



PHOTOGRAPH BY TIRI WRIGHT

Argyll is one of those boats that you want to own so much that you almost imagine that you do. The grace with which she sails and her elegant sheer are enough to make anyone dream...

LUCY TULLOCH

A speculative S&S design but built for William T Moore, a NY shipping magnate in 1948, *Argyll* was built by Simms of Massachusetts. Designed by the legendary Olin Stephens, she is said to be a development of the previous year's Bermuda race winner *Gesture*. Indeed she won the Bermuda Race herself in 1950. At 57ft LOA with a beam of 13ft and draft 8ft, she is reminiscent in many ways of the legendary *Stormy Weather* (3ft longer), both doing their best to windward with a vertiginous heel on, showing off their beautiful underwater shapes. She is constructed with double-planked mahogany on finest white oak, monel fastened, teak decks and soles, and gleaming mahogany bright work. Moore raced her hard, all over the oceans, from the North Sea to Rio de Janeiro and of course the Med. He did not spare any expense, even shipping her to race starts on his liners. So loved was she that he kept her until he died in the early seventies.

In Olin Stephens's 1999 Autobiography he wrote of these boats (about *Baruna* specifically, built alongside *Gesture*) "*Baruna* was raced with a crew about half the size of today's maxis. Faster they are, but at what cost? And lighter but requiring a big crew, without proper accommodations and

with motion to pound out your teeth. Why do we have less pleasure as we learn more and more?"

In 1976 Stan Parks, bought *Argyll* in Palm Beach. *Argyll*'s heyday was nowhere near over, in fact a new life, with her second owner that would last 20 years, was ahead of her: And on that first sail from Palm Beach up to Maine, Stan could not believe how well she sailed. Indeed he cites the voyage as being one of the best in the many years he owned her: Stan fell in love with *Argyll* and went home to contemplate the difficult decision of being forced to sell his turn-of-the-century home on Eagle Island, Maine, and to "break the bad news gently to my house". But Stan ingeniously found a way to keep both and designed a six-day trip beginning with three days at the house on an unspoilt island, followed by a three day Penobscot Bay cruise on *Argyll* for the enchanted guests. Tragically, days before his first charter, a fire burnt the old house to the ground. Not to be stopped, Stan provided the accommodation from an old Inn on a different island that summer of 1978 and it worked well. Later, he did a lot of work on *Argyll*, stripping her down to her bare bones and rebuilding her with a cruising interior and for twenty years,



PHOTOGRAPH BY CORY SALKIN

Argyll was both Stan's home and his business. He ran colourful and memorable charters throughout Maine, the Caribbean and South America. During all these years, Stan had other project boats but *Argyll* was always his home. Following that, he took her to France where he cruised Brittany and Normandy for many years. Until eventually, at Duarnenez

Festival in 1996, having sailed passed everyone in the races, one Friday afternoon, a man rowed over from a Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter, and said that he really wanted to buy *Argyll* but he wouldn't be able to pay until Monday...

The new owner, Ken Briggs, had some hull rebuild work carried out by Blake Brothers. Practically none of the original



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framing remained, and 80% of the external mahogany planking was replaced. The inner cedar planking had fared better over the years and only 10% of this required replacement. She was re-decked with new deck frames, along with all new deck joinery. New masts and spars were built by Nobles of Bristol.

A new owner started another restoration but sold her before completion to Bill Ainscough. Ed Burnett, who restored her for Bill in 2008, said following sea trials: "Her power and balance give her a long and easy stride and we have yet to find a reasonable sail combination that disturbs her poise."

Next, in 2009, the well-loved Welsh Comedian, presenter and author Griff Rhys Jones was about to give *Argyll* her next lease of life.

Griff learnt to sail in West Mersea on the east coast of England with his father who was a doctor and a carpenter. Later in his life, Griff chartered and skippered boats abroad, in sunnier climes, and his love of sailing grew further.

His first boat was *Undina*, a 45ft 1956 Rhodes design which he had for 14 yrs. He was looking for beauty and speed in a yacht and he'd been around classics and knew enough to know that an S&S yawl offers both. He found *Argyll* for sale and bought her in 2011. With a heavier displacement, she is the same beam as *Undina* but has much more headroom. With a wide smile, he tells me "I've not been in a wooden boat where I can take my trousers off – standing up!"

Sitting with me at the Panerai Lounge during Antigua's Classic Regatta he is full of enthusiasm and tells me of all the racing they have done in the Mediterranean. She has taken them up a class in racing and is now highly competitive in the Regattas of Spain, Italy and France. *Argyll* was the winner of

the Bonifacio Trophy and the Coupe des Dames in St Tropez in 2014, and came second in the Panerai Transat in March 2015. This is not some hot shot who buys a Classic and pops down for a week or two here and there to impress his associates. Griff is passionate and knowledgeable. He knows his competition. And he knows their history and pedigree. It is most refreshing.

And like many a true sailor; he's not much of a motor yacht man either. "A sailing boat is about the pleasure of getting there. A motorboat is about the disappointment of where you have arrived." When asked what he likes about sailing he describes feeling "instantly transported into another world". How well we know this feeling too. Griff adores racing, indeed *Argyll* has a wardrobe of over 20 sails now. He loves helming and is a tweeker; constantly trying to get the fastest speeds from his greyhound yawl. And he likes to sail a boat that turns heads...

Griff's time in Antigua brought him much pleasure. He enjoys the trade winds and lovely conditions of the Classic Regatta. "So many have either too much or no wind at all" he noticed. "We had a good start but the wrong headsails" he told me after one race "but a lovely downwind leg!" He deeply appreciates the crew he had on board who had done previous regattas with him and his skipper Alexis "They were lots of fun and this Regatta was spectacularly good" he grins, "there are lovely boats here and it's brilliantly organised".

Argyll has turned the heads and lifted the hearts of sailors for 67 years. There is something of a soul in old wooden boats and this one in particular seems to invoke the very poetry of man. Even if we are only dreaming of owning her; her stories and her colourful owners allow us all to continue.



PHOTOGRAPH BY CORY SELKEN