

Stuart Marine at the 2010 Boston Boat Show

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Dave Whittier and Stuart Marine make a point of attending two boat shows a year: the New England Boat Show in Boston, Massachusetts every February and the United States Sailboat Show in Annapolis, Maryland. Out of simple curiosity, I wanted to pay Dave a visit and meet him face-to-face. I have called him several times to seek advice and parts, and we have exchanged e-mails every now and then. Also, as a board member of the Mariner Class Association, I wanted to thank him in person for all he has done for this great little boat. It's not often you find that a boat first made in the 1960's is still being produced today.

On Saturday, February 20th, my wife Liz and I took the train from New London, Connecticut up to South Station in Boston. The Boat Show was being held at the Convention Center, approximately a half-mile from South Station, so it was an easy walk. As this was the first day of the show, there were lot of people, and it was rather nice to see so many there (even though the vast majority of boat exhibitors were power boats.) After a short hunt, we found the Stuart Marine "block".

Dave had all his models on display, including a Mariner, Rhodes 19, JC9 Sailing Dinghy and the Stuart 19 Center Console Powerboat. But, dare I say, the most handsome boat there was the Mariner (naturally). I found Dave chatting with two gentlemen, and after he finished I introduced myself and Liz. He was very friendly and eager to talk and answer some questions I had. All the while people came up to peek inside the portlights of the Mariner or stand on the step-stool to look at the cockpit.

I asked Dave how he came to own Stuart Marine, and he told me that he met the original owner, Stuart Scharaga, at a Zoning Board meeting in Maine one evening. Stuart, a commercial developer, wanted to build a boat manufacturing facility right on Route 1 in Rockland, Maine. Dave, a boat builder for many years, spoke



with Stuart and eventually started working with him. The short story is that Stuart's skills in the development department outweighed his skills in the marine industry, and he ended up selling the company to Dave in short order. The two of them are still very good friends to this day.

The boat he had on display was outfitted as a daysailer, not a racer. It had a bow pulpit, winches and tracks on the coamings for a genoa, a ventilator (in the exact same place I ended up installing mine) and small LED tri-color light affixed to the top of the mast. Having toyed with the idea of installing a battery in *Orion*, I asked him about the setup. He said that almost all the batteries he has installed have been placed in the compartment for the porta-potti, the most logical place for it to go (although this means finding another place for the porta-potti or simply going without one, which is usually the case). The tri-color light is the smallest he could find that is still certified by the Coast Guard, and the small profile is, of course, ideal for such a small boat.



Not that much has changed with the Mariner over the years - it's a classic boat that doesn't *need* to be changed, something that Dave recognizes. Sure, he has made enhancements and improvements, but the overall style is the same. This allows O'Day Mariners from the 1960's to be raced with Stuart Mariners from the 2000's in one-design races like the Mariner National Regattas.

Amazingly, this is Dave's 25th year as head of Stuart Marine! Although he certainly does not produce Mariners at the rate O'Day did back in the 1960's and 1970's, simple math reveals that he his business has been around longer than O'Day's manufactories. When it comes to Mariners, his shop in Rockland deals mostly with repairing and restoring the older O'Day boats, and the repair/restoration business has been booming! The Mariner still continues to sell, however - one of the members of the Southeast Connecticut Mariner Fleet is the proud owner of Mariner #4210, having been delivered by Dave himself back in August of 2009.

Dave was kind enough to share a story about one of his clients whose boat I happened to feature as a "Picture of the Week" on this website. The client, having seen the picture featured, immediately



contacted Dave and shared his great excitement at having his boat on my front page, a "great honor"! Dave was very complimentary about this website, calling it a "great resource" for people looking to restore or simply get involved with Mariners.

Walking around the Boat Show, Liz and I came across a new DaySailer, now made by Cape Cod Shipbuilding (originally built by O'Day, of course). It got me thinking how few boats there are from that "classic plastic" time period that are still made today, and all us Mariner owners should be very grateful that there is someone like Dave who still makes the boat and supplies parts. He is certainly passionate about the Mariner and the other boats he makes, and it was a pleasure to spend some time talking with him.

For more information, visit Stuart Marine's website or give them a call.

Nate Bayreuther
#1922, *Orion*
Wallingford, CT