



NEWS FROM THE COCKPIT

S&S Swan 40/019 Willowind

43 years in the same ownership

Dear S&S Swan Members, and Friends,

S&S Swan 40/019 Owner, Ira Zaslow, and our fabulous American friend Jennifer Stewart, talk about this deeply loved Sparkman&Stephens designed Swan:

*...when I have been asked to write a story about my long standing love affair with **Willowind** and probably being one of the oldest longest standing owners of a Swan in the world, I jumped at the chance. There's so much to say and I'm not sure where to begin or how long this article will be. So if you get bored reading you can put the article down!*

*Willowind, Sparkman&Stephens designed Swan 40 hull number 019, was launched in Pietarsaari Finland in April 1971 and was sailed up to Canada by way of Marseilles to live on Lake Champlain for eight years. Her winters were spent inside a heated shed at the Hinckley Yard where she was winterized and stored. She was meticulously maintained by the Owner at the time. In my search for a new boat, I knew that I wanted a **Swan designed by Sparkman&Stephens** after hearing the great stories of the **Swan 65 Sayula II**. I also knew that I wanted a boat built by Nautor that would be strong and very forgiving to a young sailor with a wife and three little girls. I knew this boat would never fail us; the young father may make a wrong decision at a moment in time, but the boat would respond to any poor seamanship on his part.*

*Sayula II had won the 1973 - 1974 Whitbread Round the World Race. She was skippered by her Owner Ramon Carlin with family and friends. There were no "hired guns" aboard her! Legend has it that Sayula II suffered a knockdown in the southern ocean and did a 360° before righting herself and continuing to go on to win the grueling race. The only thing that broke was a champagne bottle of Dom Perignon! I knew then **"that's the type of boat I wanted"** and eventually Willowind would live up to her pedigree as her sister ship!!*

In 1994, with a crew of three, myself, Bill Winthrop and Kay Krieger left Fort Lauderdale, Florida and heading north to her home in Newport, Rhode Island.

Bill, aka "Swill" by his rightful name was an EMT/Newport Fireman and in my estimation the strongest & best mainsail trimmer in yacht racing. Kay, lived on the boat and maintained Willowind when I wasn't around. Amongst her great attributes were: she was a great chef; a certified hair stylist; a certified massage therapist; a knowledgeable sailor with 5 Ocean crossings under her feet and an expert varnisher that topped the works of even the Bequians!!

We spent one night in Saint Augustine having dinner with World Class solo Around the World sailor Steve Pettengill, and headed north. We eventually found ourselves in a storm which was not predicted with 55 knot winds in 45 foot seas. We took a beating on the nose for a day and a half and after changing to a number three jib and a one reef main, we ran before the wind back to Savannah surfing down waves at almost 14 knots. We reach Savannah about 4 o'clock in the morning, docked the boat and went to sleep. In the morning we examine the boat for damage and the only thing we found was the slight rip in the foot of the mainsil. There were other boats much larger and built by some of the finest yacht builders in the world, but all of them had moderate to severe damage to their structures! Willowind had lived up to her name, her heritage, her pedigree, her designers Sparkman&Stephens and her Finnish yacht builder Nautor's reputation.

*We have now owned 'Willo' for 43 years and as I look back there are so many people that helped us along the way to make her the yacht she is and can stand with the best of them and hold her own on a race course still today. In the very early 80s Nautor opened an office in Newport Rhode Island run by **Paul Buttrose and Jennifer Stewart**. I can not tell you beyond words how much Jennifer helped us to continually maintain an upgrade the boat. As I am becoming an armchair sailor these days, our family is still very close with Jennifer*

Stewart and value her as one of our dearest of friends.

*Every modification that was done on Willowind was done under the direction, blessings and help of **Lars Strom**. Lars had only recently passed away and was the project manager at Nautor for years. I owe him so much but most of all his kindness and friendship. We both love to talk about boats and our love of pets; we spoke or texted often across the Atlantic. I cannot put into words how much he has taught me and how it matured me as an individual. Being a veterinarian, we always talked about his retrievers. Most of the modifications we did were under Lars's direction and I'm sure that's what saved us in that storm. Some of the things Lars suggested that he oversaw were:*

- 1) changing the steering from a 30 inch wheel to a 42 inch wheel;*
- 2) changing from cable rigging to rod rigging;*
- 3) changing the baby-stay to composite material to lighten the stay during collapsing it when flying a chute;*
- 4) designing a new and lighter rudder which was almost as deep as the keel thus allowing the boat to track better to windward with little to no helm; the yacht didn't slide sideways any more;*
- 5) after speaking with Rod Stephen's when aboard Willowind, Lars designed new knees, added more ribs on her sides and attached a Navtech rod above and below to allow the energy in the mast to transfer to the keel. This one modification stiffened the boat and prevented the decks from lifting as in some of her sister ships;*
- 6) after speaking to Mike Toppa*, a new sail plan was designed with inboard tracks for the hoisting either the number 3, 4, or 5 sail. The boat would now sail as close as 24 degrees apparent. Lars was instrumental in placing the new genoa tracks and their reinforcement below. Whether there were major or minor changes, nothing was ever done without consulting Lars. His collaboration with Mike a world class sailor and sailmaker and of America Cups fame, changed the performance of Willowind to this day.*

*I could go on forever talking about the changes over the years that we have done to maintain her as one of the **Grand Dames of the fleet**. She has won the covenant Prix de Elegance trophy once and twice runner-up at Swan Regattas. There's not a single harbour along the East Coast of the United States and the Bahamas that we have not sailed into that sailors have either come up to us on the dock or dinghy up to us at anchorage to say how beautiful she was.*

She was a fabulous cruising boat; just right for the girls and I. And all the modifications and changes below made living aboard memorable.

I think her greatest race was the '94 'Lauderdale to Key West race. It was a PHRF rated race about 164 nautical miles. At times, we faced ten to 15 foot seas and winds gusting as much as 35 knots at times. Willowind finished first over 151 boats but ultimately pushed down to second place after another boat with a very large handicap came in almost 20 hours latter. We finished first in class and second in fleet. Normally, the heavier the weather, the better she did racing; but she also won in light air.

At 82 1/2 years of age and as Lars commented before he passed, "Ira, we are starting to become like "arm chair sailors". Yup, he was probably correct! So, How do you let go of a yacht that has served you so well. I have not yet been able to do that!!

Willowind brought us long lasting memories; experiences at sea never to be forgotten; discoveries of new ports of call, and the meeting of new friends having met while sailing that could fill a life time of bonded friendships. The friendships have proven immeasurable and have lasted a life-time!!

Ira Zaslow

Ira and Willowind, they are one and the same in my mind having witnessed this man and his love for his boat for almost 40 years! Way back when, I was a new employee at the Newport Swan office and this lovely family invited me to go for a sail with them, the first sail ever in a Swan!

It was a blast needless to say, and I was wrapped in to the Zaslow family, and they in to mine.

Ira took exceptional care of our many pets, and fulfilled my father's dream of racing in a regatta.

Willowind has to be in the top ten of any vintage Swan - she is a stunning boat that has had the best of everything. She was well known in the American Swan regattas, winning the elegance trophy and for her hard work on the race course.

It was a pleasure to have helped Ira with all his boat parts, along with connecting him with the Professor! A long time friendship starting with a beautiful Swan!

By Sparkman&Stephens, of course.

Jennifer Stewart
Berthon USA

** Mike Toppa, and his Italian counterpart Guido Cavalazzi, are both sail designers and both of them work for North Sails. They are the best classic sail designer in the world*

Save the dates:

Christmas Party

Milan

14 December 2022

10° S&S Swan Rendez-vous

dedicated to Lars Ström

Marciana Marina, Elba Island, Med Sea

28 June . 2 July 2023

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