

There Ain't No Such Thing as a Bargain

For more than thirty years, I have practiced the first watery lesson-learned any owner should know about boats – a fool and his money soon part. I have proven this axiom many times over by purchasing and reselling a Hunter 30, a Morgan 35, a West Sail 32, and a Carver 35. Unequivocally, the tired and worn out adage that “a boat is a hole in the water into which you pour money” is absolutely true.



So recognizing the underlying truth in these axioms and adages, in December 2008, after surfing eBay for bargains, I ended up in Boot Harbor in Marathon Florida, writing a check for a sadly neglected and tired and worn Downeast 32 that had been hanging from an anchor for more than a year. If any of you surf the web or look at boats on eBay will likely recognized the photo of Saffanah. It has been posted on a variety of sights for a number of years.

So after the bid ended on e-bay with no bidders, I called the owner, who was also located 400 miles from the keys, drove the 600 miles from my home to Boot Harbor, and borrowed a dinghy motor out to where Saffanah was anchored.

The owner could not meet me at the boat, and instead asked a friend to show the boat. The boat was in pretty miserable shape – trash in the cockpit, the head had not been pumped for a long time, the sails were marginal, canvas worn etc. I could not find a key to start the engine, and to attempt to quantify my personal survey as anything close to superficial would be an over statement. But once I stepped on board and walked along the deck, I knew that even if I had to put in a new engine, I would buy the boat. The only question in my mind was what was an honest price?

Returning to Tallahassee, I called the owner and noted that I would buy the boat but before a check was to be signed or an amount filled in, I needed to know if the engine was operable and the boat had to be moved to a marina where it could be hauled and surveyed. The owner agreed, and a couple weeks later he called on his cell phone, and, in the background, I could hear a diesel engine running. But oddly he asked if I would help him move the boat to the Marina (he was not a sailor, had impulsively purchased the boat a year or so earlier, had never sailed and only motored it once).

So ten hours later, I stepped on the boat for the second time. The owner and a couple of his friends went forward to raise the anchor, I took the helm and off we went – or so I thought. The motor ran fine but the transmission would not engage. Unfortunately I realized this little problem only after those on the bow had decided the anchors were impossible to recover and had cast the rode lose. So in the middle of Boot Harbor, there sat poor pathetic Saffanah, engine running but no propulsion to get her to a safe marina.

Ultimately we towed Saffanah to the marina with a borrowed dinghy, I wrote a check for what I believed to be fair hull value, and resigned myself to facing whatever might be the worst news that a surveyor would possibly deliver. I truly believed that would have to start from scratch in order to get the boat to a point that would be acceptable to me, and before the surveyor arrived I had already made

arrangements with the yard to store the boat in the yard for a year just in case I had to address blister repairs and other hull issues.

So the owner left with smaller check in hand than he had wished, and I began the process of toting trash to the dumpster in the marina. While I waited for the surveyor, I tried to calculate just how much a new engine and transmission would cost and began to put together a to-do list and a budget that almost immediately proved that I paid way too much for the hull.

A few days later I received the written survey, which was unexpectedly better than I thought, No blisters, general condition acceptable, survey value far more than I paid. And using the survey as a skeleton, I began the process of assembling a list of original design specifications that would be important to me in the future. I continue to update that specification as I complete a task or learn more of the original specification. I surfed the internet for technical information to modify my specification sheet and I assembled a itemized budget to help me plan my next steps – one that would be broken into two phases.

I have attached a copy of the specification that I developed and continue to update –hopefully another Downeast owner can edit the specification and advise me of errors that I have made. I have attached my ongoing budget noting the investment I have made to date and expect to make in the future. Again hopefully other owners can offer their perspectives and thoughts on this budget and planned list of expenditures.

My first milestone was to return the boat to a fully functional condition allowing me to safely move Saffanah to a convenient location where I could more effectively use personal labor on weekends. I live in Tallahassee, Florida and Marathon is 600 miles away. So any work on the boat while in the keys had to be planned and I needed local help that I could trust not to break my pocket book. I needed to strike a balance between what work I could do, what work I needed to hire, and what could I put off until I could get the boat to a harbor where I could work at my convenience and while staying on board.

The first steps to prepare the boat for a five hundred mile voyage from the keys to the St Johns River in Jacksonville included:

- The engine and transmission had to be reliable and I had to be confident of the hull's integrity (replace thru hulls, hoses, etc) and the head and water pumps had to be operable.
- The trip to Jacksonville is a coastal passage and I wanted to sail it so running rigging and sails had to be replaced
- There were a number of safety and navigation issues that had to be addressed
- And before traveling a couple hundred miles some creature comforts such as cushions in the cabin had to be addressed.

Once in the St Johns River I felt I could address labor intensive projects and creature comforts requiring more sweat equity than cash. Some of these projects include:

- Installing a new battery bank and re-wiring the boat.
- Installing a shower, hot water, air conditioning and rebuilding the holding tank
- Many, many cosmetic and mill work items – the boat had had an extensive interior up grade but some of the details would not meet my standards.

- New canvas and bimini – the boat did come with a hard dodger but the cockpit was not protected.
- The boat needs to be fully repainted – topsides and below the water line.
- Installing the modern electronics and communication systems for long distance cruising.

At the end of November I sailed Saffanah to Ft Pierce, and in a couple of weeks I will move on to Jacksonville. So here is a discussion of the various projects I have undertaken so far.

Rebuild Shifter, Throttle, Water Pump, Alternator, and Cutlass Bearing

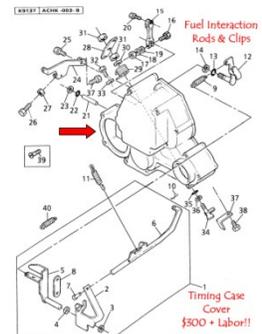
The lack of propulsion was not a transmission problem but instead the linkage for the shifter had corroded to the point that it was in operable.

A few years earlier a previous owner had replaced the Ferryman with a 30 hp Perkins Parma but it appears the throttle and shifter were original. Unless I wanted to crawl over the engine, access to this shifter was through the cockpit locker, and one must be a contortionist to worm a way into the aft engine space



Once the shifter plate was removed, it was pretty obvious a new plate had to be made in a local shop

The holder for the transmission/shift cable had also corroded and a new one had to be fabricated. While the stainless steel holder and plate were being fabricated, there were a number of engine issues that had to be addressed.



The front of the engine was heavily rusted, the water pump was leaking, all hoses needed to be replaced. Unfortunately this turned out to be a greater task than I thought. First, because the water pump was so badly corroded, the bolts holding it in place (which were tapped into the timing case) required more than finesse to remove. So in the process of removing the water pump, the timing case cover was destroyed and had to be replaced.



Perkins is a British firm so the cover had to be ordered and flown to the keys before we could proceed. But there was much work to be done in the mean time.

The water pump was badly corroded and had to be fully disassembled and repaired – a weekend job.

The surveyor had noted that the cutlass bearing was worn and the shaft was not properly aligned and if the condition were not remedied, ultimately other problems would surface. So while waiting for parts from England and the fabrication shop, I had the yard pull and replace the cutlass bearing. A pretty significant task because the rudder must first be removed. To complicate matters, the gudgeon plate holding the rudder to the keel was through bolted with very badly corroded brass bolts and there was also a crack in the fiberglass at this point that had to be repaired.



It took nearly eight hours to drill out these the eight or so bolts and a bunch bits went into the trash can in the process. Once the plate was removed and with the help of a fork truck, the rudder was removed and a slide hammer attached to pull the shaft was installed. The before the shaft could be removed, the coupler and stuffing box corrosion had to be addressed. More corroded bolts and much drilling in a very inconvenient spot.



Although I assume the cutlass bearing had not been replaced when the new Perkins was installed, I would assume the stuffing box and coupler were at least refurbished if not fully replaced. But the level of corrosion likely as a result of the broken water pump had very severely damaged these components and ultimately would have lead to a catastrophic failure had not the been addressed.

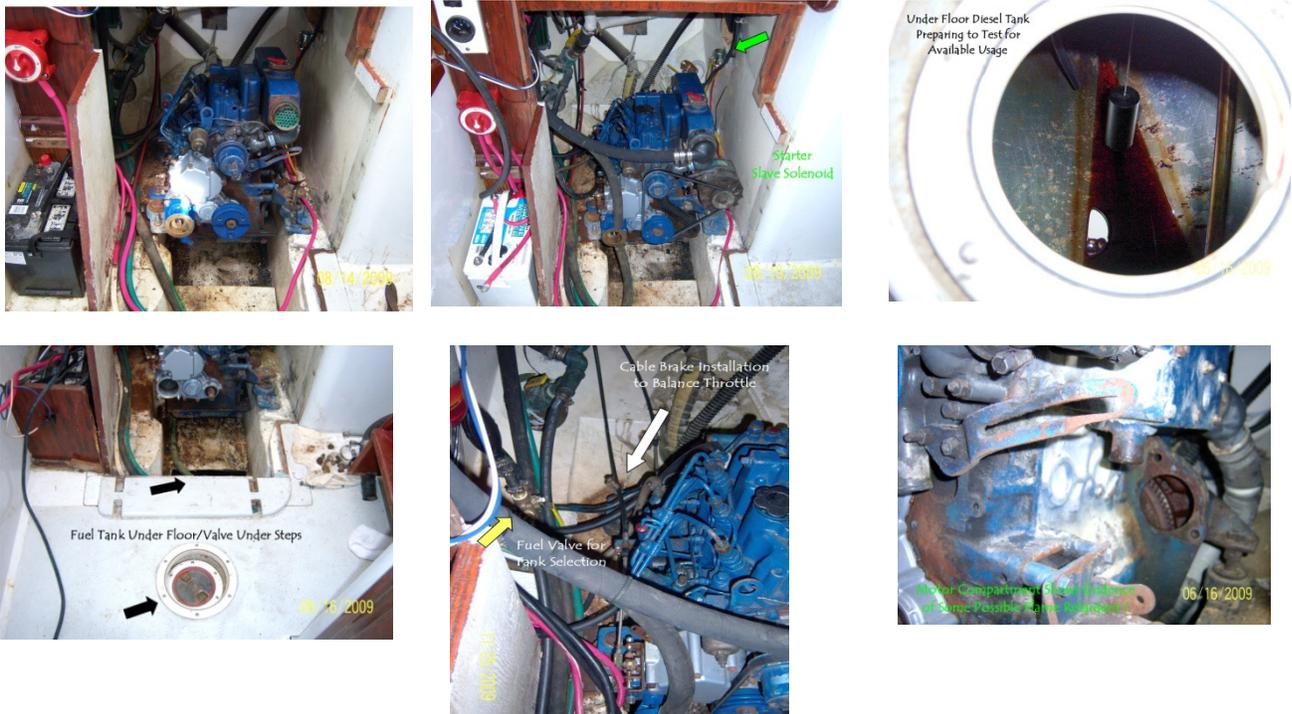
While the corroded parts looked bad, once the corrosion was removed, most parts could be salvaged as shown below.



Once cleaned and repainted all is ready to go back into place



Next Saffanah's the new timing cover had to be installed, new hoses installed, a huge number of redundant wires and hoses removed and new hoses installed. Had to rebuild the starter and alternator and a new starter solenoid installed. The fuel tanks were cleaned and tested for leaks. There was residue in the engine compartment that looked as though a fire had occurred and the residue had to be removed



The engine instruments were not working so a new oil pressure sensor, temperature sensor and alarms had to be purchased and installed.



The effort to rebuild the water pump, the alternator, replace the cutlass bearing and generally refurbish the engine compartment required nearly sixty man hours, some of which I subcontracted and some of which I did myself with the help of the yard. Parts, either purchased or fabricated cost somewhere in the range of \$1,800. So overall, to get an old Perkins engine and the various systems to the point I could be comfortable making the trip to Jacksonville cost in the range of about \$4,800 if I valued my time at \$50.00 per hour.

But before I could leave Marathon, I felt there were a number of other items that had to be addressed. Saffanah did not have shore power – apparently a factory option that was never considered – although the boat did have cable and telephone connections. The boat had either at one time or someone had attempted to install 120 V receptacles, but 120V power was not available when I stepped aboard. The boat also at one time or another had a wind generator and a small solar battery charger, but they were long gone when I signed the check to buy Saffanah.

So the electrical system was very limited – in Southern Georgian terms – the electrical system was a sorry mess. Prior to leaving Marathon I did install a 120V shore power receptacle and a Xantrax 2000 watt inverter to a level adequate to charge batteries and give power to the 12 volt system. But the installation is not very pretty and has to be one of the first things I address once safely in Jacksonville. I purchased and installed a prewired 120 Volt distribution panel from Paneltronics in Ft. Lauderdale that simplified my wiring effort significantly.

I installed the inverter charger underneath the navigation station and the 120 V distribution panel above it. After going through the exercise of repairing the shifter mechanism, I do not believe I want to use the



battery tray to hold future batteries. Temporarily I moved an old 4 D battery from the tray to the foot rest at the navigation station and plan to ultimately install four golf cart batteries in the same area – cutting out the foot rest to accommodate them. Would appreciate any thoughts anyone has on this concept. That built in battery tray in the engine compartment seems impossible to service batteries.

I also replace the battery switch with a new Blue sea switch and added a second switch to to kill the engine if a fire were to start or an emergency required a quick kill of electricity in the engine

compartment.

Likewise, the sails were on their last legs. I pulled the sails off the boat and took them to JSI (Doyle and Johnson Sails) in St Petersburg to be inspected. As I unrolled the Yankee it fell apart in my hands and the main was in just as bad a situation. The running rigging was also in pretty bad shape.



The halyards were half inch lines and as you coiled the lines, dust and salt particles would seem to fly out of the rigging. The blocks were old wooden blocks. I had the standing rigging surveyed by a local rigger who gave me comfort that everything looked pretty good. But I do worry about the original wooden spreaders.

So from a sailing perspective, Saffanah has a new main, staysail, and working jib all produced by Johnson Sails in the Doyle loft in St Petersburg. I elected to use Garhauer blocks, they were a lot less than Harkin



or other more popular, but fabricated from stainless steel. And I used New England Rope for all the running rigging – it is much smaller in diameter and stronger than the older yacht braids that were installed. Any one reading this discussion can see the costs for each of the components but overall new sails were in the range of \$4,400, running rigging \$1,000 and blocks in the range of \$900. I have a bunch of wooden blocks if any one has an interest.

Safety was the next consideration because Saffanah had no electronics, the navigation lights did not work, there was no VHF, GPS and the simple things like flares and horns were obsolete. So internet surfing, eBay bidding and bargain shopping began in earnest to be assured I complied with the Coast Guard regulations. Likewise, I spent some time making certain that I had clear title, the Coast Documentation was filed correctly, checked for liens, and cleaned up the state registration.

From the specification list which I have attached one can see the various items that I had to add and from the attached spreadsheet one can see the cost for each.

I like to single hand, and as such I like the benefits of a

wind vane so when an old Aries wind vane popped up on the internet, I worked to be the successful bidder.

Saffanah did come with a working Autohelm 4000. So now Betty (the Aries) and Bob (the Autohelm) serve as crew, along with Pee Wee the new dinghy and Einstein the Garmin 3210.

I also had to purchase new anchors and rode and when installing them I noticed the anchor platform is in pretty rotten shape so it will have to be replaced. As a side note as I moved to Ft Pierce apparently one evening the CQR became entangled in a dock box and the weak anchor platform was weakened further. So advice on replacement would be greatly appreciated.

With all of the above, this little discussion along with the specification document and the excel spreadsheet should give anyone interested a perspective of the investments I have planned or plan to make to put Saffanah back in the position to sail for long passages off shore. Advice, criticism, encouragement or otherwise would be greatly appreciated and I would love to hear from others who are attempting similar projects.

