

CANIM



In her early days (above) *Canim* explored the cold waters of north-west America and then became a Great Lakes celebrity (right)



'I was born to own this boat,' says

Martin Sutter with a smile. 'My passion in life is to restore *Canim* to her original state, preserve her, and operate her in the manner for which she was created.' Sutter's unstoppable aim for the past few years has been to buy and rejuvenate this fine classic yacht, and now, after a long life of shifting home ports and belonging to multiple owners – some devoted, others misguided – she is finally his and has been brought up to almost perfect condition. Sutter, who acquires nautical artefacts of all types, has assembled a collection of historical treasures with the yacht as the centrepiece.

When *Canim* was built, America had lots of haves and have-nots and very few in-betweens. In early 1929 the joints were jumping with roaring good times, jazz, drink and luxury. After the Wall Street crash, when the joys of life were struggling to rise from the ashes, renowned naval architect Ted Geary and one of his top designers, Ed Monk Senior, drew up a series of four elegant 29.2 metre fantail cruisers to be built at Seattle's Lake Union Drydock. These slender, 5.5 metre beam motor yachts, with straight stem and fine entry, featured an abundance of round ports and were heavily built from the finest timbers, seasoned with brass and flat glass. There was nothing to rival these beauties for luxury.

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The original pilothouse (above left) was probably two or three steps lower than the modern version (opposite, top), where the captain gets a commanding view and guests can settle down on a raised sofa to watch the world go by. Charming cane furniture has transformed the delightful fantail deck (above right and opposite, bottom), which can be heated and sheltered in cold weather

speed, handling and pure lines, and soon Geary's office had produced eight fantails, including *Canim*, which was commissioned by the publisher of *The Seattle Times*, Colonel C B Blethen, whose family still produce the newspaper. Just a few decades earlier in those same Pacific north-west waters, local native tribes had plied the icy waters in their large cedar canoes, so *Canim*, meaning 'Big Chief's Canoe', paid homage to the coastal Chinook tribe's famous craft.

Since 1930, *Canim* has undergone three name changes – to *Polaris*, *Cano* and back to *Canim* – and survived nearly a dozen owners, including Buster Keaton's wife, Natalie, whose cruises in the 1930s attracted flocks of Hollywood celebrities. After being commandeered for coastal patrol duties in the Second World War, the yacht ventured to the Mexican coast on star-studded marlin expeditions, and then was bought by Clessie Cummins, who had introduced the diesel engine to America in the early part of the century. He replaced her 150hp gasoline engines with twin 855 cubic inch Cummins diesels and chartered on the Inside Passage from Seattle to Alaska for decades, often playing host to Julie Andrews and her husband Blake Edwards, who were both passionate about fishing.

In 1983, *Canim* passed into the hands of Gary Norton, who loved the vintage style of workmanship and gunkholed along the Inside Passage while carrying out some restoration each season. 'I bought a boathouse for it and hired 22 craftsmen from the Seattle

wooden boat shops, and these dedicated enthusiasts ripped into it for six months,' he says. 'We removed all the machinery, stripped the decks, cut the roof back to the house, replacing tarred felt and wire mesh with a solid membrane and removed the rotten overhangs and ports – and then we proudly paraded on Seattle's Opening Day Parade.'

The next year they dropped in on British Columbia's prestigious Victoria Classic Boat Festival and swept up all the awards for restoration and class of vessel.

Before Norton could do all the work he had planned, he had to turn his attention to another of his yachts, the 39.6 metre *Yecats* (later *Atessa*), and reluctantly let *Canim* go to Werner Erhardt, who stationed her in 'houseboat row' in Sausalito, California, and carried out major repairs to the hull planking and structure. But after Erhardt had begun decorating the teak in tiger stripes, installing a spa bath in the master cabin and putting in Italian marble showers and lizard skin ceilings, Norton bought her back to restore her vintage pride.

'I missed the boat, and once I got rid of *Yecats* I wanted it back,' he says. 'It was one of the most graceful cruisers ever built, with too much beauty to see it transformed into a comfortable lounge palace not in keeping with the original creation. I had to have it back and restore a little respect for the design.'

Canim later went to two other owners, one of whom gave her a further facelift at the Phillbrooks Yard in Sidney, British Columbia,



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The main saloon and observation-cum-dining room (opposite, top and bottom) have rejuvenated cluttered parts of the old boat (above) to give guests an unrivalled experience of the genteel life aboard a 1930s yacht. The saloon's wood panelling, leather buttoned furniture and midships fireplace provide the atmosphere of a club, while large windows fill both rooms with natural light

after which she was taken to the Caribbean for a life of reggae, rum and island running. Her old-world charm and finish faded in the tropical sun and her joints and classic canoe form longed for the cool air of northern seas.

It is at this point that Martin Sutter enters the story. He grew up on the Great Lakes and lived in Texas as an adult, gaining experience of boating in all types of craft, including 12 foot skiffs, Sea Rays, a 15.8 metre Hatteras, Hobys and Catalinas, from California to Texan lakes. He says: 'I'd been scouring North America for years looking for an old Trumpy design, and was vacationing in the British Virgin Islands when I saw *Canim* cruise past. I went wild – she was the finest looking classic wooden yacht I had ever seen, so I hopped in my dinghy and circled her frantically until she was embedded in my mind.'

Sutter was relentless in his pursuit of the yacht, and overjoyed when, a few months after his first sighting, he saw her advertised for sale, and quickly reached an agreement that would keep her from returning to the West Coast. Harbor Springs on Lake Michigan seemed the perfect home for *Canim*, and Sutter took her on the 2,800-mile journey from Boston up the St Lawrence Seaway because her air draught is too big for the Erie Canal route.

In her 78 years, *Canim* has spent many wet but mild winters in the cool, sweet waters of Seattle's urban Lake Union and Lake Washington, running to the remote glacial runways of the Inside Passage each summer and hosting college football fans at the

waterfront Washington Husky stadium in the autumn. Similarly, the Great Lakes are good for *Canim*, explains Sutter. 'There is a history of classic motor yachts of that era plying these waters as private luxury yachts, ferries and commuter craft. It's humbling when we tie up at some harbour and people come down to the dock just to see this big wooden boat. If we anchor out, they immediately start circling us in their small lake boats.'

Guests of this Great Lakes celebrity discover a surrounding warmth of Burmese teak, and the distinctive fantail has heaters and an enclosure if the weather is cold. The main saloon has an open-beamed ceiling and Chesterfield-style leather furnishings, bookcases and a midships fireplace that create a clubby atmosphere. Forward, a viewing lounge with panoramic windows can also double as a dining saloon. Below decks, the master cabin and two doubles are all beautifully restored with teak, brass, mahogany and wainscoting, while a third double cabin is situated in the raised forepeak.

The pilothouse is small but provides a commanding view and originally may have been a step or two lower. Its height provides great visibility for the captain, and guests can watch the passing scene from a raised sofa. The navigation area's electronic instruments are perhaps the only items that break with the authentic consistency on board.

Sutter and his captain, Luther Hall, who has been with the boat for many years, cruise all the cherished spots around the Lakes,



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The classic beamed ceilings and circular portholes remain but the furniture in the old cabins (above) has given way to well-planned modern fittings and bunks, with teak and mahogany predominating and mirrors adding a feeling of spaciousness (opposite). The yacht has a master cabin and two doubles below decks and a third double cabin in the raised forepeak

including the dazzling shores of the Chicago waterfront and charming Mackinaw Island. The yacht's seasonal route includes the famous marinas of Charlevoix, the Great Lakes marine parks and the Les Cheneaux 'snow' islands on the way to the North Channel's 15,000 islands bound by Canada and Michigan's upper peninsula, where wonderful rocky outcroppings, wooded shores and pastoral coves provide all the exploring *Canim* will need after a lifetime of coastal adventures.

'There is nothing in life I enjoy more than piloting a boat through places like Georgian Bay,' says Sutter. 'Unlike modern designs, these older cruisers favour the open aft deck where people can enjoy the panoramic views and smooth, quiet running.'

The Great Lakes have a long history of stately private yachts visiting the smaller ports before coastal roads were built. *Canim's* summer home in Harbor Springs has been a holiday retreat for 170 years, and cars have never been allowed on the residential peninsula, home to wealthy families such as the DuPonts and Fords. According to tradition, these people still have to take a horse and carriage to their front door.

Some of America's finest woodworkers come from Michigan, which, as well as having a notable school that teaches the art of constructing wooden boats, is home to the renowned Mertaugh Boat Works, builders of many outstanding wooden vessels. The lake's finest are displayed every August at the Wooden Boat Show

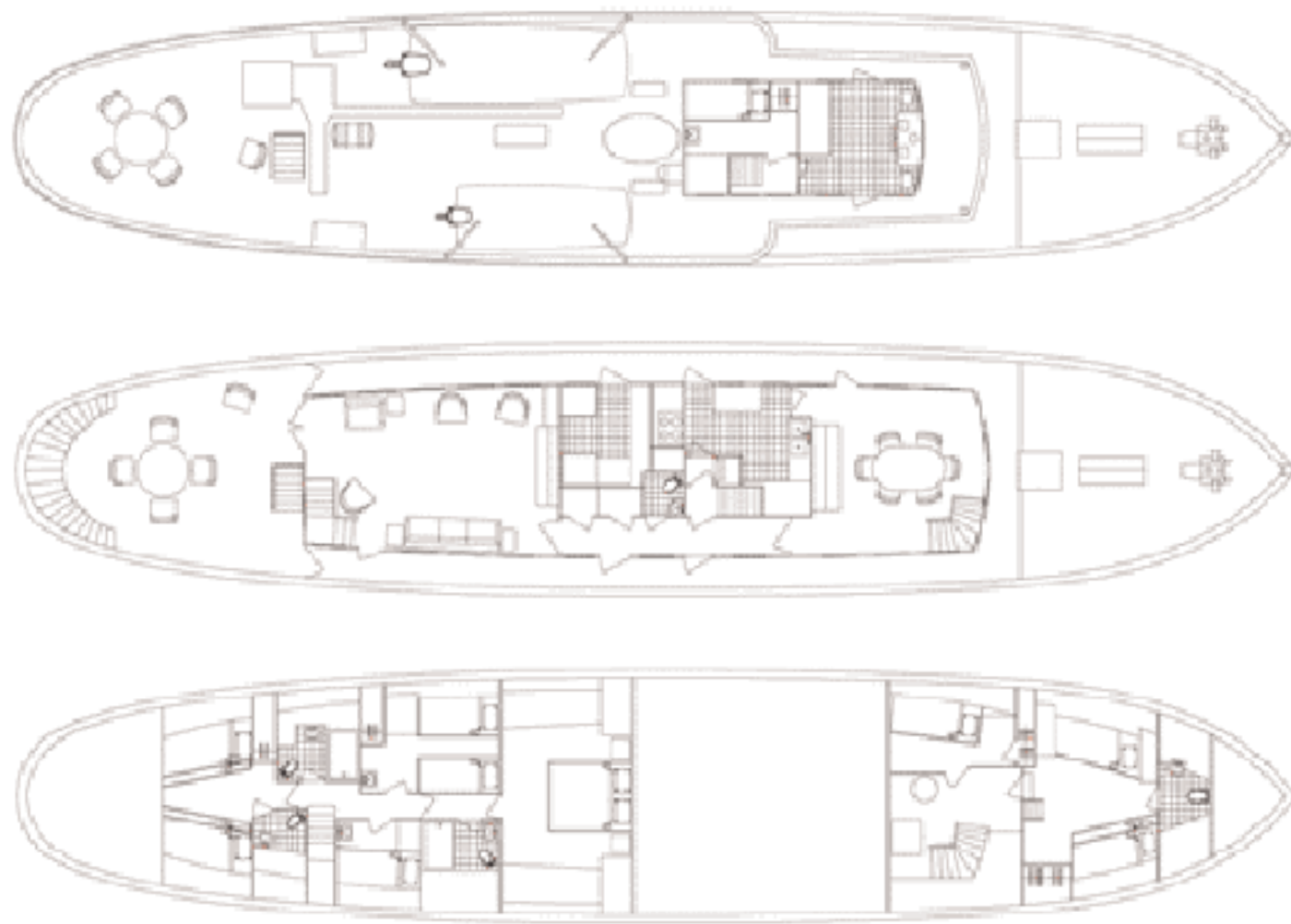
at Hessel, a town that 120 years ago was one of the many simple Native American fishing villages that became thriving lumber ports filled with wooden schooners, and helped to create the wooden boat heritage that the region now proudly claims. Another yacht of *Canim's* vintage is *Delphine*, built in Detroit for Horace Dodge and recently restored in Europe.

'Who knows how many fortunes have been spent on *Canim*,' says Gary Norton. 'Everyone seems to throw at least a million bucks into it out of passion for the boat – it has the prettiest fantail of them all, built double and now almost triple planked, with a raised forepeak. I used to run it at 11 knots at 11 gallons an hour – pretty economical. But offshore it could roll like the devil and bury that fine bow entry into head seas.' Clessie Cummins did just that on one Alaskan cruise, burying the bow so deep that green water rolled aft and caved in the forward dining saloon bulkhead, which has since been reinforced with aluminum.

Canim has an atmosphere no modern boat can quite reproduce. More than history preserved, she brings to life an era when boats were not a smothering extension of life on shore, burdened by the comforts of home, but rather an escape aboard a craftsman's sculptural link to adventure, unique travel, and an uncorrupted experience on the water. That is the mystique *Canim* has provided to seduce a near-century of boat owners who passionately nurture this graceful vessel.



Specification



LOA
29.36m
LWL
27.1m
Beam
5.7m
Draught
2.3m
Displacement
89 tonnes
Engines
2 x 325hp Cummins,
855 cubic inches
Propellers
101.6cm 3-blade bronze
Speed (max/cruise)
12.5/10 knots
Fuel capacity
9,085 litres
Range
1,500nm at 10 knots
Bowthruster
50hp 5-blade hydraulic

Stabilisers
61 to 91cm hydraulic
Generators
2 x 25kW Onan (2006/2007)/
(2 x 2500 with inverters)
Watermaker
Sea Recovery, 5,300 litres/day
Freshwater capacity
3,028 litres
Security system
Maritron
Monitoring systems
Maritron monitoring 55 separate
systems
Air-conditioning
6 Cruisair reverse cycle
with extra heating units
Fantail heating
32,000 BTU diesel unit radiated
heating
Communication/
navigation electronics
4 VHF, single side band, weather

fax, Seatel satellite,
sat phone, radar,
autopilot, depth sounder,
4 GPS,
3 networked computers,
hand-held phones,
Nobeltec
Entertainment system
46in plasma television;
Bose surround-sound
stereo system
Owner and guests
8
Crew
3
Tenders
3.6m Whitehall custom
sailing dinghy;
5.5m 60hp Boston Whaler;
4.9m Castoldi diesel
Tender launching system
Hydraulic davits port
and starboard

Paint
Awlgrip
Construction
Teak, mahogany, yellow cedar
and Douglas fir hull
Naval architect
Ted Geary
Exterior styling
Ted Geary
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