

# CHANGING LIVES

BY GEORGS KOLESNIKOV





# 2015 marks the 10th anniversary of TrawlerFest under the *PassageMaker* banner, but the event started nine years earlier as the West Marine Trawler Fest series soon after the magazine was launched in 1995.

## HIS BIG GREEN TRAWLER ON THE COVER OF *YACHTING* MAGAZINE IN THE EARLY 1990S

inspired me to leave sailing for cruising under power, but when he walked up to me at the first TrawlerFest and introduced himself, I had to ask, "Who exactly are you?"

I was so enthralled with reading about his boat and the prospect of crossing oceans under power that I hadn't paid attention to his name. He was Bruce Kessler. And, with his wife, Joan, Bruce had circumnavigated the world aboard *Zopilote*, that majestic green motoryacht that started me—and many other sailors—thinking about cruising and voyaging under power.

His circumnavigation in 1990-93 signaled the start of the recreational trawler era as we know it today. The first circumnavigation in a production powerboat—the voyage of Jim and Susy Sink in the Nordhavn 46 *Salvation II* in 1990-95—demonstrated what was possible in a small, modern-day trawler yacht. Together, the Kesslers and the Sinks birthed the trawler phenomenon that led to the magazine you're reading and the events you've most likely attended.

The appearance of Robert Beebe's classic, *Voyaging Under Power*, as revised by Jim Leishman of Nordhavn fame, helped fuel the growing interest in trawler yachts.

I first learned about *Zopilote* and saw the first advertisement for the Nordhavn 46 when I lived in Yellowknife in Canada's Northwest Territories and was publisher of *Up Here* magazine. I had sold *Great American*, the ocean-racing trimaran with which I had set the New York-San Francisco sailing record around Cape Horn, and left California for Yellowknife to live out a boyhood dream. I wanted to leave boating behind, but those photos of *Zopilote* in the South Pacific and that ad for Nordhavn would not let me be. I wrote away for information from Pacific Asian Enterprises and started looking for boat shows where I could see these wonderful trawlers. If you can remember the early 1990s, there were few trawlers to be seen at the mainstream boat shows.

## KROGENS, NORDHAVNS

By 1994, I was itching to see Nordhavns and Krogens, as well as Grand Banks and Marine Traders, together in one place so I could climb aboard, look them over in the flesh and start making decisions. Soon, I lost patience. If there was no show that featured trawlers, I would organize one that did!

For most of the Eighties, I owned and operated The Great American Motorcycle Shows in major markets across the U.S., thus, event management wasn't new territory for me.

There were no online boating forums then, the Internet was just starting to enter the public consciousness, but there was Sailing Forum on CompuServe. It was there that I first floated the concept for TrawlerFest, initially much more of a

**NEW Bay Area Location**

# West Marine Trawler Fest

Vallejo, California • August 19-22, 1999

- ↓ All-make rendezvous for people who voyage, cruise and live aboard motor vessels, and for people who want to
- ↓ Cruising seminars, in-water boat show, product displays and demonstrations, and a fun time!
- ↓ Register at a West Marine or E&B Marine store and get a free savings coupon by mail!

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For information, call 1-888-WMTFEST toll-free. Trawler World Productions, 2008 Wildewood Center #151, California, MD 20614

California was the site for TrawlerFests before and during *PassageMaker*'s ownership. It may well return there.



rendezvous than a show. I figured it was as important to meet owners of trawlers and learn from their experience as it was to see the boats.

TrawlerFest will be a rendezvous, an in-water boat show, a cruising academy of seminars and workshops, social activities, a weekend of fun on the water. It will be a unique new event open to all makes of motorboats and the people who voyage, cruise and live aboard them, and the people who want to.

Sailors who had recently transitioned to power, or were about to, were instantly enthusiastic. One of the first to respond was Hal Wyman of Seattle who had just acquired a Krogen 54 named *Utopia*. For a West Coast event, there was only one location that I should consider, he told me, Puget Sound. On the Atlantic side, many suggested Florida but the Chesapeake was the clear winner.

### DREAM LIVES ON

"My dream is that TrawlerFest will become to cruisers under power what Oshkosh is to people who fly their own airplanes, what American Motorcyclist Association is to touring motorcyclists and what Boston is to runners—an annual pilgrimage and entertaining gathering of like-minded people and the boats they love, participating in the activity they love most."

—Georgs Kolesnikovs introduces the inaugural TrawlerFest

### INSPIRATION

Circumnavigators Jim and Susy Sink and Bruce and Joan Kessler will motivate a new generation of cruisers to start voyaging the way the Hiscocks and the Pardeys did in the past. Ordinary people in relatively small boats can undertake and enjoy extraordinary voyages. The new development is that it can be done in the comfort of a motorized passagemaker, even by the middle-aged and retired.

—News release announcing the first TrawlerFest season

### THEN AND NOW

**1996:** TrawlerFest is an all-make rendezvous, cruising academy, in-water boat show, a good time, all in one weekend of fun on the water. It's open to all makes of motorboats and the people who voyage, cruise and live aboard them—and the people who want to.

**2015:** TrawlerFest is *PassageMaker's* stand-alone series of boat shows for cruising enthusiasts. Strategically located in key cruising regions nationwide, TrawlerFests feature an impressive in-water selection of new and pre-owned cruising powerboats, the latest in marine gear and services, first-class education and demonstrations. TrawlerFest is more than a boat show. It's where industry, education and community come together in an intimate, rendezvous atmosphere.

### NEVER REPLICATED

At the very first TrawlerFest in Puget Sound, SoyGold Marine invited attendees to what it billed as the "Pacific Northwest's largest floating cocktail party and salmon bake."

The festivities took place aboard the historic navy destroyer USS *Turner Joy* in Port of Bremerton, a short ferry ride from the TrawlerFest venue in Port Orchard. Dinner was served on the ship's fantail. Dancing followed on the gun deck. Unforgettable!

**West Marine**  
**Trawler Fest**  
June 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup>, 2001  
Sons of Norway Hall & Port of Poulsbo Guest Marina  
Poulsbo, Washington  
REGISTER TODAY FOR THE ALL-NEW PROGRAM FOR 2001!  
West Marine Trawler Fest is an all-make rendezvous featuring seminars and demonstrations, an in-water trawler show, a shoreside expo, and all the fun you can cram into four days on the water. Trawler Fest is open to everyone interested in voyaging, cruising and living aboard under power. You don't need to own a trawler to participate. In fact, if you're just getting into trawling, there is no better place to start than at Poulsbo where you can Try A Trawler at Trawler Fest courtesy of Nordhavn and Sea Magazine.  
PROUDLY PRESENTED BY  
Trawler World WOMEN ABOARD Ocean Navigator Sea

During the of West Marine's involvement, Poulsbo, Washington, was TrawlerFest's Pacific Northwest locale.

Chuck Hawley of West Marine was active on the Sailing Forum. When he expressed enthusiasm for the concept, I emailed to ask for dates of West Marine events to avoid any conflicts. He immediately replied: "Conflicts? Hell, we want to be involved!" So, West Marine signed on as title sponsor and Hawley became a popular seminar presenter and master of ceremonies at social events.

In early 1995, I visited Puget Sound and the Chesapeake, scouting locations, eventually deciding on Port Orchard, Washington, and Solomons, Maryland.

### BUEHLER'S DUCK

While out west, I met George Buehler, then the little-known designer of Diesel Duck and author of this issue's ShopTalk column. He told me he recently had a visit from a couple I should meet who were thinking about starting a power cruising magazine. And so it came to be that I hooked up with Bill and Laurene Parlatore and *PassageMaker* became the presenting sponsor. The first TrawlerFest was staged several months after the first edition of the magazine appeared.

TrawlerFest, when it was known as West Marine Trawler Fest, made its debut on August 9 through 11, 1996, at the municipal marina in Port Orchard, Washington. West Marine Trawler Fest in the Chesapeake was launched on October 11 through 13 of the same year at Hospitality Harbor Marina and Spring Cove Marina in Solomons, Maryland.

I invited Jim and Susy Sink, recently returned from their six-year, 50,000-mile circumnavigation aboard *Salvation II*, to be the guests of honor. The slide presentation of their adventure was one of the highlights of the first two TrawlerFests. A



personal highlight was that I was able to introduce the Sinks as the Trawler World Passagemakers of the Year (after the *TrawlerWorld.com* website I had started, which lives on today as *TrawlersAndTrawling.com*).

Jim and Susy ran *Salvation II* to Port Orchard from Dana Point, California, nonstop in eight days. Seeing the Nordhavn at the end of dock, with flags of the 51 countries visited fluttering in the breeze, was a thrill for all 185 trawler enthusiasts who attended the inaugural event. Thirty-five yachts were open for viewing, including one named *Passagemaker*, a 47-foot C&L Alexander PH owned by Jerry and Pam Munson.

Coming full circle at the most recent TrawlerFest in Baltimore, it was cool to see another Nordhavn 46 on the guest dock, *Egret*, with which Scott and Mary Flanders circumnavigated via the five great capes from 2006 to 2011. It was also way cool to see Bruce Kessler as a seminar presenter.

To the first TrawlerFests in 1996 I also invited Bryan Peterson, who circumnavigated in *Sunrider*, a 24-foot Zodiac semi-rigid inflatable powered by biodiesel fuel—becoming the smallest motorized vessel ever to complete such a voyage. He brought *Sunrider* to the events on a trailer.

## PREACHING THE WORD

It took several years for me to overcome the embarrassment of not recognizing Bruce Kessler when we met on the docks at Port Orchard. He and Joan were named Trawler World Passagemakers of the Year in 1998 and honored at the TrawlerFests held that year. Here's part of the citation:

*"What Bruce Kessler is doing today is as remarkable as his voyaging with Zopilote. He is tirelessly and selflessly spreading the word for the trawler cause, answering any question, being available on almost any occasion, helping hundreds and even thousands of others realize their dreams."*

From the first TrawlerFest in Port Orchard, with 35 boats and 185 people, to Solomons, with 45 boats and 320 people, the series grew rapidly, expanding to Texas, California (San Francisco and Long Beach) and the Great Lakes by 2002 when I passed the torch to return to my great love, magazines. Solomons and Fort Myers were the largest events, with more than 100 boats and close to 2,000 people taking part. In all, a total 4,000 participants at all venues made TrawlerFest the largest event sponsored by West Marine.

One feature of the early TrawlerFests that could not be continued as the events grew and morphed from a rendezvous into a show was the popular TrawlerFest Trawler Crawl where owners of private vessels opened them to visitors.

Each TrawlerFest featured a special Saturday evening social program unique to that location. In Puget Sound, it was a banquet of halibut and prime rib. At Solomons, there was a Chesapeake crab feast in a huge tent—bushels of steamed crabs dumped on tables where guests were equipped with plates, paper towels and mallets. An open bar helped lubricate festivities.

The rising price of crabs encountered a slumping economy and the feasts unfortunately had to end. At the final crab feast, some 800 trawler-crawlers enjoyed a most memorable evening under the TrawlerFest big top at Calvert Marina. Put that many kindred spirits in one place at one time and the buzz in the air is palpable—a clear memory years later.

**An adventurer's vision spawns Trawler Fest**

By Tim W. Swanson

Georgs Kolesnikovs planned to run a race around the Malaspina Strait, Marathons on Seattle Island and the coast of British Columbia. He was promoting the event for the Toronto Star and ended up raising the money in a matter of days. A year later, he sailed the coastlines and not only raising the money, but also the love for the sport. He also started the U.S. Speed Sailing Grand Prix in Long Beach and San Francisco Bay, Calif. — the first professional sailing event on the West Coast, he says.

The former publisher and owner of Great American Media Inc. of Newport Beach, Calif., is starting something again — a boat rendezvous called Trawler Fest. He envisions "an all-male rendezvous for people who cruise, voyage and live aboard powerboats, and for everyone who wants to participate," he says.

After shattering the 180-year-old record for sailing from New York to San Francisco via Cape Horn in 1989, Kolesnikovs turned to kayaking and is now focused on building a steel trawler. He plans to motor back to Cape Horn as "pole voyager." The idea for a rendezvous is Kolesnikovs' way of filling a void in the world of recreational and promoting his interest in powerboats, he says.

and hopes to double the number at the second Trawler Fest which includes several weekend options ranging from assemblies to rallies and seminars to being aboard.

The Port Orchard event includes a dance dance with the help of the entertainment world owners of Trawler Fest and a parade broadcast at SeaStar that lasts the following morning. The event costs \$95 per person, \$45 for children and is a "special," says Kolesnikovs. "I think it's a moment of its own, and I'm giving it a five-year commitment."

Kolesnikovs set his Cape Horn record aboard the 86-foot catamaran *Great American* in 1989. The record he broke was 89 days, set by the clipper ship *Piping Rock*. Kolesnikovs, with crew Steve Petricelli, finished in 79 days and 22 hours. After breaking the record, Kolesnikovs explored Canada's Northwest Territories in a kayak. He worked for a few years during the early 1990s as a business consultant before starting Cape Horn Marine in 1994. Working with yacht designer George Hunter, Kolesnikovs plans to build a 36-foot steel motor yacht called *Diesel Duck*, and return to Cape Horn. He eventually would like to build the boat, which will cost about \$270,000, as a semi-custom boat. The long-range cruiser has 12,000 pounds, 100 hours of about 15 gallons and fuel capacity of 412 gallons.

"I'm looking forward to a true trawler cruise as a powerboat," Kolesnikovs says. "The only one ever designed and had to be made in response to it."

For additional information on Trawler Fest, call 416-724-0012.

**"No one was promoting how much fun it would be for everyone, regardless of brand affiliation, to get together in a lovely setting," says Trawler Fest founder Georgs Kolesnikovs.**

**"No one was promoting cruising under power across all modes," says Kolesnikovs. "No one was promoting how much fun it would be for everyone, regardless of brand affiliation, to get together in a lovely setting."**

Kolesnikovs is planning two West Marine-sponsored Trawler Fests. The first is scheduled at Port Orchard, Wash., Aug. 9-11, and the other will be held at Vancouver Island, B.C., Oct. 11-13. Kolesnikovs expects at least 100 boats at the first.

**Background info on the guy running around like 'crazy' at Trawler Fest**  
Reprinted from the July 1996 edition of Soundings, The Nation's Boating Newspaper

*TrawlerFest founder Georgs Kolesnikovs has hosted the popular online Trawlers & Trawling forum since 1997.*

TrawlerFests attracted industry support right from the get-go. Camano, Eagle, Endeavour Catamarans, Grand Banks, Great Harbour, Island Gypsy, Kadey-Krogen, Mainship, Nordhavn, Nordic Tugs, Pacific Trawler and Seahorse Marine showed boats to consumers eager to buy into the trawler lifestyle.

In addition to West Marine, inaugural sponsors and exhibitors included Naiad Marine Systems, SoyGold Marine and Alaska Diesel Electric/Northern Lights.

## SKIPPER BOB

High-caliber seminar presenters included cruising-guide-writers Skipper Bob, Claiborne Young and Fred Myers; Bob Smith of Lehman Ford; Ron and Eva Stob, founders of America's Great Loop Cruisers' Association; Nordhavn's Jim Leishman, yacht designers Steve Seaton and Jay Benford, Maria Russell of Women Aboard, Capt'n Wil Andrews, and the list goes on.

Trawler folk showed up at the dock with their boats, wanting to share their knowledge and experiences. One such couple was Mark and Susanne Richter. They were in the midst of converting a Morgan 45 sailboat hull into a unique trawler when they heard about the first Solomons TrawlerFest. They vowed to finish the project by the second edition—and just made it, running up the Intracoastal Waterway from Orange City, Florida, in 14 days right after launching *Winnie the Pooh*. Mark became a popular seminar presenter for many years.

TrawlerFest's immediate success attracted couples eager to work for a little more than peanuts to help make the events happen. Tom and Ann Caywood, Dennis and Esther Bruckel, Ted and Dee Kermod, and Jack and Millie Rose worked hard and loved it as "event staff." Nanette Jacques, with whom I had worked in motorcycle magazines in the 1970s, handled sponsorship and exhibitor sales. Norlene, my girlfriend, now wife, was a huge help in immeasurable ways.

In those early years, the tremendous effort to produce TrawlerFest was made more than worthwhile by the wonderful impact it had on so many lives. As a result of the experience—the boats, people, seminars and camaraderie—countless couples have been inspired to purchase a boat and adopt a new lifestyle that comes with voyaging under power, cruising and living aboard. That was true in 1996, and it's true today.

Indeed, TrawlerFest changes lives. 