Love Affair

I fell in love in Victoria, British Columbia, in June of 1964. We spent four days sailing in the Pacific, the Straits of Juan de Fuca and wandering through the Puget Sound. Circumstances separated us. But I never forgot her.

We met again in Block Island this summer. She was with someone else but I saw her many times during Race Week.

I sailed with her again this last weekend on Long Island Sound and my feeling hasn't changed a bit. I'm still in love with the Annapolis 44.

The Annapolis 44 is not a perfect boat. Such a thing doesn't exist. I know what her faults are but I don't care. No woman is perfect either, but you can love her anyway.

For example, the 44 is no prize before a light wind. This weekend we couldn't even hold a pair of 33-foot Chinooks on a long light down wind slide. But the wind blew, and blew hard, from dead ahead the next day. We drove upwind with the stateliness of a church and the power of a locomotive, leaving everything else in sight far, far behind.

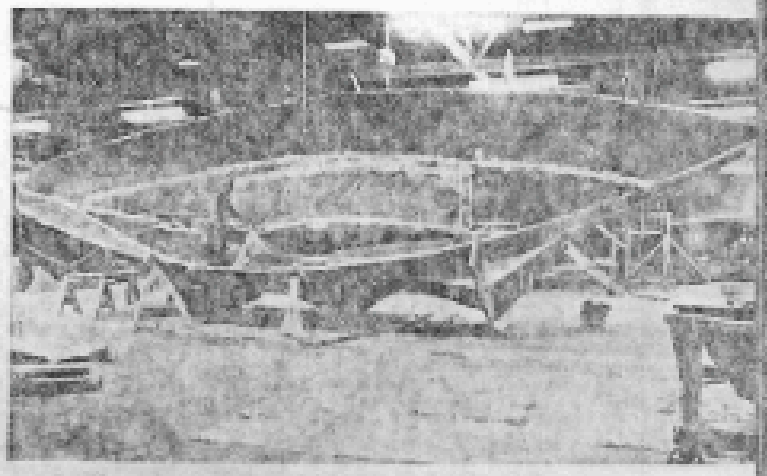
It is times, and boats, like these that stir men's souls.

You can say what you will about the virtues and pleasures of running before the Trades in a well-designed ocean cruiser, the excitement of a fast reach on a light planing boat, the versatility of a trailer boat or the comfort of a stocky auxiliary anchored in a quiet, out-of-the-way-cove but none of them can match the sheer majesty of a good boat knifing her way to windward.

This is the stuff that separates the men from the boys and it is, I believe, one of the real tragedies of the age that so few boats are built today that can go uphill in a lump of a sea. In the old days the idea was to design a boat that would sail well. Considerations like berths, full headroom and enclosed heads came a long way second. Today, boats are designed with every consideration, except sailing, first. Boats are built to house the greatest number of berths, contain the largest number of amenities, be the most popular, or the cheapest or to have the lowest rating, but I have yet to hear of a boat being sold on the basis of being the best sailer.

I have raced a lot of those floating motels with low ratings and have always been intensely jealous of the high-powered, long-legged beauties that disappeared over the horizon ahead while leaving us to bobble about. We could usually count on saving our time and going home with the silverware but I, for one, would rather have the thrill of sailing on a real sailing boat and buying my silverware in a store. Of course, there is always hope that someone will invent a rating formula that will not favor any particular kind of boat. Then, maybe the fat buckets that are so heavily favored now will find themselves having to really work for their laurels.

An Annapolis 44 starting life at United Boatbuilders.



BY PETE SMYTH, *photos by the author*

Love Affair

While the modern boats have undeniable virtues in their accommodations and their off the wind abilities, most of them have the undeniable defect: lack of stability. This, of course, is helped along by the Cruising Club formula and results in an appalling lack of sail carrying ability, a thing our ancestors never would have put up with.

On the day mentioned above when *Varuna*, the Annapolis 44 that I sailed last weekend, had her nose full of wind and loved every minute of it, *every other boat in the race* was either reefed, carried a small jib or both. A sad commentary indeed.

The Annapolis 44 has no trouble carrying sail, in fact she has very little trouble in any department except for the aforementioned poor, light weather running ability.

But then, most of the Annapolis 44 was designed by Billy Luders in the late '30s a golden era for yacht design. The design was originally created for the United States Naval Academy as a training boat. The Luder's yard in Stamford built three of them, in wood of course, and other yards subsequently built more to the same design. This entire fleet of Academy training boats was yawl rigged and without engines.

In the early 60's these yawls were beginning to show their age and it was decided to phase them out by replacing with fiberglass duplicates. United Boatbuilders in Bellingham, Washington got the nod on June 27, 1962 even though they were a continent away from Annapolis. The first boat passed its acceptance trials on April 23, 1963.

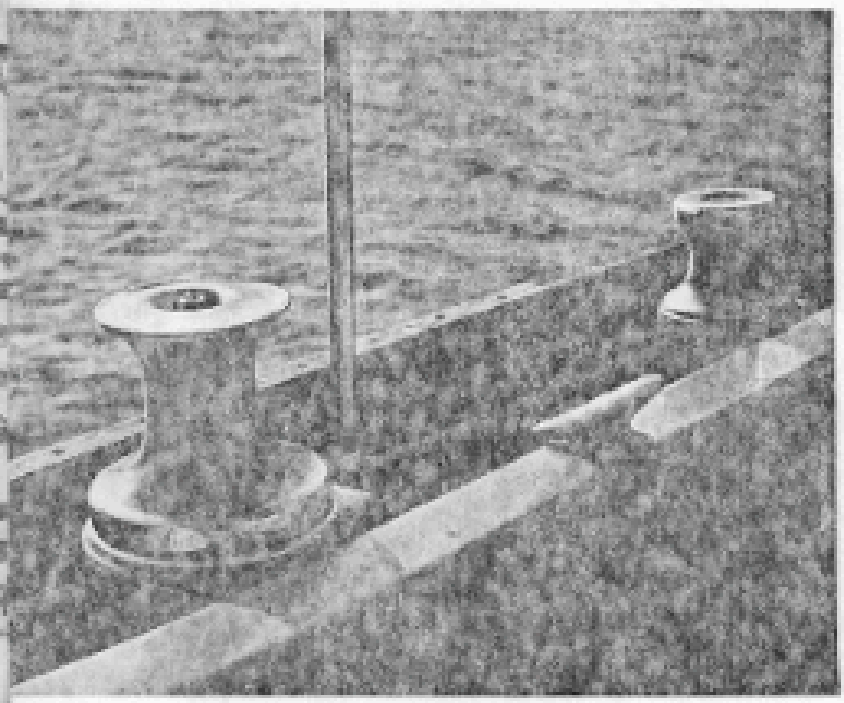
It is doubtful if a boat like the Annapolis 44 could ever be built in this country from the ground up. But, with most of the tooling costs already paid, it was easy enough for United to manufacture a civilian version. This version, with a sloop rig of 824 feet, is the Annapolis 44.

The season of 1963 saw two of them delivered to Seattle yachtsmen, Erle Zahn and George Reeve, and a third built and retained as a factory demonstrator. This was the first *Mai Tai*. Under the command of Charley Ross, four time winner of the Swiftsure Trophy, she and her two sisters swept the top three places in their class in the 1963 Swiftsure Race —a rather spectacular performance for a new class.

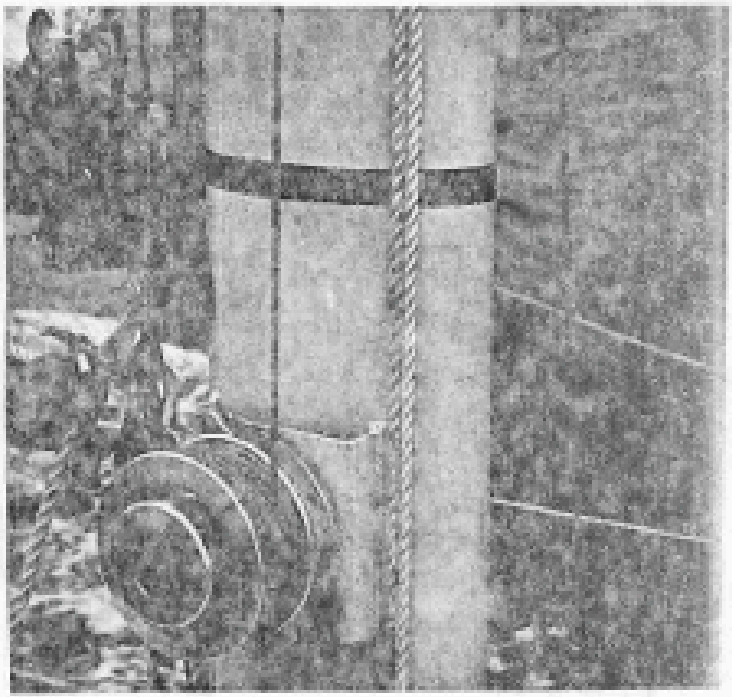
Just to prove it was no fluke, the Second *Mai Tai* (the first was sold to San Francisco) took another third in her class in 1964. Again she was skippered by Charley Ross, and among her crew in the Swiftsure was none other than your loyal correspondent, beginning his two-year love affair.

The Swiftsure that year wasn't much of a boat race, and those who would like to learn more about it are respectfully referred to the August 1964 issue of *Rudder*. The race was useful in that it contained about every type of weather from absolutely flat calm to more wind than anyone in their right mind would want. *Mai Tai* took it all like the lady she is: She romped along when the wind was blowing and suffered through it with the rest when it wasn't. She even survived a complete broach without carrying away as much as a cotter pin. She merely shook herself free of the water and sailed off with an indigent twitch of her transom at the madmen who were sailing her.

Mr. Luders did well. Nearly thirty years ago he designed a boat that is still an absolute delight to sail. In fact, I asked him if he would make any changes in the boat if he had the whole thing to do over again. Normally the most reticent of men when it comes to discussing his own boats, he allowed that there weren't any changes that he could think of. He



The winches are inadequate to strap in the genoa.



Mast hardware and sail track.

thought that "she's pretty good the way she is."

So did the crew that sailed *Varuna* in Block Island Race Week. This crew was largely composed of the staff of One Design Yachtsman magazine. The exceptions were the owner, Heaton Robertson, his wife and the skipper, George O'Day.

I talked to Bill King, of One-Design, about the group's reaction to the boat after a week of competition under varied circumstances. His feeling is that the opinion on board was that the boat definitely needed light weather sails, of which *Varuna* had none. During the Race Week, King reported, they did well with any kind of breeze but lost their shirts when it was light.

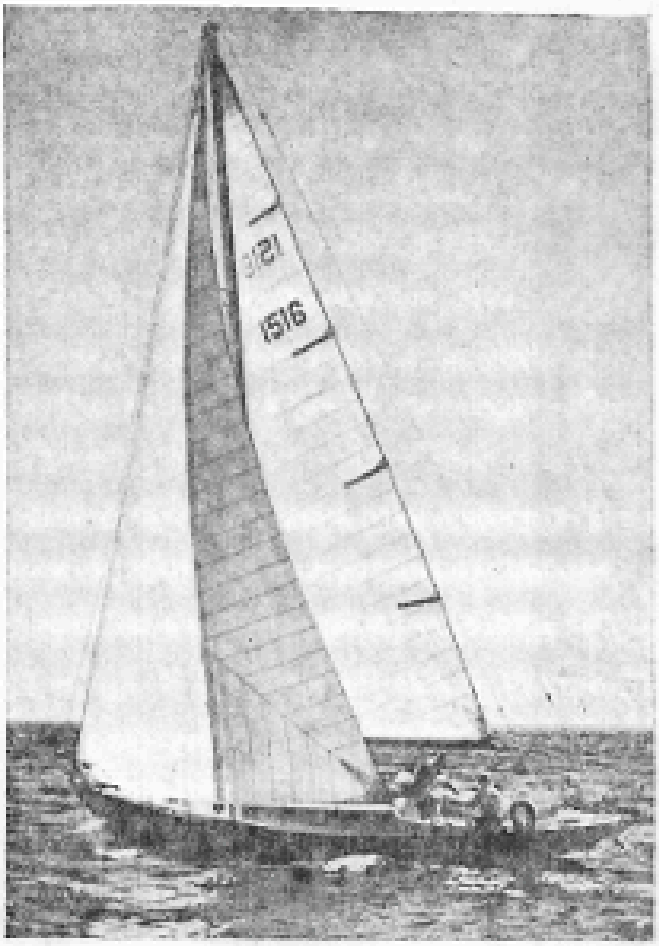
They attributed this to lack of light weight sails. Whether or not this is true or whether the boat is simply not too good in light wind is a point to be proven since no one I know has ever sailed on an Annapolis 44 that had light sails.

Another defect that they complained about, and with which my still aching muscles can only agree, is the lack of suitable winches for the genoa. Even in tandem, the number 6 Merrimans that are standard equipment for the boats are far too light to effectively sheet the jib home.

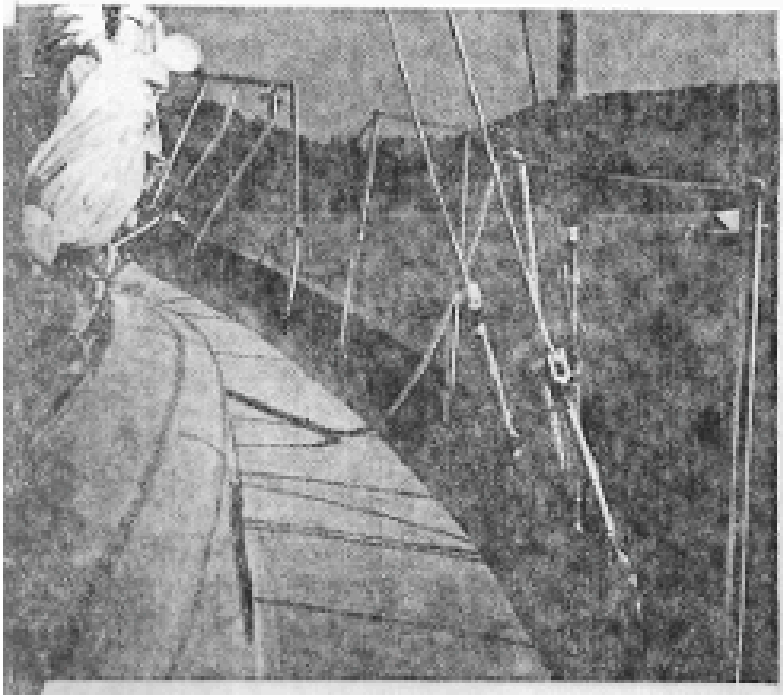
Another equipment defect is the undersized drums on the main and jib halliard reel winches. In neither case is there enough room to accommodate all the wire with attendant danger of turns of wire slipping off or snarling with each other.

I personally prefer to have a regular top action winch for the jib halliard. This saves a lot of time and needless cranking in changing jibs. It also allows the same winch to be used for more than one halliard.

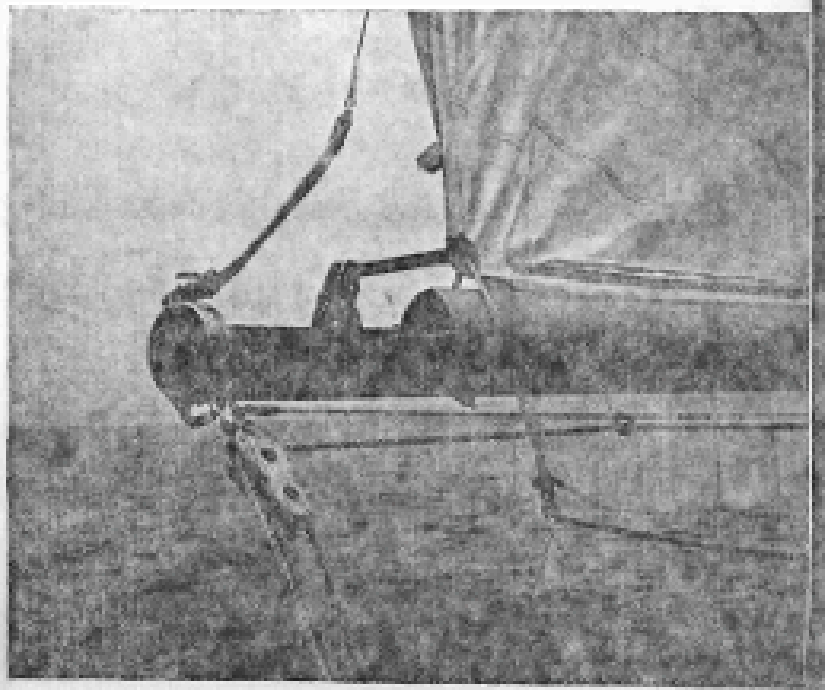
Continued on page 62



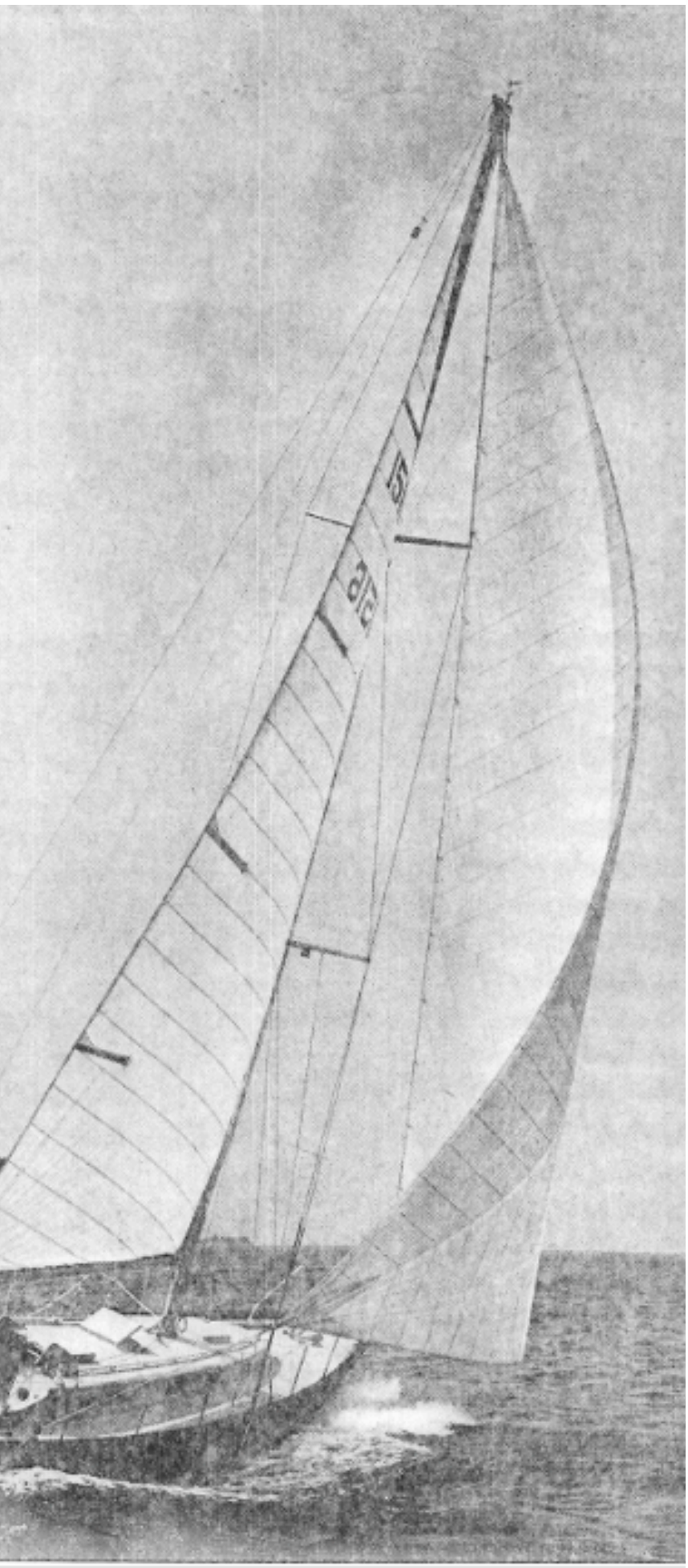
Working to weather.



Rugged reliability and simplicity are the keynotes.



End of the main boom. The short main is not a mistake.



Love Affair

Continued from page 21

The rest of the equipment is simple and strong. The general feeling that you get as you step aboard the 44 is one of great solidity and reliability. One of the men from the factory maintains that you can pick up her entire 12 ton weight from the top of the mast. Maybe you can and maybe you can't, but I don't know of anyone who is about to prove the point.

No proof is necessary of the strength in her hull, however. United does a great deal of fiberglass molding for the government which has tremendously high standards. In fact, their standards are so high, most fiberglass laminators cannot compete for Navy or Coast Guard work because they cannot turn out a sufficiently high quality product.

United, and their craftsmen, are equipped and skilled to perform work of this quality and this nature, which is really semi-custom fabrication. Very few companies have the staff, and even fewer have the desire to produce boats of the quality that is routine at Bellingham. It is natural then, that their commercial products are also of an outstandingly high quality. It can be safely said that the Annapolis 44 is probably the best built fiberglass auxiliary on the market in this country.

Quality, unfortunately, isn't free and the price of the 44 is nearly $50,000 for the basic boat. Actually, with the goodies you'd need for racing, the total would nudge the $60,000 mark.

This sounds like a great deal of money, and to writers and other vagrants it is, but it isn't that much more than comparable boats such as the US 41, which carries a list price of $44,750, the Seafarer 45 at $45,000 or the Bermuda 40 at $38,500. It's still, however, a pretty impressive pile of pennies.

Now that I have spent 2,000 words in generalities, its time for a few specifics. The boat under discussion, as you probably have guessed, is 44 feet 1 inch long on deck. Her waterline is an even 30 feet, she is a moderate 11 feet wide and her five ton keel extends six feet underwater.

She is laid out below for six people in two compartments. There are two vee-berths in the forward cabin followed by the head to port and hanging lockers to starboard. The main cabin (or saloon as it used to be called until the WCTU gained so much headway and changed it to salon which is too effete to even be mentioned) is next aft with upper and lower berths to starboard and a big, comfortable U-shaped dinette to port which converts into a real playground of a double bed at night.

The after end of the saloon (there, I said it) is taken up by the galley to port and the chart table topped icebox to starboard. This last is a poor arrangement since it can only safely be opened on the port tack, down wind or at anchor. There are little, removable battens to hold the ice and food in when you're heeled to port, but it is a nuisance at best.

The entire interior is paneled. No fiberglass shows at all. Even the usual fiberglass headliner is supplanted by a vinyl one trimmed out in mahogany. The joiner work throughout, while perhaps not up to the standards of Nevins, Herreshoff et al, is certainly superior to most production woodwork.

The boat is carpeted throughout with vinyl decking underneath. This carpeting must be lifted to fill the 120 gallon water tank that is under the cabin sole. While this is a great place for the tank, it is an atrocious place for the fill. Why it couldn't be carried up to the main deck is beyond me. There is probably a good reason but I don't know what it is.

While we're on the subject of defects in mechanics, the single battery for the engine and the lights might well be mentioned. *Varuna*, for example, has a BMC diesel engine which requires pre-heating and therefore considerable electrical power to get started. Even if the battery is fully charged, an evening's moderate use of power will drain the battery to or beyond the danger point.

Varuna has also experienced considerable trouble with this particular engine, which is no fault of United, of course. However, whereas a full battery might have many times been able to kick the engine to life, the single battery was usually at least a little depleted and therefore unable to do anything with the reluctant engine. The net result has been a lot of practice for Robertson in sailing to and from docks and moorings.

A boat of this size and complexity requires at least two batteries arranged so that one is always full of pep and power. This is easy enough to do and, again, it's surprising that the Annapolis 44 is not arranged in this manner.

Varuna spent most of her time in Block Island without the benefit of auxiliary power, and it was sheer pleasure to watch George O'Day, a consummate master at boat handling, threading her through the anchored fleet and into her slip under sail.

O'Day's skill gave this virtuoso performance the grace of a pas de deux, and *Varuna's* superb handling qualities gave him a partner that was fully equal to his abilities. Anyone who is used to the handling qualities of the shoal, tubby centerboarders that make up so much of our cruising-racing fleet is in for a delightful shock when he takes the wheel of a 44. When you put an Annapolis 44's helm down, she comes about *then*, not minutes later. And she carries all her way right through the tack, going nearly as fast afterwards as before.

I have never been aboard a recalcitrant or balky 44, no matter who was handling her, and I have been aboard them during some pretty hairy maneuvers which I will merely call misguided. Some of them would have resulted in disaster with a lesser boat.

To finish my psalm of praise, I want to bring up a quality that I rarely hear talked about, probably because few boats have it and fewer sailors would know how to take advantage of it. That is the ability to hang up almost into the wind with practically no way on at all and still be under perfect control.

All boats can be stalled close to the wind, but as the speed slacks off the boat's lateral resistance disappears and the boat falls off until she picks up speed.

The 44, along with other good boats, can be pinched unmercifully and aimed almost directly at the eye of the wind. They will not make much progress to windward, but they'll make a little and that little is sufficient to give their keels good solid bites on the water and hence keep them under solid control.

An outstanding boat in this regard is the International One Design which is really a small 6 meter with a cabin. I sailed one of them for two years and moored her at the head of Mamaroneck Harbor, New York. The channel in Mamaroneck is very narrow and it is perhaps a mile to open water from where I was berthed. Most days required tacking all the way out or all the way in, or both. Many times, it was impractical or impossible to tack. At times like this, we could trim the boat in as flat as a board and pinch up until we were a very few degrees off the wind. We could hold this indefinitely until we had squeezed by whatever object we had to fetch or we had room to tack. It is a very handy quality to have in a boat, and one that the 44 has in ample measure.

At one time, the fellow at the helm was paying attention to everything except sailing. The boat's bow crept closer and closer to the wind. Eventually the masthead fly was streaming almost directly aft, but the boat kept inching forward, while the man at the wheel kept talking and carrying on. Most modern boats would have lost control and been all over the ocean. The 44 plodded docily along, waiting for the helmsman to stop yapping and start sailing.

Thus endeth my mash note about the 44. I freely, even proudly, admit to a great deal of prejudice. Maybe I'm utterly blind to a serious flaw in her design. I don't think so because, recognizing my own prejudice, I went out of my way to solicit other people's opinions. I have yet to hear a dissenting word, although some of them are not as rabid about her as I.

The concensus is that if you're in the market for a substantial auxiliary for racing and cruising, you'd have a hard time finding one that was better built or handled better than the Annapolis 44.

* * * * * * * *

Preparing this article has been a labor of love on my part. When this series was started, this boat was in the forefront of my mind. I'd apologize for the onesidedness of this report except that I think every man is entitled to his own opinion about what is an ideal boat.

I have expressed my opinion, and it is only fair that I offer equal space to other people's views. I therefore most earnestly solicit suggestions and opinions as to what boats I should sail and report on.

I have said what kind of boat I like—what kind of boat do you like?

Please forward your BRIEF *suggestions to Rudder, Sailing Reports, 67 West 44th Street, New York, New York.*