

Memories of Beetle Cats on Waquoit Bay

By Frannie Shepherd

Some Background:

In early September, I had a surprise visit from Bob and Joannie (Eastman) Bradley. They live in the warm weather at Charlotte, near Eastport, Maine and in Florida, during the winter months. Probably over a couple of hours drive up north. Bob and Joannie were our next door neighbors when we lived in Waquoit.

Bob called me from Bangor about mid morning of the 7th of September. He was in the city and remarked that in a couple of hours they would like to visit me and take me out to dinner. We ended up eating in the same spot that Dan, Denise, her sister and mother, took me during the first of the summer season. The restaurant is on Route 1, over the bridge, towards Gouldsboro. (Bob called the *Crocker House* in Hancock but they were not open for the noon meal.) My haddock chowder that day was soo.. good.

Later, I remarked to Joannie and Bob that I had not written my letter and wondered what I should write about? They both agreed an article about Beetle boats, years ago, in Waquoit. Joannie said she would send me a list of folks who used to sail the beetles in the Bay. It sounded fun to do and is something good to think about. I agreed.

And here's the "rest of the story"

My first connection with a beetle reminded me about Woods Hole on real windy days. Coonie, Bec and I often would sail Sammy's beetlecat, *Sea Win*, instead of the knockabouts, and we had loads of fun.

On our Cape Cod 18' Knockabouts in Woods Hole, we had to take off the cotton mainsail, jib, and spinnaker to dry them before we stored them for the next week. (We used our older sails, during the week.) Pa would check things over and tie the spinnakers the night before the races. We did help, as he held one end of the spinnaker, after he had fastened the eye to a door knob at the other end, to keep it tight. The spinnaker ties had to be made of some of Ma's older yarn, so they would break easy, after being set.

The Beetles were something else. The small 12 footers were great in heavy weather - 'cuz if a puff of wind came - all one has to do is let out the main sheet of

the one gaff-rigged sail. They were not easy to tack in the strong tides in “the Hole” area, but were OK in Great Harbor. However, I remember one day we sailed into Little Harbor and on our return, we could not tack around Juniper Point to go into Great Harbor. So.... we sailed into the sheltered cove at Nobska Beach. There we could “come about” and “head” for the buoy off Juniper Point.

Ken and I were married in 1950 and my father passed away in 1952. We lived at Ma’s camp in Waquoit for four years. In 1956, we purchased a house in Waquoit and Cynthy was born. Ken had a job with Einar and Susie (Jones - Swain) Edwards at their boatyard in Waquoit for a number of years. That is when Ken bought a catboat from Mr. Curtis of Menhaunt .

Ken’s first mate was his son, Kenny, who was a little almost 3 yrs old. Johnny Pires, who worked with Ken at Edward’s Boatyard, was the second mate. The boys went on a week-end cruise to Tarpaulin Cove. ...was I ever nervous about “Kenny Lloyd” as he was so.. young. Judy (Bailey) Manchester was my baby sitter at the time and the boys returned ‘no worst for wear’.

They had sailing classes for the children in Waquoit Bay. During the week days, the young ones used the Beetles and the grown-ups raced with the Beetles on Sunday. I can’t remember when last I sailed my 18’ Cape Cod Knockabout. I probably did, but I am not sure. I enjoyed the beetle more. I did sell the knockabout, *Mae Win*, to a young fellow down the street at Seapit, Waquoit. A few years later, Ken changed jobs to sport fishing (he skippered the *Tomahawk* for Mr. Perry Hall). Now he was on the water during the day and home at night. (I have an album I made of Ken’s Life but it is in Woods Hole.)

As the kiddos became older, we purchased a 12’ beetle cat to sail in Waquoit Bay. We named her *SOS*. As we lived just across the street, we joined the WB Yacht Club. Young Ken and Dan did enjoy racing. Cynthy crewed for Dan but she didn't skipper until 1983. Dan enjoyed being in any kind of a boat on the water.

Brooks Becker gave his 18' knockabout to Ken the first time he retired from sailing, and another boat to Dan the second time Brooks retired. Now Dan's wife Denise is skipper and he watches from his power-boat. They live across the street from WBYC.

Of course, I had to race the boat on the Sunday afternoons and the holiday races at Waquoit. The “beetle cat” helped me get over my “change of life”. If you were all alone, then you forgot the giant problems of the day. The sails were always left on

the Beetle boats so, we just put in the battens, hoist the sail, let down the centerboard and you are off. It was so easy to control and didn't require a lot of up-keep.

Frannie Shepherd

Frannie's father, Sam Cahoon was a great sailor of knockabouts in Woods Hole. Of course the genes from him have made Frannie, Cynthia Shepherd Limberakis , Danny Shepherd, and Kenny Shepherd (children of Kenny and Frannie) topnotch skippers.

Frannie worked at her father's fish market in Woods Hole for years and in later years for the Penikese Island School which was for troubled teenagers. This is how she got started with working on a computer and did a lot of geneology work for herself and others (including the Eastman side of my family and also Bob's.) She is very interested in the old days and has written a lot of monthly letters with interesting stories pertaining mainly about being around the water, sailing, fishing, etc.

Joan Bradley