

Port Carling-area builders of today

The Muskoka Lakes Association 2008 boat show is featuring the boat builders of Port Carling, this Saturday, Aug. 9. For most people, this means Dukes, SeaBirds, Dispros and Matheson-built boats. At shows where I display my photos of boats, I often hear people comment, "They don't build 'em like that any more," as though to imply the skills to build boats are dying away.

This couldn't be further from the truth. The art of boat restoration, reconstruction and building from scratch is very much alive. In fact, most of the boats restored or built new today are far better than were ever built by the finest of Muskoka's master craftsmen. While builders today do use power tools, there is still much work that requires "laying on of hands."

A computer can come

up with a fast hull, but it is the eye and hand of the builder that turns it into a lasting work of naval art. As I mentioned in a column a few weeks ago (July 24, page A30; online at muskokasun.com), there are many ways to arrive at the design of a boat. Some production boats are now cut by computer-controlled machines, but several of Muskoka's contemporary builders continue to construct essentially custom-built boats using modern methods combined with the experience of restoring over 100 years worth of Muskoka boat-building craftsmanship.

There is much debate over the advantages of using epoxy-like methods of gluing and encapsulating wood. When these methods are used, cheaper and perhaps stronger woods, such as marine plywoods, can be shaped in sections

that would be more difficult with solid woods. Plywood-built boats are often painted to cover up strange construction sections.

From years of experience restoring antique boats, we can see the advantages of using different materi-

or bolts suffered the rust and staining from the metal. Some boats were covered in fibreglass in an effort to save the hull or extend the inevitable date of a restoration, but all this meant was that the hull had to be completely cut apart.

The art of boat restoration, reconstruction and building from scratch is very much alive

als and techniques, and how woods such as cedar, cypress, mahogany, oak and even pine stand up to the ravages of time. The differences in smooth skin boats versus lapstrake or Greavette Dispros built without "knees" and Port Carling-built Dispros that had "knees" to tie the hull together can be compared. Boats built with iron nails

In the Port Carling area, Stan Hunter builds a variety of boats using traditional methods. He has built rowboats, Peterborough-like cedarstrip runabouts and replicas of smaller classic launches. Tim and Ron Butson continue to build a variety of modified versions of Muskoka launches that maintain the classic elements, but

Classics on the water

Tim Du Vernet



enhance the traditional shapes to improve stability and practicality. Paul Gockel builds Muskoka-style skiffs, in addition to restoring Dispros. There are other modern builders constructing small craft, as well as lesser known historic builders such as Norm Stripp of Windermere, Bob Priddy and Charlie Amey, who built a Dispro replica hull, skiffs and oars up until his last few years. Will Ruch is well known to those who are passionate about canoes. Located near Minett, his canoes are truly works of art whether cedarstrip or cedar canvas.

A gleaming varnish finish or piano-black paint job brings a boat to life, but when the antiques were first launched, many had only a few coats of brushed-

on varnish. Today, varnish may be brushed, sprayed or even rolled on, creating an ultra smooth and clear finish never possible even 20 years ago.

Besides the MLA boat show and the ACBS boat show, there are two other opportunities to see antique and classic boats in Muskoka. Rosseau held a boat show last weekend and the town of Baysville will be holding its boat show next Sunday, Aug. 17 at its town docks.

At the MLA show this weekend, while checking out the historic boats built by Port Carling builders, spend some time enjoying the latest modern-day offerings from those who maintain the art and craft of building wooden boats Muskoka style.

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Public Information Centre (Open House) North Bala Hydro Project

Swift River Energy Limited Partnership (Swift River) is proposing the construction of a 4.3 MW run-of-the-river hydroelectric facility at the North Bala Dam. The proposed project will be governed by the existing water level rule curves for Lake Muskoka as outlined in the Muskoka River Water Management Plan.

The map below indicates the location of the proposed development.

The project is subject to the Ontario Ministry of the Environment (MOE) Environmental Screening Process for Electricity Projects required under Regulation 116/01 of the Environmental Assessment Act as well as assessment under the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA). The screening process will also be conducted to meet the requirements of the MNR's Water Management Planning Guidelines for Waterpower.

This Public Information Centre (Open House) is being held to provide preliminary information on the proposed project.

Date: Wednesday, August 13, 2008
Time: 4:00 pm to 9:00 pm
Location: Bala Community Centre

Information will be collected and used in accordance with the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and solely for the purpose of assisting the proponent in meeting environmental assessment and local planning requirements. This material will be maintained on file for use during the study and may be included in project documentation. All comments will become part of the public record.

For more information, please contact:

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Fax: 905 374 1157
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