

# How I Got My New Boat

By Jim Lawson

I had built a variety of quick'n'easy, goo'n'screw, U-build'em boats over the years, all long on practicality but short on traditional elegance. I was talking about this to my friend John DeLapp, a designer and builder of ecologically sensible homes and apartments and a fine boatbuilder.

Well, John had been sketching a boat that would meet my needs. He designed a very light car-toppable boat, fast in calm water and, most importantly, capable with two people in a chop. As it happened, the boat was to be built out of two sheets of Bruynzeel.

John has been questioning the traditional theories concerned with the likelihood of developing a worthwhile hull out of the straight-line constraints of plywood. Through concentrated experiment and development with half-models, he has developed not only a theoretical basis but also practical application. This model represents some of his ideas. Looking at the half model, I was completely taken with the economy and gracefulness of the lines.

At 15'6" long and 38" wide, she is fitted with laminated outriggers. These are slipped into traps built in at the rowing stations as part of the structure of the boat, similar to the arrangement on John's latest boat based on the Herreshoff 17' fast rowboat.

Everyone knows the next line: "I want that boat."

But John wouldn't build it; he had no time. Then, in a conversation at a boat meet with William Enoch of Bitter End Boatworks, I realized that I could indeed have that boat. William agreed to build the hull, leaving me to do the finish work, and for a price that hardly dented my lunch budget.

When I got the boat, I was amazed. My inexperience with the half-model process left me unprepared for the finished appearance of the boat. Essentially, the boat is four panels stressed into a shallow vee with a springy sheer, somewhat resembling a Delaware ducker. Beautiful. In addition, William's work was meticulous. The hull was ready for finishing, needing only light sanding and the fitting of the outrigger traps and foot braces, which I now think are indispensable for rowing. The boat is painted with a base coat of epoxy and a topcoat of a linear polyurethane developed for aircraft.

In keeping with the concept of economy and appropriateness, the design called for 5 mm Bruynzeel for the hull and lumberyard materials for the rest. The knees, keel, chine, and gunwales are clear fir, the seats are cut from spruce ledger boards, and the breasthooks are Honduras mahogany. The traps for the outriggers are from a madrone\* log that John cut and milled, but oak or beech would do as well. Even with the Bruynzeel at \$65 to \$80 a

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\* Madrone (also spelled madrono): An evergreen tree of the heath family, with smooth, red bark, leathery, oval leaves, and edible, red berries, native to west and north America.



*The Natoma skiff, built from about \$200 worth of materials, is an exceptional pulling boat. Photo: Ken Steinmetz.*