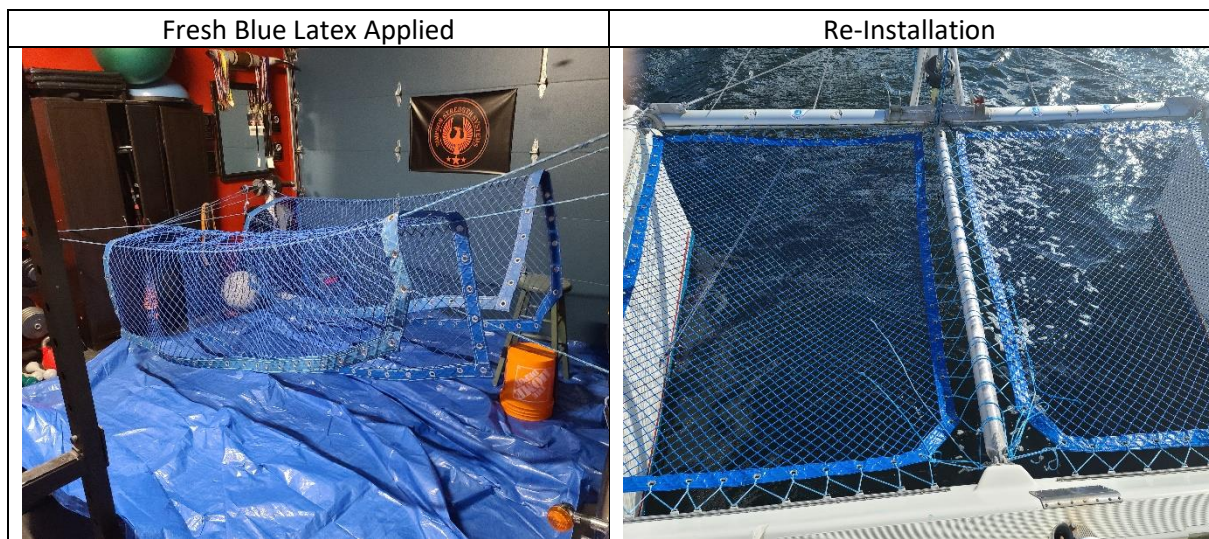


## Boat Slaves

By Rae Simpson August 2021

2021 – a perfect spring for tackling refit jobs on Mustang Sally while we wait and hope for COVID to wind down. Alas – navigating the shoals and reefs of boat maintenance in the time of COVID was challenging. Three months later (mid-August 2021), we are nearly, almost, just about ready to start our summer sailing. But - oh the twists and turns on the refit course. I said to myself at the start: “This won’t take long, just a bit of work and presto - boating nirvana will re-emerge.” Twelve weeks later and still counting. Most boaters understand. Even so, we do our best to pretend it is all just a ‘piece of cake.’

First up was an R&R on the tramp. Early spring my partner Sharon and I removed it, repainted it with a nice bright blue latex. Replaced all the slides and a few of the rivets. Then re-installed, trying out some slippery new dyneema line. Each side is one continuous line. Looking much refreshed and much safer.



2021 was the year I planned to remove 22 years of accumulated bottom paint. I may have put the Interlux CSC ablative paint on thicker than necessary or perhaps ablative is just a buzz word that applies to 10 knot plus vessels. Regardless the existing paint was getting ugly: - caking and cracking. Due time to fix. I booked a haul out for late April at Steveston Marine in Richmond, BC.

Sanding old bottom paint is my favorite activity – said nobody ever! I read about a soda blasting technique which media from the eastern USA were raving. Seemed a good idea and an escape from sanding. I just had to throw money at it and presto bottom paint gone. Somehow between Marine Blast and me - soda blast became sand blast. That stripped the bottom paint off just fine. Along with the bottom paint came 90% of the previous barrier coat and 20% of the gelcoat. Did I mention the hundred or so tiny holes in the gelcoat?

### After the Blast



It was nothing to do with the blast but, a half dozen blisters at the secondary joint where the mini-keels joined the hull emerged. These swelled up as the sun heated the hulls but were otherwise invisible. The hulls are vacuum bagged closed cell foam so a little water won't hurt them. It seemed like the resin did not get sucked into 100% of the gaps in the foam, then - over time, water wormed its way in to a few of those gaps.

Ok, head down, get going, grind or drill, mix and fill, sand and fair. Repeat ad nauseum. Half a dozen of the small gelcoat holes leaked a stinky clear fluid. These were flared out, dried out, filled and faired. The big blisters were ground out, vacuumed, dried out, filled with epoxy, and faired. Respect to Ron Tomas who helped with materials, tools, and technical advice.

### Filling and Fairing



After two weeks, things were looking pretty good, so we applied the first barrier coat which revealed minor flaws in my fairing. Back to filling and fairing. This was now four weeks on the hard.

New Stripes and the Fifth Barrier Coat



Bottom Paint on



I looked enviously at the 42-foot classic full keel sailboat next to us in the yard. The owner found a sander willing to take on the job of removing his bottom paint. The sander worked hard in full coveralls and whole face dusk mask for a week. I didn't see much residual damage like occurred on Mustang Sally.

Meanwhile, Sharon attacked Mustang Sally's tired old floor coverings. The tiles we laid down 22 years ago were fading and beginning to lift and warp at the edges. An upgrade was needed. Sharon spent days with a Fein tool, chisel, and scraper, ripping off the stubborn old tiles. A tough dirty job carried out with dust mask, gloves, glasses at the start of a heat wave. It was impossible not to gouge the floorboards a little. Why not do some more filling and fairing on the floorboards?

We had installed a hard top, built by Tim Postie a year or two back, and did a quick and dirty job adapting the old dodger to the new hardtop. Over the winter Sharon tried to modify the old dodger to fit properly. I thought it was fine – but Sharon was just not happy with the results. Lucky for us, Master Craft Boat Coverings' shop was right next door to the boat. Frank managed to build an awesome new dodger for us within our steadily lengthening time at Strait Marine.

Professionally Built Dodger



In parallel with the floorboards and dodger work, we used stripe remover wheels to lift the scratched up and faded old lower vinyl hull stripes. We laid down fresh bright red and blue stripes. Under those stripes, we put on a total of five Interprotec epoxy barrier coats. Those will seal the hull watertight for the next 20 years or so. We also changed the oil in the legs, replaced all zincs, inspected the rudder shafts and the obligatory topside wash and wax. Back in the water – our two weeks haul out lasted 6 weeks.

### Finally Splashing Mustang Sally



Just enough time to sail back across the Salish Sea to our Ladysmith Raven Point marina to strip the old floor tiles out of the salon then sail the boat down to Canoe Cove for our appointment with 3C Yacht Services. 3C had agreed to install the replacement faux mahogany and holly vinyl floor from Plasteak. Buggars! After specifying an *epoxy* filler for floor fairing, the turkey's used a zinc based product that dissolved in water! I've experience with that product, and it turns to mush in high humidity situations in a year or two. No amount of persuading and showing them the manufactures spec's could make them redo it right. Reluctantly I stopped work. We headed back our Raven Point moorage with a disgustingly ugly plywood and resin floor covered with a poorly installed water-soluble filler and a bad taste in our mouths.

Ugly Salon Floor



Window Tricks



Our salon windows were crazed from the sun and showing spots and scratches - 32 years of use, much of that in the tropics. Last fall (2020), I lined up Plexi-Klass of Victoria to supply and cut the acrylic glass windows, but the rains had begun so we delayed to this spring. Then COVID travel restriction made our supplier inaccessible. As soon as restrictions were eased, we shelved the floor project and tackled our windows. Vic at Plexi-Klass cut acrylic for the side and smaller front windows

and hatches. He could heat and bend the small windows, but the big front window had compound curves that were beyond his capabilities.

4 of 5 windows new windows removed and re-installed. Arduous work. The Fein tool could break the old Sika bonds, but wedges, chisels and a machete were required to reach the bonds where the Fine tool couldn't reach. Then meticulously scrapping and cleaning the tenacious old Sika off by mechanical means.

To install the big, curved acrylic side windows we used ropes, weights, suction cups and Sika 295 UV (polyurethane) to glue and bend those windows to match the boat's curves. The ropes and weights were left on for 3 weeks to ensure the curves in the acrylic were permanent.

#### Window Tricks



Brian at Gilcrest Glass Bending in Cobble Hill took on the complex manufacture of the front window. Brian is a perfectionist; he works mainly with tempered glass and sometimes with plastics. He manufactured much of the special glass that Waterline Yachts used in their magnificent line of steel boats. He also supplied complex windows for another cat we know – Sarabi. We waited patiently as Brian meticulously built a custom jig, developed and debugged heating techniques and procedures to create a replacement.

Back at our marina (Raven Point in Ladysmith) we met an enterprising young couple who had moved west from Quebec. Stefane has lots of floor installation expertise and agreed to correct 3C's errors and complete the floor installation. His work was outstanding.



Last winter Sharon had methodically manufactured a sail stack. The sail stack would make it easier to raise and lower the mainsail. We completed the first cut installation while waiting on the front window. It will need some minor modifications, but it makes lowering and raising the big mainsail a breeze. Ease of use is going to be the priority as we continue to enjoy sailing through our eighth decade.

Finally, we get the call from Brian, the front window was now finished to his high standard. We brought it back and rough fitted it. Perfect. Awesome

improvement over the old window. Brian eliminated the visual distortion at the major bend in the window. Of course, now the rain starts. A scramble ensued as we rushed to catch the drips and slow the leaks from the unsealed window. The next day, too much wind to primer or safely maneuver the window. Day 3 installation went well.

#### Sexy New Windows



Hooray, boat slavery is done (mostly) for this year, and we will squeeze in some boating nirvana before and after Sharon's knee replacement voyage. Oh – oh. Crap! Now the toilet needs an R & R