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Lord Nelson  
Victory 37

May 2014



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Peter Reich looks happy at the helm of his Victory tug, Teddy Bear.

# The LORD NELSON VICTORY 37

Turning heads and  
tugging at hearts

BY MARY SOUTH

One look at the photo, and you can tell it was a beautiful evening — an autumn twilight when the crisp air smells of sweet wood smoke and seems to be warmed, just a little, by the golden glow of the fading sun.

Photographer Jody Dole and Soundings editor-in-chief Bill Sisson had just finished a photo shoot in Essex, Conn., and were driving home along the Connecticut River when they spotted a small tug making her way toward the sea. A true pro, Dole sprang into action and managed to grab just one shot — but what a beauty! — before the salty-looking vessel slipped out of sight.

When we put together our trawler stories for this issue, Dole's photo seemed a perfect fit for the cover, but we didn't know a thing about this Lord Nelson Victory Tug. Some quick research led us to Peter Reich, co-owner of the 37-footer Teddy Bear. I reached him by phone at home in Shelter Island, N.Y., off the east end of Long Island, and within about a minute I wished we were sitting in his pilothouse and chugging out to Montauk as we talked. But probably not as much as he did.

Reich has had a tough six months. Last August, he was feeling under the weather and consulted doctors. "I was basically just going downhill fast," Reich says. In October, he was admitted to Columbia Presbyterian Hospital in New York City with a diagnosis of angioimmunoblastic lymphoma. An experimental treatment worked — he has received a clean bill of health — but he is under-

COURTESY PETER REICH



going a stem cell transplant that his doctor advised, just to improve the odds the disease won't recur. For a hands-on guy who clearly loves the water, it's been a tough time.

Reich was eager to tell me all about his Victory Tug and about the brand's exceptional owners organization. He had planned to take Teddy Bear to a rendezvous in the fall but had to cancel when he was diagnosed and scheduled for immediate treatment. "The day I got home, after 17 days in the hospital, I had a stack of mail waiting," he says. "The first thing I opened was a card signed by everyone at the rendezvous."

It was handmade and featured a picture of Teddy Bear. "Lord Nelson tug owners are just great," Reich says.

Reich and his father, Dan, purchased hull No. 15 in 1985, and that makes them the longest Lord Nelson Victory Tug owners of record. Theirs had been a dealer's model with only 90 hours on the engine after appearances at a couple of New England boat shows.

In 2008, Teddy Bear was repowered and fitted with new fuel tanks at Coecles Harbor Marina and Boatyard on Shelter Island. The old BMW engine was pulled, and Teddy Bear got a Cummins ReCon 4BT-3.9M diesel, a new Borg Warner 72 Series transmission, new Nibral propellers and a Centex muffler. The two new aluminum fuel tanks hold 135 gallons. A Walker AirSep was added, too.

Reich praises the expert work done by Coecles Harbor's John Needham and crew, and says repowering was the best thing that ever happened to Teddy Bear. Even though the reconditioned Cummins has two fewer cylinders, Reich says she runs smoother and performance is better, too. "While 2,150 rpm used to barely make 7 knots, Teddy Bear now hits 7.2 knots at 1,900 rpm and 8 knots at 2,000 rpm. The throttle is very responsive, and the engine feels a lot more powerful," he says. "Starting is instantaneous with no preheating, even after sitting all winter."

Fuel efficiency is good, too, with Teddy Bear burning about 1.7 gph at 7.4 knots.

The Victory Tug concept was Loren Hart's, owner of Admiralty Ltd., Lord Nelson's parent company. Seventy-six 37s were built between 1983 and 1989 — the first 19 at Hai O Yacht Building, the rest at Tommy Chen's Ocean Eagle Yacht Building Corp. Both yards are in Taiwan. (There also were 41s and 49s built, but they were much less successful.)

Designed by Jim Backus, the 37 set out to achieve the following, according to the design brief:

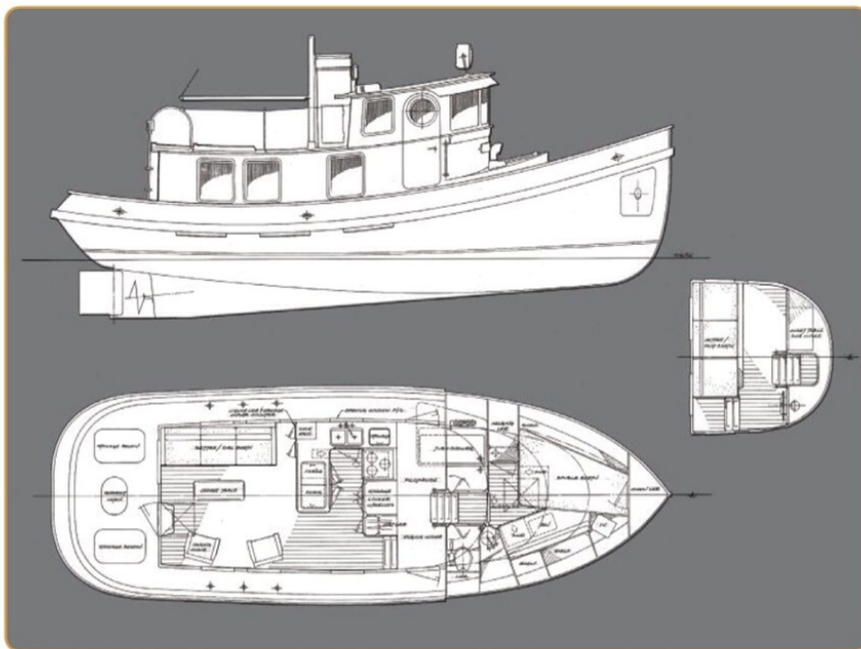
- an efficient displacement hull capable of providing excellent fuel economy at speeds equal to or exceeding hull speed
- a fine-tracking, easily steered hull
- a true tugboat profile, both in terms of the hull and abovedeck
- a spacious interior that meets the requirements of the entire crew
- a design that meets ABS standards

The Victory Tug's profile combines the attributes of several commercial tugboat designs. "The sheer was developed to provide a show of strength, a statement of seaworthiness and a safety factor forward using high bulwarks," the design brief says. Her hull is full displacement, but Hart considered a trawler hull unacceptable for the tug he envisioned. Instead, her hull was based on a New England lobster boat. "With a fine entry forward and flat run aft," Backus notes, "the tug provides for efficient displacement running."

The hull is solid fiberglass — 11 layers below the waterline and seven above. All Victory Tugs were "over-built" to American Boat & Yacht

Council and Society of Naval Architects and Marine Engineers standards.

Although Teddy Bear has done her share of cruising the beautiful waters of eastern Long Island, she's done some memorable voyaging, as well. "My wife, dad, a friend and I cruised Penobscot Bay for a week after leaving the boat up at Atlantic Boat in Brooklin, Maine, to get some work done over one winter," Reich says. "We made a 36-hour straight run up and back to Shelter Island that put us over 50 miles offshore. Teddy Bear has explored most harbors from Shelter Island to eastern Connecticut, Rhode Island and southern Massachusetts. I bet she has been to Block Island alone over 24 times. In 2006, I got married at the Sullivan House on Block Island. Teddy Bear was our transportation to the island, and my wife and I honeymooned aboard her the following week in Cuttyhunk, Menemsha and Newport. Fifteen years ago I rented my house out for the summer and lived aboard for a few summers."



Though Reich has had almost 30 years of happy cruising aboard Teddy Bear, he's no stranger to other kinds of boats. A homebuilder by profession, he built himself an Odyssey 16.5 rowboat, and he and his kids sail regularly, too. In fact, he points out that Soundings senior writer Jim Flannery interviewed him for a story in the magazine back in 1980, when Reich was a recent graduate of SUNY Maritime with a degree in naval architecture and working his first job as manager of Halsey's Marina in East Hampton, N.Y.

"I was helping my parents out," he says. "We were sailing their Moodus 33 to St. Thomas by way of Bermuda. We got caught in a storm and took three knockdowns and a roll. We didn't do a 360, but let's just say the mast was pointing at the bottom of the sea," Reich chuckles from a safe, dry distance of more than 30 years. "A huge wave broke over the stern and smashed down on the companionway. ... It was chaos down below. Our only way to dewater was with a bucket. ... When the water was over the V-berth, we knew we had to abandon ship."

The family spent five days in an Avon life raft. "At one point we woke up, the raft was upside down, and we're kneeling on the canopy in the middle of the pitch black in the middle of a storm in the middle of the Atlantic," Reich says. A Polish freighter rescued them on Halloween in 1980. "I did talk to Avon after that about providing

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The saloon of Sally W., a Victory tug with a layout similar to Reich's boat, owned by Allan and Sally Seymour. It's traditional and roomy.

#### **LORD NELSON** *from Page 39*

more ballast in their life rafts."

I asked what drew him to the Victory Tug, and he ticked off these reasons: a comfortable ride, even in heavy seas; she tracks unbelievably well in a heavy following sea with minimal working of wheel or autopilot; she's simple — no generator or complicated systems; it's easy to just jump aboard and be under way in a couple of minutes; a three-hour cocktail cruise burns less than 5 gallons of diesel; and the smiles and comments she wins when people see her under way or at a dock.

"I had a friend with a Regal 42, and when he came out with me he was just amazed by the ride and that you could eat under way," Reich says. It's slower, he says, but it's a great way to cruise "and you're not going to get into too much trouble at 7-1/2 knots."

Today, 75 of the sturdy and handsome Victory Tugs ply the world's waters. One bit of advice: They're not the right boat for the shy. "Oh, yeah, everywhere you go, people want to know the story behind your boat," Reich says. And as we well know, it's the kind of boat that makes you pull off the road and take a picture. ■