

# Resurrection of the wooden yacht Freedom

By Sam Bari

Americans hold the word "freedom" in high esteem, for they have paid dearly to preserve and uphold its meaning in every sense of the word.

In this case, "freedom" takes on a new meaning as the name of a classic 104-foot by 20-foot fantail motor yacht designed by John Trumpy, the famed marine architect. Built in 1926 by Mathis Yacht Building Co., of Camden, N. J., for A. J. Fay of Lowell, Mass., Freedom can now be found at MacMillen Yachts, Inc., the wooden boat specialists in Portsmouth.

When classic yachts begin to show their age, they are often refitted and restored to their original condition by fine craftsmen. Freedom was found over two years ago in Jacksonville, Fla., sitting on land, her engines silenced by rust and years of neglect.

Her meticulously shaped wooden hull was covered with three layers of chipped and peeling painted fiberglass. The once highly polished wooden decks that hosted well-heeled eastern seaboard aristocrats sat rotting, exposed to the elements, and supported by deteriorating refrigerators and machinery.

Freedom was in need of much more than restoration. She required resurrection.

Freedom was christened on the

150th anniversary of our country's independence, hence her name. She is a near sister ship to another Mathis-Trumpy vessel, the presidential yacht Sequoia that was designed for President Herbert Hoover and was sold in 1977 by President Gerald Ford. The boat served nine presidents.

The man in charge of the formidable task of rebuilding Freedom's entire wooden hull and superstructure is Louis Sauzedde. Born and raised in Jamestown, Sauzedde has been building and restoring wooden yachts since he was a boy. Sauzedde is the head carpenter, and he and his experienced crew, who are awed by his knowledge, have been working for over two years to resurrect Freedom and bring her back to her original condition.

According to Project Manager Jeff Jacobson, a total of 14 skilled wooden boat specialists will work on Freedom for over four years before she is ready to navigate the seas. "Sauzedde is passionate about his work and is one of the most experienced wooden shipwrights in the business," Jacobson said.

The crew agreed that nobody in the country knows more about wooden boat building than Sauzedde. To complete a task of this magnitude takes that kind of experience, knowledge, and talent.

Company owner Earl MacMil-



len found Freedom in Florida and purchased her for an undisclosed amount. The boat had been renamed Sunset, but after checking the records, MacMillen knew it was the famed yacht commissioned in 1926.

"We don't know exactly how much the restoration will cost," Jacobson said. "But I would

guess that it will be upwards of \$6,000,000. It's difficult to estimate exactly because you never know what you're going to find beneath decks and behind bulkheads," he added.

"We've replaced 100 percent of the planking and the entire hull," said Sauzedde. "By the time we're finished, we will have replaced ev-

ery dowel, screw, and nail, as well as the engines and superstructure. The boat will be better than when she was new."

According to Jacobson, shares are offered to investors in a fractional ownership program designed by MacMillen to finance the project. "It's very much like a timeshare," he said. Investors purchase shares that allow them a percentage of days per year on the yacht, he explained. The number of days allowed depends on how many shares they buy.

"It's expensive, but it's also a very good deal," Jacobson added. "For instance, the investors in Belle, another Mathis-Trumpy motor yacht that we restored, got their time on the boat, and when they sold their shares, they made a respectable profit," he said.

As he inspected the boat with a keen, knowing eye, Sauzedde said that at least two years will be required to finish the Freedom project and do it right. He claims that every boat he works on is a labor of love, and that it is nice to be paid for doing something he really enjoys.

Sauzedde moved to Jamestown over half a century ago when he was four years old. He maintains homes in Jamestown and Saunterstown, where he lives with his wife of nine years.



Louis Sauzedde (top) stands beneath the ribs of Freedom. At left, Sauzedde talks with Fred Clarke of Jamestown.

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