

History of Lightning 3692

Constructed of white pine planking and oak framing, the standard procedure to begin the season was to sink the boat in the cold lake for a week. This would allow time for the pine planks to swell up and re-close the $\frac{1}{4}$ inch gap that opened up over the winter. After pumping the boat dry, it could then be rigged and would remain leak tight for the season. As the years passed the caulking between the bottom planks became harden and uneven making for problems in getting a good seal. The old cotton caulking was stripped out by hand using old hacksaw blades and replaced with new material. Also the side plank joints didn't always stay sealed tightly because this area of the hull was alternately wet and dry. About this time (1958) the stem piece showed signs of dry rot and it was replaced by unscrewing the planks at the bow for a distance of two feet or so, spreading them apart and fitting in a new piece of chemically treated oak that was copied from the original. A woodworker who had a shop in the village of Shelburne was working on a Navy contract to build launches supplied the necessary skill and material. The copy was a perfect fit and it was a breeze to put it back together. I believe I used a "bedding compound" but no fiberglass or resin was used to make the seal.

About this time I moved the boat from Lake Champlain (Mallets Bay Club) to Sacandaga Lake where Lightning Fleet 13 was established at Mayfield, New York. The wonders of fiberglass were just being discovered. so I decided to sheath the hull in a water proof shell and be done with the problem of a leaking boat. I routed a groove on the outside of the wood approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ inch wide by $\frac{3}{8}$ inch deep along each joint of the hull and glued in a mating strip using polyester resin. With help from other friends who had successively fiber glassed boats a completely sanded hull was covered with a medium heavy grade of cloth from a mail order supplier (Herters I believe) using polyester resin. As I remember a layer was first applied to the chine, the stem and the stern and then the full hull using a roll of fabric that was probably four feet wide. I worked out a method to fiberglass the inside of the centerboard well that worked resulting in an end to leaks in this area. When I finished the outside of the hull I got two of my

neighbors as usual to help me roll the boat upright and I refinished all the cockpit combing and other wood trim after removing it from the boat.

The boat raced pretty well on Sacandaga finishing first or second in our Sunday races largely due to a top notch crew but the boat wasn't a handy cap either. About 1962 the boat made the journey to Burlington for a New England championship meet in Shelburne bay. The wind really blew, a bronze turnbuckle in the standing rigging broke and the mast and sail ended up in our laps. Upon removing the boat from the water, it was discovered the tang of an anchor being hoisted aboard had penetrated the fiberglass of the hull making a large hole and that dry rot had spread through out the hull leaving a shell for a boat. The fiber glass had not allowed the boat to dry out over the winter while any moisture from spray or rain was trapped at perfect conditions for dry rot to spread over much of the year. The fiberglass on the bottom of the boat came off the next spring and then the ribs one by one to be replaced along with some of the frames. I then removed the planks and one by one using cedar planking screwed and epoxyed a new bottom to the ribs which were now made of mahogany. There also was some wood to be replaced on the lower part of the sides which was done using cedar instead of pine. The thickness of the hull planks are as originally required; the ribs and frames are a bit heavier than required.

About this time the canvas covering on the deck was replaced by fiberglass cloth that was applied with polyester resin that was pressed on firmly with a squeegee so the fabric weave was slightly exposed and gave traction to the surface. The wooden deck under the canvas was found to be in good condition and is some of the limited amount of the original boat. Some of the deck fiberglass has come loose from the wood and I was planning to reattach it using epoxy resin.

Speaking of original parts of the boat, note that the keel has never been disturbed and at last check appeared to be in good shape. I believe it is Cypress or similar wood.

At this point the boat was in pretty good shape but coming back from vacation in New Hampshire at dusk on the Jersey Turnpike, I slowed down to let a lady who blew a tire in front of me to pull over to the side. My rig was rear ended by a driver flying in the slow lane. The boat was boosted off

the trailer and skidded to a stop along the center medium still upright. The mast was broken and the trailer looked like a pretzel. An insurance company picked up the cost of repairs which included some scratches along the bottom, some fiberglass patching along one side and a new mast from Lippincott. The operator of the flat bed that picked up the pieces told me he had recovered boats many feet from the road that suffered only minor damages. He was impressed with just how strong boats turn out to be. After four years of dry sailing the boat at Northeast, Maryland I returned to Sacandaga and set out to finish all that needed doing. This included a new transom both screwed and fiberglassed in place, new rub rails and working over the bottom to a smooth finish. The bottom has one small crack that is obvious but should close up tight after it sees a little water. The combination of the cedar planks screwed and glued to the frames resulted in a very dry stable boat. Some of the epoxy joints have developed very small cracks apparently due to temperature and moisture variations over the years but the hull should be mostly dry. There is still fiberglass along the sides that laps over the chine but the bottom is epoxy covered cedar. The stem piece is covered by the side pieces of glass cloth over lapping at the bow but it is not rapped by itself. I have tried to stay ahead of dry rot wherever it appeared. The boat has been dry storage for the last 8 years or so and I haven't been able to inspect the inside of the boat for any problems.

The rudder has been replaced and although it works fine it is not made to the specifications for the lightning class. I have the pieces of the original rudder but failed to copy it exactly due to a problem with material "on hand" verses time to go sailing.