day, Melissa told him she wanted him to go sailing, to return to the West Indies and sail amongst their beloved islands once again. Mobile and Sat phones allowed him to stay in touch and tell her of his landfalls and adventures during his season away. He would tell her if it was a little stormy, saying she's probably glad not to be at sea. A loyal friend next door was a wonderful caregiver and reported that Melissa was doing better than ever.

Coming back from Rocky Harbour, Newfoundland one early September in 1982, the forecast called for 15-25



knots from the Nor'West forecasting a broad reach for Avenger. It was a sunny day and there was no wind. And still there was no wind. Tom started ranting at the gods, asking where the breeze was... "You want me to pay you for it?" he joked and reached in his pocket and threw a handful of change into the sea. "Well that was a very bad thing to do". The wind begins to blow from SW. It gets stronger. They tie down a reef. The wind increases. The foresail is taken down. Then the staysail. The wind strengthens and they hove to. The barometer goes from 30mb to below 28mb within an hour. Wind is getting stronger and stronger... right where the Labrador and St. Lawrence currents meet, with already notorious seas. Avenger is doing OK, she lies abeam for a bit, coming down a wave, picking up speed, climbing the next wave, she skits back, digs her stern in and a wave breaks over the bow and the boat flies through the air and sticks her masts in the water...

"It's really not a very nice thing to happen." Tom's understatement of turning turtle says it all. It happened no less than three times in that storm, the second time taking forward hatch away leaving them knee-deep in green water. They were close to losing her and called a Mayday. Tom remembers grimly hearing the Coastguard report "the 47ft Gaff schooner with five souls aboard".

When the Submarine Tracker plane found them, the plan was to drop a 125lb pump on a float into the water for pick-up, but the wind was blowing so hard, with so much spray and the sea so wild, that neither could see each other and there was a very real danger that it would go straight through the boat or that they wouldn't be able to find it if it landed nearby. They admitted they'd never seen a storm like this and so the Canadian Forces said Godspeed Avenger, before Tom said, "wait, I don't want to be lying when I tell this story... what is it blowing?"

"110 knots of wind, sir" came the chilling reply before they ran before it through the night. By daylight, it eased

to a mere 40 knots and they were able to sail back to the safety of Rocky Harbour.

He describes it as the hardest moment in his sailing life. Getting back on the boat to leave and dropping the mooring lines was tough... the storm was too fresh in his memory. He got 6 miles offshore and came back to the dock before leaving again some days later, this time for a safe passage home.

A big refit followed in 1995. With the skilled help of the best shipwright in Nova Scotia, she was reframed in American white oak, New spars of black spruce. 30 new planks in Wana and garboards and the sheer plank, which were Angelique. Recalked from garboards up.

For 50 years Tom and his schooner have sailed over 100,000 miles and as you'd imagine, everything on board has a story; every painting, every tool, every custom fitting "To remind you who you are. Where you come from and how rich your life was". And one such current richness is Tom's beloved cat Jimmy. A brave sea-going cat, who found Tom in the boatyard some years ago and is as important a member of the crew as any, having sailed over nine thousand miles together with Tom and Avenger.

I can't help but finish with Tom's own words:

"It's a lucky man who can find an obsession equal and opposite to his work. Sailing is the perfect way to clean the cluttered mind of all the leftovers from writing books and songs and plays and such. And it draws you back into the living planet, brings you close to things that are real and beyond argument."

She asks only that you pay attention, which is exactly what life asks. What we pay attention to is a question worth pondering. Something tells me, the answer to that is outside the self. We need to be looking out at the world. We need to watch the sky, feel the wind, notice the changing state of the sea, if we're to carry the right sails, survive the storms, and make time in the easy reaches."