

Troubadour rebirth

Two days after hurricane Andrew, I rode Daphne's bike down to Dinner Key marina to see the state of affairs. There was no electricity, thus no TV, and no internet in 1992, so there was little visual evidence of the disaster, beyond photos in the Miami Herald, which unbelievably published an edition the next day.

Dinner Key Marina was being protected by the National Guard, not very securely I must say since I was able to easily ride my bike down towards the sailing club and gain entrance to the marina. I had my camera and took pictures and it was quite a startling sight to see boats impaled on the pilings, extending through the bottom of the boat, and back out the top of the cabin. Quite a disaster! I took a picture of a red sailboat, leaning up against the back of City Hall, seemingly in fairly good condition, but nevertheless hard aground. It was apparent that the surge came in fast and went out fast, leaving a lot of boats high and dry, and yet others sitting in the water in a slip, probably where they started. Fast forward three weeks, I decided that this was the time to look for a sailboat. I went bargain hunting with Klein Merriman. We went to a marina on Marina mile (SR 84) in Fort Lauderdale, where boats were being transported by insurance companies one after another. There are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of boats standing side-by-side over an enormous area. I walked through these with Klein and he identified a Morgan 38 by its hull shape similar to a friend's Morgan 41. There was fiberglass damage, but not extensive, and we were able to climb on and look inside, and see that the motor had not been submerged and boat had not filled with water.

I placed a bid on this boat with the insurance company (\$3000). After a couple of days, the insurance rep called me up and said two people had bid the same amount and did I want to go up. I did to \$3500 and Troubadour was ours. Next job was to get Troubadour down to Miami for repairs. I was able to find a spot at Merrill Stephens Marina on Biscayne Bay in Coconut Grove. I enlisted a marine transport truck who picked up Troubadour and took her on the fastest trip of her life at 50 miles an hour on I-95, where she was placed on the hard Merrill Stevens boat yard.

Surprise! Several months after the hurricane, the film from the days immediately after was developed and it turns out I had taken a picture of Troubadour leaning against Miami City Hall.

That boat yard was full of damaged boats from the hurricane, some already under repair others, waiting for mechanics who are available to work. I was approached by two youngsters, probably in their late teens, who had worked after hurricane Hugo in the Caribbean with one of their fathers who was a fiberglass repair man. They claimed to know fiberglass repair, and after discussing details of repairing the fiberglass, I decided to give them a try. For a few thousand dollars these two guys went to work and repaired the transom that was loose, a small crack in the side that actually had delaminated over a much larger area, the bow at deck level that had been fractured when the forestay was hit hard enough to part the stay. In addition, there was damage in the hull deck joint in the way of the port side chain plates and the hole drilled above the keel by the salvors who did not bother to see that there was no water in the boat. The two boys had a falling out over a newly acquired cocaine habit by one, probably with some of the money that was being made on Troubadour. After his disappearance his partner Pat Wooley finished the job which involved prepping the entire boat and spraying new white gel coat. Troubadour originally had red top sides.. I asked for

photos during the repairs and Pat Wooley took them and never shared them for me. Many years later, I tracked Pat to Guadmalá where he was repairing sailboats (love the internet). He shared this collage that he was using as advertising for his repair business.



From here on out, it was my job to bring Troubadour back to where she belonged. She was 22 years old and had suffered from less than timely maintenance and needed overhaul of many things, too many to list. I completely rewired the mast including installation of an internal PVC conduit and replaced the mast head light and tell tail, had new spreaders made as some rot was found in one. The old spreaders are now the legs of the plant stand in the living room of 1780. Shell lumber actually had quarter sawn sitka spruce for making new and new spreader lights were mounted. New used main from an Alberg 37 was bought, and spinnaker

halyards were added. Dennis at Frenchies welding on South River drive made new fore and aft chain plates and a stainless bow plate I designed with two anchor rollers, a big improvement on the stock design and it re-enforced the fiberglass repair. There were few stanchions left on the boat and the rest were badly bent and had to be replaced. The bow pulpit and stern railing were twisted messes. Using Morgan 38 drawings, the shape and angles of the bow pulpit and stern rail were measured and given to Dennis to create new and I repaired and reconstructed the deck mounts for those. The railing was 3/8" double braid nylon line since wire and fittings were so expensive. Money was tight and spent on items that I saw as critical for safety and structure. In fact we sailed Troubadour with no pulpits, stanchions or lines for awhile.

Below, the engine was next. It started first try after replacing oil and filters. New throttle control arm and cable and new shut off cable were installed. New fuel tank vent installed in the rebuilt transom. New fiberglass aft hatch cover was made to replace the one lost during the hurricane. New hinges were installed on the forward hatch that were damaged by the salvors getting into the boat.

Below the water line, all the through hull fittings were the original bronze and were corroded and stuck in closed position. These were all replaced with new stainless teflon ball cocks. New center board cable was installed. On launch day, the mast was stepped, and Troubadour put into the basin at MS. Unfortunately the crane interfered with the mast head gear and that all had to be removed for stepping. Afterwards, I was hoisted to the top of the mast to reinstall all the VHF antenna, lights and tell tail.

What a mess the basin was with steel protruding from the sea wall. The night after launch Miami experienced what became known as "little" Andrew, a low pressure from the Gulf that brought near hurricane force winds. I spent that first night on Troubadour sleeping on the cabin sole to monitor for leaks and to fend off the sides of the basin if needed, even though it was well bumper-ed. After a few days, we moved the boat to Rickenbacker Marina.

Daphne and I took a day for a shake down cruise that was uneventful except for the single engine plane that flew low over us in the bay and rocked wings to acknowledge what a good time we were having!

Over the next few years innumerable items continued to be repaired and replaced and really are too many to list. The major items were repaired during subsequent haulouts for bottom painting. These included remaking the steel girders for chain plate mounting, fiberglassing the entire keel with another inch of woven roving glass to seal a small crack that seeped water.

After Klein Merriman moved his boat out of the Dinner Key Anchorage, Troubadour took up residence on his anchors for the next 17 years. Those two 120 lb anchors are in the back garden of 1780. We recovered them after being booted from the anchorage by the City of Miami. That's a story by itself.