

ACBS

# Rudder

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## Boats a certain pedigree, a storied provenance, luxurious turn of the century yachts in need of a second life are his specialty.

she was put into his fleet of fractionally owned boats.

*Hopak*, a 1930 38-foot commuter built by the American Car and Foundry Company (ACF) is one of six ACFs in McMillen's collection and possibly the only of the 12 commuters ACF built still in existence. She was purchased by John Nicholas Brown in 1936 and Nick Brown, John Nicholas' son, shared with McMillen that his father used her to commute to Fishers Island, New York. In 1960 *Hopak* was sold and renamed to *Ranger*. Today, *Ranger*, like *Bambino*, sits in a cradle in McMillen's boat yard awaiting restoration, though she is in much better shape.

But before work on *Bambino* and *Ranger* can begin, McMillen is finishing *Coastal Queen*, a 1928 72-foot Chesapeake Bay buy boat, and gearing up for the next restoration project, a 1929 110-foot

Mathis-Trumpy named *Maemere*, one of the few surviving. "This will be four to five year project, McMillen estimates of the time it will take to bring *Maemere* back to her former glory, though she is in pretty good shape, all things considered.

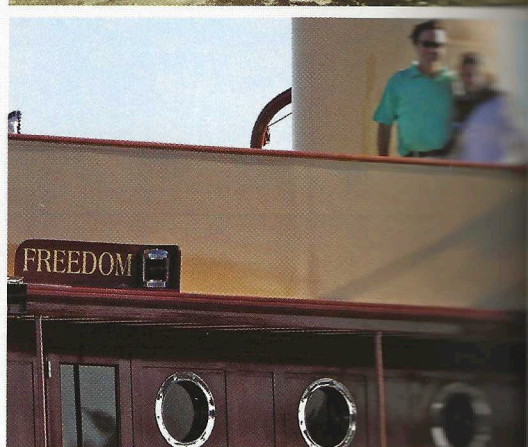
After work on *Maemere* is complete, *Ranger* and *Bambino* may get their turn. And, when they do, they'll return to the water in a style reflective of their former glory.

"We will reframe the whole boat," says McMillen of *Bambino*, "and fabricate a new keel. Then we'll build up from there," more than likely replacing most of her wood. Though original drawings of this John Wells design haven't yet been located, McMillen thinks that because of *Bambino's* pedigree, they might around somewhere. Undeterred with moving ►

Opposite. Even in the state in which she was found, *Bambino*, built for L. Gordon Hamersly, was something special.

Above clockwise. *Miss Asia* in her heyday. *Miss Asia* in Watch Hill, Rhode Island today. *Hopak* in her heyday. *Bambino* in her heyday.






Clockwise. Waiting for restoration at McMillen Yachts. *Bambino's* original brass hardware. *Hopak* in her heyday. Earl and Elizabeth aboard *Freedom*. *Miss Asia* in Watch Hill, Rhode Island. Looking down onto *Hopak's* deck.

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forward, it is common in cases such as these to refer to the Mystic Seaport's Rosenfeld Collection for photos and documentation of sheer lines so that his team can reverse engineer restorations.

McMillen is an Emeritus board member of IYRS (one of the boat building schools whose students benefit from the ACBS scholarship program) and his lead shipwright spent 18 years at IYRS as the school's lead shipwright. McMillen Yachts also employs a number of IYRS interns and graduates. Elizabeth, his wife, oversees their projects' interior designs and crew training and their son,

Nelson, is also in the family business. In 2010 McMillen Yachts received the World Super Yacht Award for restoration of a 1926 104-foot Trumpy-Mathis collaboration named *Freedom*.

Sometimes you just know, with these old boats, that underneath all the rotting wood, peeling varnish and paint, lies a beauty and grandeur worthy of saving. Then, if you are Earl McMillen, you roll up your sleeves and get to work, saving the history and beauty of a bygone era so that it stays alive for future generations. 





# Sometimes, You Just Know

Amy Scanlin

When Southern New England Chapter member, Earl McMillen, III, first saw her, he knew.

Built in 1936 for famed yachtsman and race enthusiast, L. Gordon Hamersley, *Bambino* was something special. Oh, but she was rough... really rough. But underneath all the peeling paint and rotten wood was a pride of the Robert Jacob Shipyard of City Island, New York.

McMillen found *Bambino* near Mystic, Connecticut, after getting the call that he needed to come see her. She is double-planked mahogany on white oak frames, "basically a pattern boat," McMillen says. Her last owners had performed very little maintenance over the past

30-40 years so her keel was like Swiss cheese, "though her planking appeared to be in good shape." Adding to *Bambino's* appeal was original hardware, still intact, including massive bronze controls, which, he says, "are awesome."

McMillen finds many of his boats this way. A call comes in and he heads out to take a look. Boats of a certain pedigree, a storied provenance, luxurious turn of the century yachts in need of a second life are his specialty. At McMillen Yachts in Portsmouth, Rhode Island his team of designers, boatrights and carpenters take in these old vessels and get to work. Redemption is the next chapter in their history.

Other notable restorations include *Miss Asia*, a 1923 62-foot commuter built by Consolidated Ship Building for automotive giant, Lawrence P. Fisher. Originally known as *Margaret F*, she was used by Fisher to commute to his company on the Detroit River. The boat changed hands (and names) a number of times and was eventually purchased in 1960 by John Astor and renamed to *Miss Asia*. More recently, *Miss Asia* is notable for playing host to then Lady Diana during her 1995 visit to Martha's Vineyard when the boat was owned by Gery Conover. After McMillen purchased *Miss Asia*, she not only underwent a restoration, she was given a fresh new interior design before