

Chesapeake Bay

MAGAZINE

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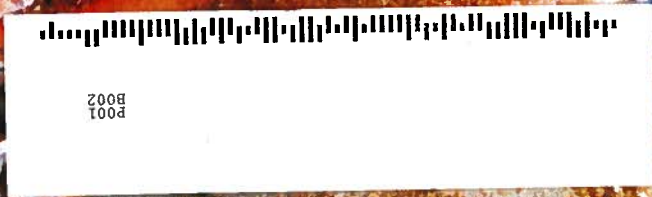
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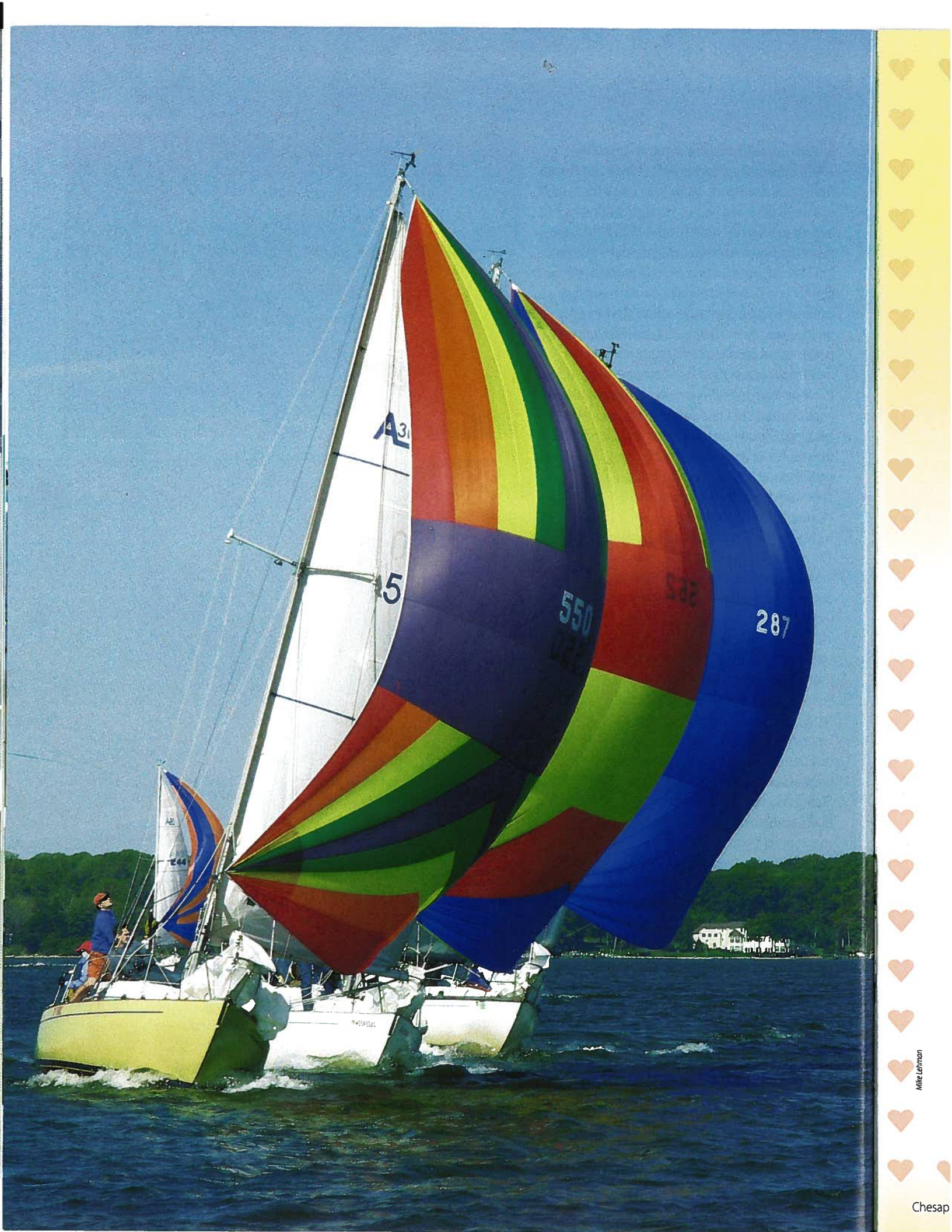


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Mike Lehman

LOVE

by *Association*

The Chesapeake Alberg 30 Association marks half a century as one of the country's most enduring and remarkable boating clubs.

Here's a riddle: Why has the Alberg 30, a Canadian-built family racer/cruiser with arguably the most successful one-design production run in the history of yachting, been a mainstay of the *Chesapeake* boating scene for the past 50 years? If you answered the beauty, quality and seakindliness of the boat itself, you'd be half right, for the Alberg 30 is not only a good racing boat but also a comfortable family cruiser. But if you also answered that it has been the devotion of A30 owners to their 200-boat-strong Chesapeake Bay Alberg 30 One-Design Association, you'd get full marks. Chesapeake A30 owners are devoted not only to their boats but to their association. It's a 50-year relationship quite unlike anything else on the Bay. ¶ My husband Michael and I are good examples of that bond between family, boat and association. We will commemorate our 40th wedding anniversary this January and feel blessed that 37 of those years were spent on our wonderful Alberg 30, *Gilleleje* (hull 505), and reveling in the bonds of friendship

by Trish Lehman



Unknown, Alberg 30 Member

and camaraderie we found in the A30 Association. When we bought *Gilleleje* in July 1977, we never had any intentions of joining a sailing club. Ever. But her previous owner, Bob Leigh, talked up the Alberg 30 Association as being nothing like other sailing clubs, but rather an association built on relationships and friends. We joined right then and there, and we have never looked back. It was a perfect fit for us.

The Chesapeake Bay's love affair with the Alberg 30 began in the 1960s with the search for boat bigger than the usual 22- to 25-foot weekend racers then found on the Bay—a boat that would double as a comfortable cruising boat for the family. The boat needed to have a full keel, standing headroom and the ability to sleep four. So when Whitby Boat Works in Ajax, Ontario, began producing a new fiberglass design by Carl Alberg in the early 1960s, the Chesapeake sailors were immediately onboard, so to speak. Here was a beautiful, traditional-looking boat with long overhangs fore and aft, well-made, fast and comfortable. In 1964, a group of Annapolis sailors—led by Jack Martin and Rolph “Towney” Townshend—ordered 10 boats through Arnie Gay’s Yacht Yard in Eastport. A second group, in Washington D.C., ordered another 15 directly from the Whitby factory. The Alberg 30 Association dates from those orders. The follow-

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George Dimwiddle

Celebrating 50 years on the Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Alberg 30 Association will be celebrating its 50th anniversary throughout the sailing season with rendezvous, cruises and races—including a special celebration in September with the Great Lakes Alberg Association, which is also marking its half-century. The highlight of the year, however, will come this month, when members gather August 9 for a weekend hosted by the City of Annapolis and the National Sailing Hall of Fame. Everyone is invited to watch the Albergs parade around Annapolis Harbor at 11 a.m., followed by docking at the Hall of Fame slips at City Dock. Visitors are welcome following a reception at 2. On Sunday, August 10, an Old Timers Race (with owners from years past) will begin at the Hall of Fame docks at 10 a.m., followed by an awards ceremony and general socializing. Everyone is invited to come and see these lovely boats and discover what has kept this association ticking.



Donner Morris

TOP TO BOTTOM: A Labor Day weekend Alberg 30 raft-up at Still Pond; A30s racing off Annapolis; and Albergers enjoying the association's summer 2012 cruise.

PRECEDING PAGES: Three Canadian racers under spinnaker during a contest with the Chesapeake Alberg 30 Association.

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Donna Morris

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ing January, Martin formally organized an A30 one-design class of 12 members, which in turn adopted a 13-race schedule for 1965. Later that year, the Annapolis and Washington groups combined to create a single one-design racing/cruising fleet. By-laws were drafted, including one significant feature that makes the A30 Association different from other sailing clubs—there was only one requirement to join. The applicant must own an Alberg 30.

After that initial purchase and the establishment of the association, the number of Albergs on the Bay grew rapidly. Bob and Elaine Leigh are typical of many of these devotees. In 1972, they bought hull No. 505. Up to that point, the biggest boat Bob had ever been on was a Lightning. Elaine had never sailed before. On their first outing, Bob tried to sail the A30 like a dinghy rather than a big boat. "The severe heeling, slapping sails, and wind gusts scared the hell out of Elaine, and it was very clear I did not know the limits of the A30. I needed to go off alone to understand how to sail this boat, without a terrified wife." He did—very successfully and soon Elaine was back on board. Later that year, on a cruise to the Choptank River, they rounded a sandbar on La Trappe Creek and saw a large raft-up of A30s. "We tied up and joined the group. The association immediately changed our lives, providing fellowship with a wonderful group of people over the next 42 years. The busy schedule of the A30

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Towney: A life in Alberg 30s

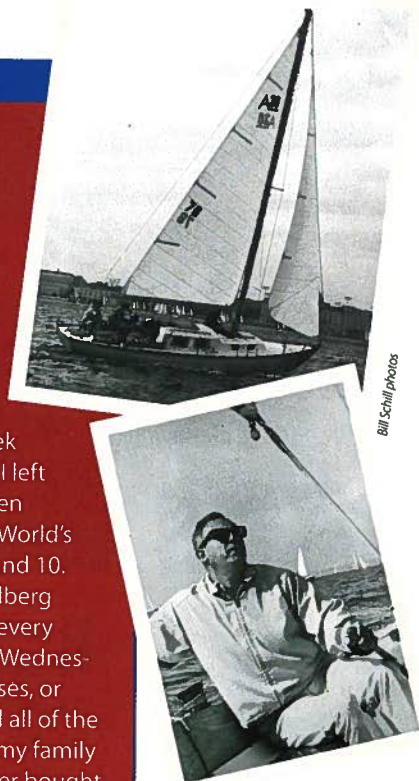
One of the Chesapeake's first Alberg 30 owners—and one of the A30 Chesapeake Bay Association's founders—Rolph "Towney" Townshend—recently had the opportunity to visit his original boat, hull No. 76, *Kittiwake*. The visit prompted him to recall a life well spent in Albergs.

"I had ordered the boat in 1964, and she was delivered to Arnie Gay's Yacht Yard in June 1965. One week after she was launched, my family and I left Annapolis on her in company with seven other Alberg 30s, headed for the 1965 World's Fair in New York. My children were 13 and 10.

"That was our introduction to the Alberg 30, and we continued to sail that boat every chance we could for the next 14 years. Wednesday night races, CBYRA races, long cruises, or just day sailing. We loved that boat and all of the wonderful experiences it provided for my family and me. I sold her in 1979 and soon after bought a C&C 35, which we sailed for several years. But it was never like the A30! So in 1995 I bought another A30, No. 550, *Skybird*, and sailed her for another wonderful 15 years.

"At 85 years old, now I sail in other people's boats. So when I heard that No. 76, was still active and right near by, I jumped at the chance to see her and to renew some of those old memories.

"She really hadn't changed that much, and many of the things I added to the boat 50 years ago were still there and working. She looked great, and it was so nice to know that she has had many years of the same kind of love I gave her."



Bill Schill photos


ABOVE: Rolph "Towney" Townshend aboard his first Alberg 30, *Kittiwake*.

BELOW: A five-Alberg raft-up on a bright, still day.



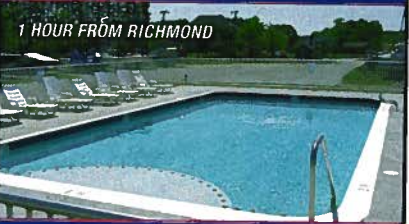
George Dimwiddle

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LOVE BY ASSOCIATION

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events included races, cruises, raft-ups, rendezvous, and winter training seminars, which quickly educated us.”

The A30s arrived just in time for the beginning of Wednesday night racing off Annapolis in 1965. They were among the first classes to participate and easily made up the largest class. In addition, a number of local clubs, including the Annapolis Yacht Club, Potapuskut Sailing Association, and the Sailing Club of the Chesapeake, agreed to give the then-fledgling A30 Association a start in their regattas. The Chesapeake Bay Yacht Racing Association (CBYRA) gave the Alberg fleet a provisional sanction for racing as a one-design class. By the following year, the Alberg 30s could boast the largest one-design fleet in the area, and they were given official status. Their racing was now solidly in place, with a rigid set of sail and equipment rules in their by-laws that has kept Alberg 30 racing based on ability alone—not on pocketbook. Even today, the 1964 boats compete evenly with the newer boats, enjoying competitive one-design CBYRA racing.

One of the highlights of the racing year has long been the annual competition between the Great Lakes Alberg Association (GLAA) and the Chesapeake Bay A30 Association. Each spring, a team of Bay Albergers head to Toronto to compete for the Syronelle Trophy. Then in the fall, the Canadians send down a contingent to climb aboard local Albergs and race all weekend long for the coveted Bruce Rankin Memorial Trophy. It is a great way for the two associations to keep in touch. This year, the Canadians are also celebrating their 50th anniversary. Canadian Don Campbell (*White Opal*, hull 528) has participated in two events over the years. “Little did I know when I bought the boat that I was joining an international family. It has been a most unusual way for a farmer and his wife to meet wonderful and interesting people that we would never have met any other way.”

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Dave Cooper sails *Cookin'* (hull 464) with his wife Renee (this year's Commodore), and their two children (Nikos, 11, and Sophie, 9) out of Blackhole Creek on the Magothy River. Renee is the local Alberg Association's 7th woman commodore. The Coopers love the challenge of an occasional race, but for them it's all about cruising. Dave had yearned for an Alberg 30 for many years, and finally found one: "I was 30 when we met. She was 19. She was a bit of a fixer-upper, but she was an Alberg 30." Dave was in love. Later that year, he shared *Cookin'* with Renee, the next love of his life, who, after hearing Dave's desire to sail to Bermuda, agreed. Preparing for nearly four years, soaking in the advice of other Albergers and training their crew, they did it. Since then, the Coopers have ventured as far as Lagos, Portugal, aboard *Cookin'*.

"To this day, every time *Cookin'* noses out of Blackhole Creek, I'm always thinking a left, a right, and another left puts us in the Atlantic, with the

whole wild world before us. It's our intention in 2019 to sail the Circle (East Coast to Bermuda then the European Coast and back by way of the West Indies). Then come home to tell the Albergers all about it. And, if the winds get a bit higher and the waves bigger with each telling, well, no harm."

While many Albergers may dream of bluewater cruising, many are perfectly happy with cruising on the Bay. Because Michael and I have both worked for most of the 37 years that *Gilleleje* has been a part of our lives, our sailing boundary rarely has stretched beyond 20 miles north or south of Annapolis. But happily the association maintains a robust cruising calendar, starting in April and stretching to November, including mini-cruises where alternating "hosts" choose a favorite gunkhole for a weekend on the hook. There are also point-to-point races that end in raft-ups for racers and cruisers alike.

Mike and Pat Meinhold (*Rinn Duin*, hull 272), with their teenage daughter and son, Rachel and Max, savor these

weekends. "I have fallen in love a handful of times in my life," Mike says, "with my lovely wife, with my newborn children, and with *Rinn Duin*." The boat has allowed the family to spend more time together. "We have anchored off of Sandy Point to jump off the stern and swim; we slept aboard in the boat slip and watched a comet streak overhead. We christened her *Rinn Duin* and drank the bubbly sitting in the cockpit, rather than wasting it over the bow."

The association members' favorite cruise of the year is probably the annual Wild Goose Chase, a weeklong adventure during the best sailing time on the Bay—the fall. It's named for the geese that are migrating through just then and is popular with association members for its warm days and cool nights. During that week, Albergers compete with their best jack-o-lantern creations, which are displayed on their sterns at dusk and judged by fellow Albergers rowing through the raft-up in their dinghies.

All of the association's activities are

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LOVE BY ASSOCIATION

announced in the annual handbook, which has been published since 1966, providing the group's racing and cruising schedules for the coming season as well as the bylaws and membership list. Also founded in 1966, the monthly *A30 Mainsheet* keeps association members in touch.

One of the association's earliest race/cruise events was the Windjammer's Chesapeake Bay Appreciation Day, held first in 1965. The Windjammers asked the rapidly growing fleet to represent the modern sailing vessel, racing alongside the working skipjacks and bugeyes. Alberg 30 racers and cruisers alike turned out for the late-October event—as many as 31 boats one year—for a wild race around the buoys, ducking the bowsprits of the skipjacks and bugeyes off of Sandy Point. At the end of the day, the Albergs tied up at the piers, sharing soup with the captains and talking about the day's excitement. The next morning, everyone got up and did it all again.

Those were grand weekends, and, to this day, offer many of our best stories and memories.

So what is it about this association that keeps it going? Jim Mennucci, who is heading up the 50th Year Anniversary Committee, believes it's because "we have lived and grown—together."

In 2002, John Kretschmer wrote this in a *Sailing* magazine profile: "While many older boats have a quiet following, nurtured by a few dedicated owners, Alberg 30 owners can be defined as a full-blown cult. They love their boats and maintain several active class associations. The Chesapeake Bay Alberg 30 Association boasts 250 boats on its registry and publishes an informative monthly newsletter, a maintenance manual and hosts well-attended seminars every February."

In its profile of the Alberg 30, *BluewaterBoats.org*, like *Sailing*, is unwilling to separate the boat from the association. "Today Alberg 30s can be found scattered over all parts of

the world, but mainly concentrating around North America and particularly in Chesapeake Bay, where a vibrant owners association has approximately 250 members."

Since 1964, the Alberg fleet has been a significant factor in sailboat racing and cruising on the Bay. "It is amazing how the association has grown and stays so active with just one focus to bring us all together—the boat itself," says Sue Barrett (*Tern II*, hull 548). The group has been responsible for many deep friendships, marriages, possibly a divorce or two, and many children growing up to love sailing through three generations and are now sailing their own Alberg.

"Our lives have been affected in ways large and small," reflects member Mike Meinhold. "We have been welcomed and honored and trusted with responsibilities, and we fully expect to be part of this association for the rest of our lives."

But what about the boat itself? Sandy Dapkunas (*Reflections*, hull 92)



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describes the first time he saw one sail by: "I was struck by the fact that the Alberg looked like a boat was *supposed* to look. It was beautiful—graceful, elegant, sleek and seemed to be in harmony with the wind and water."

The Alberg 30 reflects its designer Carl Alberg and his Scandinavian roots. Like a number of other boats designed in the 1960s, the A30 was created as a kind of grown-up Folkboat, one that could serve as a comfortable family cruiser as well as a fast and seakindly boat. Although far from roomy by modern standards, the A30 is well-made and good in a blow, it's narrow beam cutting slickly through a chop. It's also a boat that engenders deep devotion. People who are drawn to the Alberg 30 stay with her a long time. Twenty-one years is the *average* duration of membership in the Chesapeake association, either by currently owning an Alberg, or by being an "associate member" who has moved on to a different boat (and sometimes back to an Alberg 30). In fact, in many ways, the continued involvement of past owners is a major factor in keeping the association vibrant.


"I am but her temporal custodian," Michael Connelly said, speaking of his A30, *Lorrie Rose* (hull 133). "My wish is that she lives on beyond my years to grace the water and tickle her next skipper's heart the way she has mine."

Founding association member Rolph Townshend gets the last word: "I have owned two Albergs and loved each one. I have many photos of my family growing up on the A30. I decided that the most fun I ever had was owning an Alberg 30. That became who I was. I was an Alberger! I will always be an Alberger! The A30 has been, and continues to be, even though I no longer own a boat, one of the highlights of my life." ↴

Trish Lehman and her husband Michael live in Arnold, Md., and have been Albergers since they bought their Alberg 30 *Gilleleje* (hull 505) in 1977.

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