

2023 WINTER
VOL. 1

the **Shellback**



Bears and Birds
a century of classic racing

Online Store Reveal
membership, calendar, logo apparel

SINCE 1867
MASTER MARINERS
BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

WWW.SFMMASTERMARINERS.ORG



Photo by Chris Ray, Fleets at Jessica Cup.

progress on wooden boats documentary

Wind in Their Sails: Death and Resurrection

Text by Vincent Casalaina, producer


For centuries, graceful vessels like these have carried the dreams of owners, mariners and craftsmen alike. But their beauty belies a fragile reality. Through the “Wind in Their Sails: Death and Resurrection” documentary we look at the culture and history of these beautiful sailboats that still call San Francisco Bay home.

I’m 18 months into working on this documentary. I’ve found the structure by talking with over 40 owners and the people who help to keep the boats in good condition. If all goes well, we’ll see the fruits of this labor in the summer of 2026.

The question the documentary will address is “What will become of these timeless vessels in a rapidly changing world?”

Terry Klaus’ 100 year old *Brigadoon* is maintained in pristine condition so he can pass her on to the next generation. We can see that transition taking shape as Terry’s daughter Lindsey has taken over helming that boat.

To keep boats like *Bridadoon* in top condition, shipwrights and other tradesmen work hard to maintain them as tight ships capable of safely sailing in the strong winds that are a part of sailing on San Francisco Bay. No matter how much an owner can do while the boat is in the water, it takes time on the hard to do the really serious work on these boats. Hank Easom once said he didn’t know how people could own a boat like *Yucca* if they didn’t also own a yard.



It's fortunate that we have the Point San Pablo Yacht Club in Richmond. Many classic boats are docked in that harbor. The PSPYC has tools and a woodshop where owners can do the work themselves. Boats like *Gold Star* make their home in that harbor. *Gold Star's* owner has, over the years, used the facilities there to make a fishing boat into a family boat that can sail wherever the wind takes her.

There are myriad reasons why an owner sometimes cannot properly care for his/her boat. When that happens, the vessel may fall into disrepair and die. *Evening Star*, on the hard in Cree Partridge's Berkeley Marine Center, has been looking for a new owner for quite a while. Two times Cree found someone who believed he could take on that task, but each time life got in the way for the new owner. Every year she sits on the hard, the likelihood of her returning to prior glory gets slimmer each year.

Others, such as the M boat *Pursuit*, languished on the hard. She remained in Point Richmond while Sam Elliot at Svendsen's Bay Marine worked with sequential owners to first refit, and later to try to resurrect her. Unfortunately, things did not pan out well. Finally, a new owner was found who could take on the task. Unfortunately, the new owner is in France and last fall *Pursuit* was put in the hold of a container ship for the trip to the Mediterranean.

A few lucky boats have come back to life. *Freda* is 140 years old and has died twice--both times brought back to life. Harold Sommer found her in the mud of the Alameda Estuary and undertook a first restoration. When I first set foot on *Freda* in 1985, the new owners, Jerry and Diane Brenden were excited to have a boat that looked as good as she did when first launched.

"What will become of these timeless vessels in a rapidly changing world?"

When Jerry retired, the Brendens moved to Hawaii and left *Freda* in the hands of a group that promised to take good care of her. The best of intentions ended up with *Freda* sinking at her dock in the San Rafael channel.

Enter the Master Mariners Benevolent Foundation, which believed *Freda* deserved another chance and started raising money to resurrect her. Bob Darr from the Arques School of Traditional Wooden Boatbuilding, at the time in charge of the work in conjunction with the Spaulding Wooden Boat Center, served as project manager.

Now we can see *Freda* sailing the Bay again, looking just as turned out as she ever was.

The question now isn't just whether these boats can be saved—but whether we're willing to save them.

If you feel strongly about getting this story told, please consider offering time, energy and/or a donation to help make this documentary premiere in summer 2026.

*Now we see
Freda sailing the
Bay again,
looking just as
turned out
as she ever was.*

