

Refurbishing A Jet 14

By Ernie Michaud, Class President and Fleet Captain in 2021 — A year of COVID where we needed something to do in isolation.

Falling in Love with Jet 14's

Before I tell you how I refurbished a Jet 14 boat over the past year, I'd like to share my journey with the Jet 14's. I joined the Jet 14 National Association in 2008, after having bought my first boat, a Jet 14 #760. I picked it up locally from someone who had been told that he had to sell one boat or the other as his wife moved in with him. The boat I bought from him had been partially refurbished, but was not completed and needed a good bit of work over the first couple of years I was sailing it. I learned a lot about tanks v.s. air bags on Jet 14's the hard way — just ask my crew, Anna Pentronzio, who took a swim in Lake Erie, twice, because of me. (Sorry, Anna!) Thanks to Dave Michos' expert advice and instruction on how to glass, I soon had at least the front tank and the full centerboard pin area redo complete before I sold it.



My second Jet 14 a few years later was #1136. It was a well made Buckles boat that Dave Michos and later Jim Hermetet had rigged and upgraded. It has been a great boat. Each year I improve or replace some needed lines or rigging, and some trailer adjustments have been made to make it one of the best supporting and lightest trailers in the fleet. I focused on several things

while sailing on this boat: increasing my skills, crew building, getting to race often (locally and out-of-town at regattas), and learning as much as I could to help move this boat up in the fleet regularly. As some of you know there have been some memorable moments! Now my son sails #1136, and I couldn't be more proud.



Finding My Next Boat

As we travel to regattas, I often see wooden boats from the late fifties and early sixties and am in awe of their craftsmanship and appearance. (No, not quite like Marion Zaugg's fine furniture of a boat, that is so nice you hate to challenge it against the dock, but more like an aged and well worn piece of history.) Some say boats from these decades are more rigid and likely more able to help to win a race against a glass boat. There are benefits to the simplicity of their rigging, perhaps. Still, rarely are those boats winning unless they have been upgraded to an aluminum mast, tanks, kite, deeper tanged center board and appropriately added spinnaker.

My third Jet 14 came to me as a pass-it-on boat from a prior owner out of Annapolis. This story took place during COVID-times, when the moment allowed me to renovate and upgrade it so this little boat might compete and work as well as the newer boats. Ed Lutz contacted our Class Secretary regarding a boat he was ready to pass along. He received it a few years earlier and was asked to someday hand it off to an interested and motivated sailor. The full story does elude some, but he says these boats had been passed along to three locations years earlier in the country as they were not as much in use at one of the Fleets. At one point these boats had been fully upgraded to have tanks and newer masts. Owners had put fresh sails to them in hopes of doing well at regattas, and some hardly got to use them before their fleets diminished in activity.

My wife Paula and I traveled to get the boat, and we stayed overnight touring Annapolis making a weekend of the pickup. Always a pleasure to see the spring Annapolis boat show and walk on the expensive, larger new sailboats. (Dreaming is nice!) So we towed the Jet 14 back on Sunday and admired the condition it was in. I knew it needed some work, and Ed's words of experience that it never was a winning boat haunted me. At the time, all I could imagine was limiting the boat's ability to win was maybe tuning to start. Little did I know — this is where the prior experience on the other boats and the lessons learned from Brent Barberhan, Dave Michos, Bill Buckles, and so many others who came before me and set up the boats I have owned came into play, and helped me see the little things that could make this hull #239 be more competitive.







A Restoration Project Begins

So with just a few photos, you may not be compelled to do a big makeover. I wasn't. It was not until I started down the path of a full refit of the trailer support and length that I knew what might be involved time-wise to complete the process. The trailer became my focus for a bit, because it did not have the correct configuration to keep it on the forward support in transit. Plus, it might have partially cracked the interior flooring as it bumped along down the highway on the two-by-four carpeted formal supports. Don't worry — that crack was a much easier fix than I imagined! Unlike the other projects pending, I had to investigate as time in winter of 2020-21 marched on.

I found a haven in Cleveland for this winter restoration project by visiting a booth at the January 2020 winter boat show. Joining and significantly begging for some time in the shop at the Cleveland Amature Boat Building Society's (CABBS) facility was a blessing. They gave me the space likely because I was working on renovating an older wooden boat, not a glass boat. Sure, they work with glass for strengthening wooden boats, but rarely are they doing a redo on a full glass boat. This allowed me to use a heated, larger facility and to have access to much needed support and camaraderie. They often were guiding and teaching me what or how to do all this, and I'm incredibly grateful.

Thanks, needs to be said here in that Ed Neal of the CABBS and the other skilled and helpful crew around him that hold that group together made all this possible through the fall and winter. Often watching over my effort and decisions and always willing to answer questions or teach me how to do something challenging.









A Time-Consuming Turn of Events

After the trailer was fixed, I was hoping for a simple, light paint job to the fading and worn bottom. Little did I know that without a full layer of fiberglass I would forever see the hairline cracks in whatever paint I applied. Of course I was in denial, and I had to try to sand, fill, prime

and even paint over the older cracked paint once before I believed them. At this point, I started consulting my friend and fellow "Jetter" Dick Parker of Parker Marine. He shared that I would not be free of these lines or cracks until it was taken down more fully to wood and then glassed some. I took the advice and took on the problem with new interest, as I was once a paint chemist and was curious about the deeper underlying areas of possible dry rot in the bottom stern area.









Originally sanding was slow and tedious, so using a heat gun more easily stripped the old paint and primer so much better and more efficiently. After that, using a full 80-grip to sand with limited pressure and a vacuum attached was so helpful. The advice was really paying off! I was still not sure that I needed to undo the bottom keel of this boat, for fear it might open up a deeper can of worms from prior renovations. So I moved on to the resin, glass and more resin, thus firming up this boat to have a more sturdy and smooth finish. It was this point in time my son Scott chose to move back to Cleveland and work from home in Covid. That made it possible for him to also help in this boat's renovation and hang with his dad.





Certain resins dry to leave a film, so if you're going to smooth a finish by fairing or priming, you must first wash to scrub or sand off that finish. An alternative to letting this happen is to apply a second coat of resin within an hour or so before the finish gets to the surface, and thus the next layer adheres well without issues. Alas, this did not work out as well as I had hoped, and the need for some fairing became evident to smooth the coating and to create thickness with all these angles. That's why you see all the sanding on the left working that outer resin down a bit until just starting to see the cloth here and there.

And so the fairing layers began, first heavy and all over, then moderate to fill bigger dips and lastly lightly for what remained. I even bought the dark graphite tub for the final layers to help identify where I had been already while sanding, and yet it just seemed like an unnecessary and dirty looking layer that was easy to pass on if my eyes and hands would still be willing to help me decide what needed more sanding.













Once only a few miniscule dots and low spots remained, I went for it with the two coats of primer. In between the coats of primer, I used some sort of epoxy meant for these very small or thin remaining dimples. Sanding is helpful for more adhesion, but the level of grit is definitely much higher in the fineness so not to overly leave small sanding circular lines. Similarly, attaching a vacuum to the orbital sander and going lightly is so helpful.





Finishing Touches

So I was onto the top coat! By this point, I had become very aware that I was doing this in February and that it was dry inside the shop and around 65 degrees. While facing these added challenges, watching YouTube videos on painting versus thinning for flow and videos on additives were definitely a help, along with the camaraderie of my friend, Stuart Butcher. He joined in around the time when I had hoped to just paint or prime, when I was so unhappy with my results. He definitely helped me get through a lot of the worries that arose and helped keep this project moving along.









Getting the rub rail back on was now a problem, because the glass had covered up all the holes. I decided the rail it had was far too short on this boat. Using some white oak and the woodworking tools at CABBS, it did not take long to make the perfect railing and stain/ varnish it just so.







It was off to winter storage! Now you would think a boat that had been sailed only ten years earlier would be ready to go in the spring. Well, this is a much longer story than I want to tell, I'm afraid. This first summer down near the lake in years required some real attention to making the last features correct, updated to today's specs for more competitive racing, and rigging that makes working this boat much more palatable or efficient. Even the center board needed a tang added on for a more forward center of effort to help climb the wind a few degrees higher.



With this newly painted and deeper centerboard comes a fresh caulking to the pin that keeps it in place. Additionally, finding just the right drain plugs and applying them from in the stern to the outside made all the difference in the world to keep my crew from getting wet feet and having to bale water the whole evening while racing. That left DNR measurement, trailer weighing for license plate and registering it. I then dremeled a boat ID number and applied the ID tag as Ohio expects us to do.









I balanced the boat's bridal for better support around our crane and also moved the cleats from

a very inside setup (limiting the size of the kite on the windward side) to be on the easier position of the side stays. This is a huge plus in sail size for capturing that ride downwind. Other things not seen include: a new mainsheet with tails for the traveler effect; a fresh set of wider, easier tie downs on the trailer; and making the spinnaker halyard a two to one and much quicker or easier to get up. The older wooden centerboard mechanism really does need to be at least a 2:1 or 3:1 to make it less resistive and even more efficient in raising and lowering. This often gets off track or has just too much friction to work on its own going down.

The experience and lessons learned were quite rewarding and significant. I expect sometime in the future this boat will be out front and competitive. There are a few more bugs to work out, but with efficient handling, it is up to the crew and skipper to show us how it is done.

Hopefully you enjoyed the story of my boat restoration! If you wish for any help in your endeavors in glass or wood, just ask and maybe someone will help you like so many have helped me. ernie.michaud@gmail.com