

Kawarthas Classic And Antique Boat Enthusiasts Making A Comeback

By Karen Hicks

When Catherine McLeod and Bill Barthorpe tell stories about the 33 days they spent aboard their boat touring the Thousand Islands and New York state a couple of years ago, people tend to pay attention. The couple made the trip in an antique 36-foot Richardson cruiser.

Catherine says the Richardson cruiser is “unique.” Bill says the superstructure was built of teak and the flybridge of fiberglass by the Richardson Boat Company of Tonawanda, New York in 1962. The hull, however, was manufactured in Malton, Ontario, by Avro Aircraft Limited, a part of the A.V. Roe Aeronautical Group, and in turn, the huge Hawker Siddley Conglomerate, the company of Avro Arrow aircraft fame. The hull is planked aluminum, nut and bolt construction, built like an airplane.

Catherine and Bill dock their boat all summer at their

home on Fife Bay on Chemong Lake. Catherine says it gives her great pleasure to look outside and see it moored there.

This year they plan a six-week boating trip “heading up toward Midland,” likely doing some business along the way. They named their boat Seaero, which they bought in 1984, from the spelling “aeroplane,” and that’s the name they use for their advertising business.

There are two Richardsons in Peterborough. Both owners are members of the Trent-Severn Antique and Classic Boat Association.

John and Cindy Hendron found their Richardson, which had been abandoned in a barn in Ennismore for 20 years, in 1998. “Meandering On”, built in 1935, is a 25-foot Richardson Little Giant Cruiser. Cindy says, “John knew about it, and he kept going in and asking the guy to sell it. He wasn’t interested. Then one day, he said he was

continued on page 12



Antique and Classic Boat Show 2004



Brian Norman's restored Peterborough cedarstrip boat

in his 70s and realistically wouldn't restore it. And that's how we got it. The Richardson has a really neat history, they were all custom ordered, no two are alike."

The Hendrons, who are in charge of membership and website for the antique boat association, have "in various states of repair, about five boats," Cindy says. John fixes up boats as a hobby. He is the architectural supervisor for the Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board and designs libraries. "But he has always been a carpenter." Rebuilding one boat, resulted in further commissions. "John does the wood and then sends it to the upholsters who do the interiors, then it is to us to do the fitting of the steering mechanism behind the upholstery. And then it is done."

John works from a shed behind his home in East City.

The appeal of antique boats, Cindy says, "is the charm and the interest people have in them and the history. It is important to preserve history, a lot of them got burned."

Spanky Goodin and Lisa Turney have five boats. Spanky says, "I was raised in Omemee and I was always on the river as a kid. I had canvas canoes and a cedar strip canoe. In 1997-98 we moved to the lake at Gannon's Narrows and bought a mahogany boat."

What the appeal for him in antique boats? "I like everything old – I have old cars and motorcycles. Maybe I'm reliving my youth and having things I didn't have then."

His favourite boat is his "Lumpy" a 1956 Shepherd 22-foot runabout. Its 200 Horse Power Chrysler Hemi Engine can

move it along up to 38 mph, but most of the time it 'lumps' along at a slow cruise. "Lumpy", a 1956 - 22' Shepherd Runabout

His mahogany 1959 - 14.5' Red Fish Runabout has fiberglass fins.

"I'm fortunate to live on the lake. I'm in the boat three and four times a week."

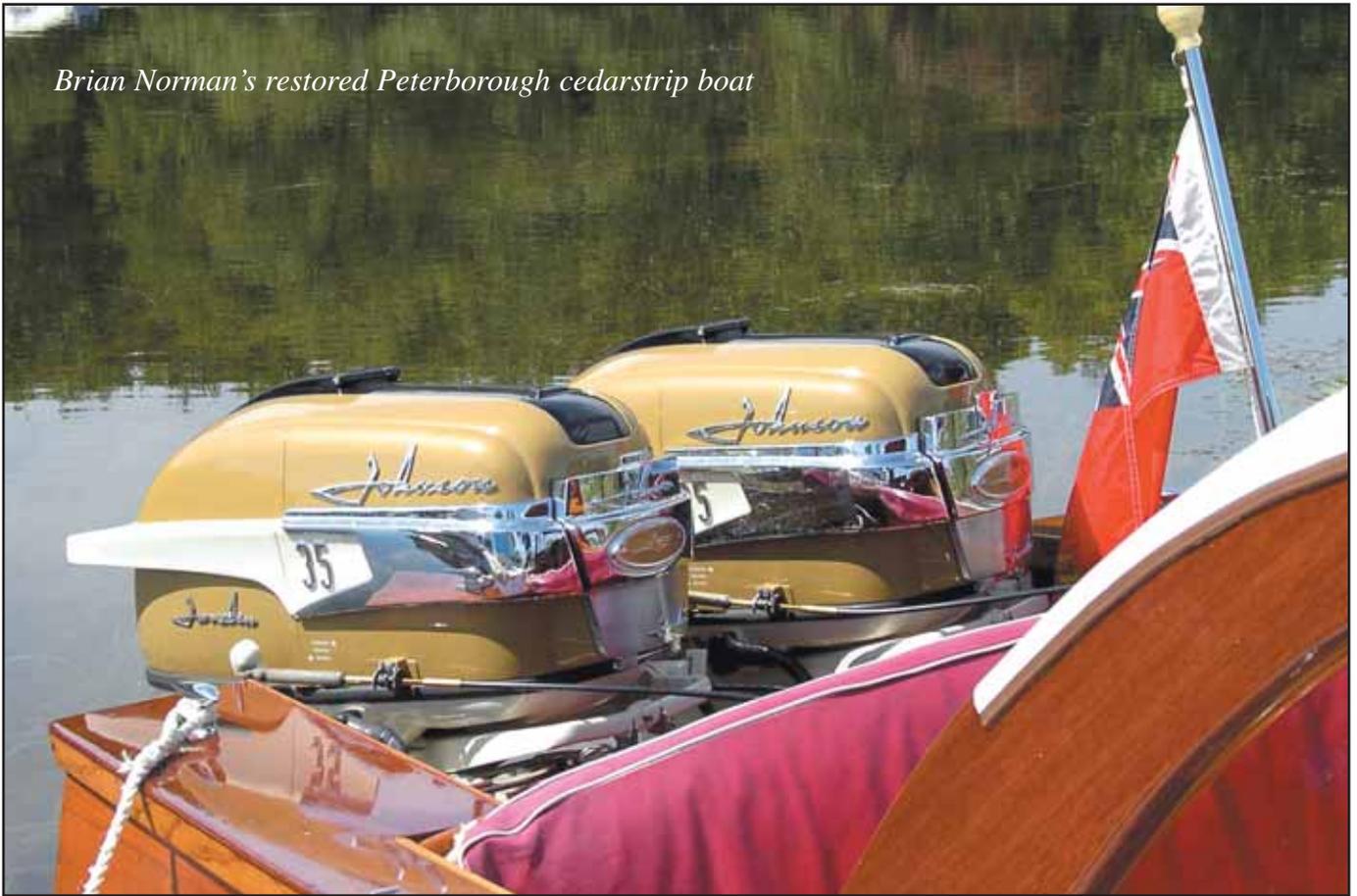
Nik Rishor is president of the Trent-Severn Antique and Classic Boat Association. Boats get their antique or classic designation based upon their age. Boats built up to and including 1918 are in the historic class while antiques date from 1919 to 1941. Classics were built from 1943 to 1968; and Contemporary Production and Custom models, come from 1969 to the present. A Replica designation is given to a new boat, built in a non-production manner.

Fiberglass boats are also collectible. Classic fiberglass boats date from the mid-1950s to about 1965. After the Second World War, boat makers began to emulate car manufacturers, and boats developed wings, and sculpted shapes, distinctive headlights

"Most clubs are unlikely to see anything pre-1900," Nik says. "Wooden boat production ceases, for the most part in North America in the late 1960s, and fiberglass took on a presence for durability and maintenance. The average boater isn't going to spend the time every year to sand and varnish if they don't have to, so that was a time when things stopped."

continued on page 15

Brian Norman's restored Peterborough cedarstrip boat



Since the late 1980s, Nik notes, “There has been incredible interest in wooden boats. Many manufacturers or boat builders are building new wooden boats, replicas of boats from yesteryear.” He cites Gar Wood and Hacker Craft models as examples. “These were two very prominent name plates and that have been revived and people are rebuilding these boats using these names. These are new replicas, but they are pretty expensive, \$65,000 US and up.”

But you can also buy closer to home. “There are also guys like Dwight Boyd in our club who is based in Campbellford and has Clarion Boats. Dwight is a master boat builder and is probably as experienced as anyone in wood boat building and refinishing.”

Nik's interest in boating has been lifelong. He remembers cottage life on Lower Stony Lake. “My grandfather's brother had a mahogany launch and my Dad always had a cedar strip from the Lakefield boat factory when it was running. The first boat I got with my Dad we rescued from a neighbour's cottage on Clear Lake and restored it. I gave it a good cleanup, it was covered in moss, but there was no rot or anything. I stripped it, sanded it and varnished it and I just got hooked. It was a 1947 Lakefield Cayuga. I still have that boat, among others.”

The Trent-Severn boat club has approximately 85 members. This year the club is sponsoring three events, with an open invitation to members to launch their boats as a group and tour on different days Rice Lake, Pigeon and Stony Lake. They will meet up after for lunch. While cruising, they will stop and show off their boats and ask questions from spectators.

Past club president Brian Norman says a fee of \$20 a year is good value for members. “It gets a group of people together with a similar interest. They can choose their level of attendance, or just go to boat shows. We also have little newsletter” and a website www.trentsevernantiqueboats.com.

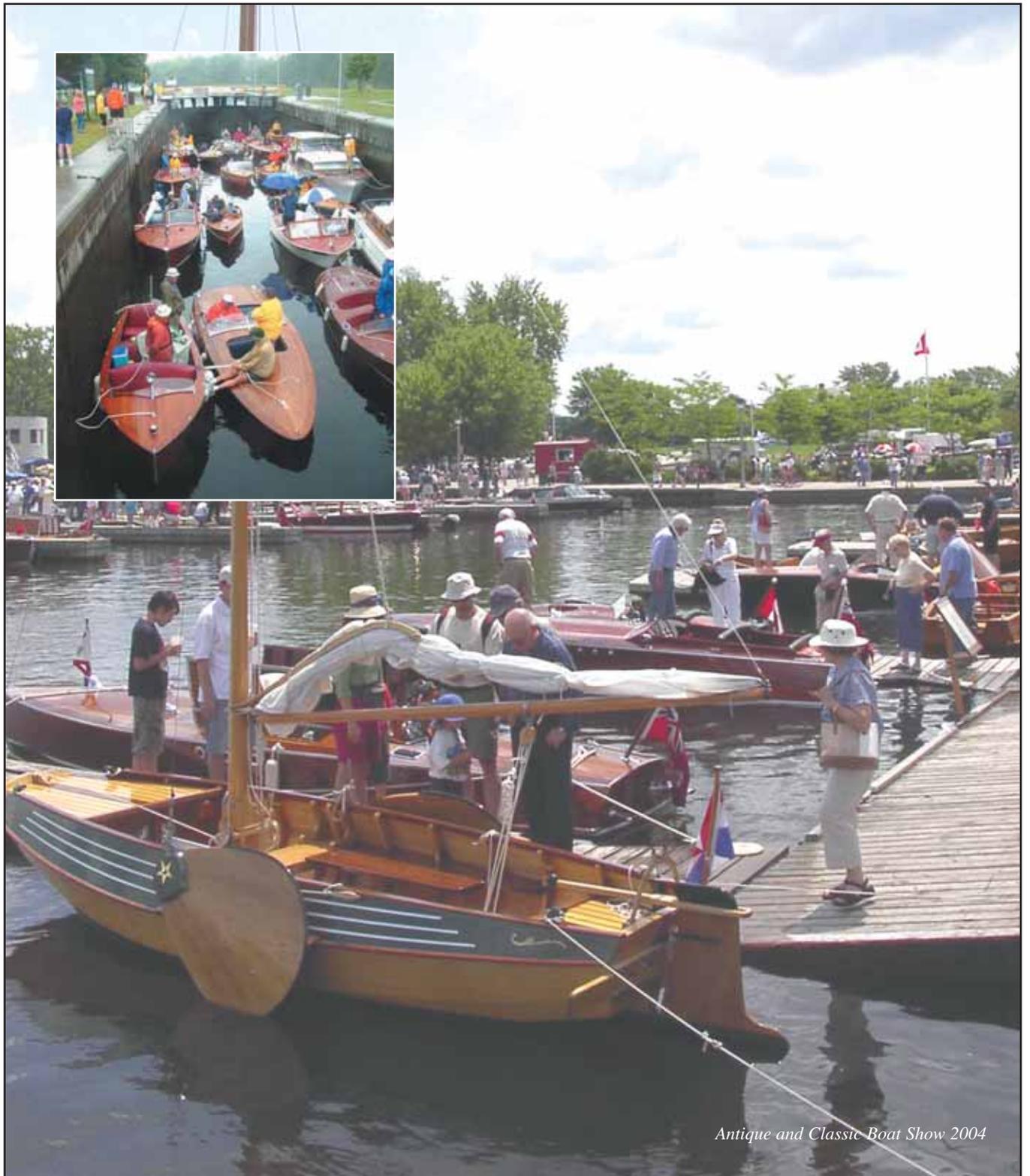
About 10 years ago, interest in the club died down for a while. But the club is now on a comeback, with 85 members. Brian says, “In general, maybe it is a baby boomer thing, there seems to be an increased interest locally – more boats are being restored and put back to use.” And most members use their boats “pretty regularly.”

The Trent-Severn Antique and Classic Boat Association was formed in 1984, after a series of local antique boat shows were held in conjunction with the Friends of the Trent-Severn Waterway. These original shows were held below the Lift Lock. Docking restrictions soon dictated that subsequent shows be held at a larger location, and the Club's events soon became a popular summer site at the Peterborough Marina in Little Lake.

As membership grew in the late 1980's to approximately sixty members, year round events were promoted, such as hosting the original Heritage Canoe Festivals in February of each year. This event proved to be very popular, and is still carried on through the Canadian Canoe Museum.

In the summer of 2000, in conjunction with the City of Peterborough for their Millennium Celebrations, the Trent-Severn Club hosted another Antique and Classic Boat Show in Peterborough's downtown harbour. Another was held last sum-

continued on page 17



Antique and Classic Boat Show 2004

mer in conjunction with the 100th Anniversary of the Peterborough Lift Locks. Boat fanciers inspected 114 antique, classic and wooden watercraft at the weekend-long event.

The club benefits from Peterborough's location on the Trent-Severn waterway. Originally built to establish a commercial water route from Lake Ontario to Georgian Bay, the system stretches for 240 miles via a series of 43 locks. However by the time the system was completed, numerous

highway and rail lines had reduced the need for commercial use on the system. Thus the waters of the Trent-Severn are used today primarily for tourists, cottagers, and pleasure boaters – and members and friends of the Trent-Severn Antique & Classic Boat Association.

For more information about the Trent-Severn Antique & Classic Boat Association, visit their website at www.trentsevernantiqueboats.com or telephone (705) 749-2535, Toll Free 1-877-2189

