



**The Herreshoff Registry**  
***A resource for owners, prospective owners, builders, and aficionados***

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## **The Documenting History Initiative**

### ***An Interview With Maynard Bray***

This interview was conducted by correspondence between Steve Nagy and Maynard Bray. Maynard's responses were written on November 17, 2010.



Maynard Bray is a leading author, maritime historian, and Herreshoff expert. He trained as a marine engineer and worked early in his career at Electric Boat and Bath Iron Works. He then spent six years as founding director of the DuPont Preservation Shipyard at Mystic Seaport. Since 1979, he has served as Technical Editor of *Wooden Boat* magazine. He has written numerous books on boats and maritime history including *Herreshoff of Bristol*, *Mystic Seaport Watercraft*, *Joel White*, and *Worthy of the Sea: K. Aage Nielsen and His Legacy of Yacht Designs*. He also writes the captions for the *Calendar of Wooden Boats* and works as a consultant on many wooden boat restoration projects. He and his wife, Anne, live in Brooklin, Maine.

### **THE TRANSCRIPT**

SN: Your writing is always grammatically correct and well-done. Even when taking an informal tone in emails, you are very clear. Is this the result of years of practice in writing and editing, or is your role as author and editor the result of your skills in this area?

MB: Editing has done more than anything to help me write reasonably clearly and with decent grammar, but I've got a long, long way to go before writing really well. Thinking up good verbs and using the active voice are always goals for me. My specialty is terseness, I guess, and that comes from years of writing captions for *The Calendar of Wooden Boats* where I have to cram as much solid information into as few words as possible. There isn't the space to ramble. Good editors (besides me) help as well, because they tweak what I write before it's published, much to its benefit. As to e-mail messages, I think of them as practice, so always read them over carefully and make corrections before pressing the "send" button.

- SN: You grew up around boats on Penobscot Bay. What triggered your interest in Herreshoff?
- MB: L. Francis Herreshoff's writing in *The Rudder* first got me interested. While in high school and college, I eagerly looked forward to that magazine's monthly arrival and vacuumed up LFH's words like an Electrolux. Herreshoff boats in our area were scarce and consisted mainly of 12-1/2 footers and the Buzzards Bay 30 then named Catspaw, so my early studies were vicarious. It wasn't until Anne and I got married and moved to Mystic that I could study and appreciate them first-hand. I thought I'd died and gone to heaven when asked to join Lloyd Bergeson in crewing his NY-30 Cockatoo II, and when offered the use of the BB-15 Elf (a boat you know well) for a season in exchange for spring outfitting. We almost bought Delight #679, but couldn't swing it, then Kestrel (ex-Lone Star) #1229, but couldn't meet her price either, so Aida was our first Herreshoff purchase.
- SN: My wife and I are novice sailors. We have found that she enjoys the sailing more, and I enjoy the boat, its sounds, and smells, more. Do you find the sailing or the aesthetics of the boat more rewarding.
- MB: Sailing, aesthetics, and working on boats are all enjoyed in about equal measure.
- SN: You collaborated with the late Carlton Pinheiro on the landmark volume, [Herreshoff Of Bristol](#). How was the work on the project divided up? Do you have memories or reminiscences of Carlton that you can share?
- MB: Carlton took the Bristol and family portion and I wrote up the boat stuff, but we shared and helped each other along the way. Always a gentleman and ever a raconteur, Carlton's devotion to the name Herreshoff and his depth of knowledge on the subject never ceased to amaze me. Halsey suggested that we partner on the book and generously made the museum's photo archives available as well as his own. The museum had recently been given his aunt Katherine's photos, some of which had been enlarged as an exhibit, but at the time only a few of the boats shown could be positively identified, so the need for further study created the book idea. As co-publisher, WoodenBoat supported the effort all the way, helping make this a first-class publication.
- SN: Your career has taken you from Electric Boat to Mystic Seaport to Wooden Boat. Was it your work with WoodenBoat that lured you back to Maine from Mystic Seaport, or did you look for the WoodenBoat gig so you could return to Maine?
- MB: A job at Bath Iron Works made returning to Maine possible, and that would have been about 1964. After five or six more years of marine engineering, I'd had enough, and Anne and I were planning to get into boating as a livelihood—somehow. Then, out of

the blue, came the Mystic Seaport opportunity: the job of my dreams. But we'd already taken Aida to Maine and planned to keep her there, so I arranged to work for 10 instead of 12 months at Mystic, with July and August to be spent with Aida and our family in Maine. As the work I'd set out to accomplish at the Seaport saw fruition, and we'd discovered Brooklin and bought land there, a full-time move came naturally. That was in 1975; WoodenBoat arrived in town three or four years later, encouraged to do so by Joel White and me.

SN: I am interested in how you do your work. I have noticed that you often make reference to the drawings. Your personal files must be quite impressive. Do they contain a large number of HMCo plans? Do you spend a good deal of time in museums and libraries? Do you make frequent "field trips" to boat yards and shops?

MB: Although filing is not one of my strengths, somehow I'm able to find what I need—mostly, anyhow. Having WoodenBoat's wonderful maritime library (that was organized and is managed by my wife Anne) just down the street is a Godsend. Claas van der Linde's HCR has helped enormously with Herreshoff research as his dedication to accuracy seems unlimited and what's there can be relied on. Thanks to Kurt Hasselbalch, I do have many HMCo drawings and hope that, before long, MIT will be able to make those same drawings widely available via the internet. Studying them has helped me just as much as examining real boats. Traveling used to occur fairly often, but takes place less so lately due to my age and what's on the internet. Your Herreshoff Registry, for example, allows me to find out at home what I used to have to seek by travel, phone calls, and correspondence. Over the years, The Calendar of Wooden Boats has allowed me, and often Anne, to accompany Ben Mendlowitz on photo shoots all over the western world, so I've been able to see lots of good boats first-hand.

SN: I notice that one of your roles is consulting on classic yacht restorations. What exactly does this work consist of? Research on the history of the vessel? Providing information on authentic construction characteristics? Could you describe a typical assignment?

MB: Research is always a big part of my role in helping restore yachts. Taking part in deciding how much of the boat to discard and how much to retain is another area I seem to get into. There really isn't a typical assignment, but I'll try to describe a couple of recent ones—Herreshoff related, naturally. In restoring the three Buzzards Bay 30s at French & Webb, much of my work was in digging up plans, historic photos and records, and sources for material. The boats themselves, upon careful examination, always have answers to many questions, and we were lucky to have quite a bit of original material remaining in them. Choosing colors is another area I got into, often with daughter Kathy's help, but the final choice, of course, was the owners'. Almost every piece of all three BB-30s was renewed, but done so about as authentically as in any restoration I've ever been associated with. The mandate was clear: do it like

Herreshoff did it or would have done it, no matter the cost. In restoring Aida, in contrast to the BB-30s, we set out to save and reuse the original material insofar as possible. With this project, I'd already done most of the research over our 40 years of ownership. So my involvement was in working with Doug Hylan in scheming ways to do the work without disturbing more of the boat than we absolutely had to. His work, like French & Webb's, was first class, so quality was assured without my having to get into that area. This restoration, too, was to be done the best way we knew how despite the cost. The owner asked that I cover the job photographically and, with selected photos, keep him up to date—which I did. A book I've been commissioned to write is in process.

SN: You are a wealth of knowledge about the characteristics of a Herreshoff yacht and how to identify one. You have obviously spent a good deal of time studying, and you must have had intimate access to many boats and restorations. Are there any that projects that stand out as being particularly rewarding?

MB: The above jobs (the BB-30s and Aida), along with Spartan, have been more than rewarding: They were dream jobs for which I'll be forever grateful.