



Spending Time with Joe Reid

★ by Allen J. Paltell ★

When you enter Holiday Point Marina, you're greeted by Joe Reid's 10-year-old green Volvo wagon. Reid is known as "Mr. Cold Molded Epoxy/Mast & Mallet/Thomas Point Yachts."

A 1955 Mathews 42 stands proudly next to the shop. Last winter, George Sass's pale yellow Thomas Point *Saw Dust*, home from her Great Loop trip, got a little TLC in the spring. Reid had a 28-foot Maynard Lowery deadrise in the shop waiting for an engine transplant. Reid actually has a custom-made metal nameplate with the words Lowery Craft in cursive letters. Reid says, "If I have a hero, it is Lowery."

In his shop, for a few minutes, we just stood there, not talking. The fans hummed, Lightning Hopkins streamed from the blues channel on the radio, and a cool breeze picked up varnish and paint smells from the corners of the shop. A tack cloth sat on the work bench next to engine coupling nuts and bolts laid out for assembly. It's clearly a shop where people work every day. Things are orderly, but "in use." When Reid talks, his hands remain at his sides, mouth moving, blue eyes steady. He thinks before he speaks. He sounds like a well-tuned, eight-cylinder gas engine at idle.

Reid gets more than his fair share of maritime industry attention. His work with wood and epoxy is legendary. Joe Evans wrote about Reid's collaboration with naval architect Mike Kaufman in the July 2005 PropTalk. I wanted to talk with Reid about changes since then.

"It's been awhile since I got an order for a new Thomas Point," Reid says matter-of-

factly. Thomas Points are the cold-molded custom power cruisers Reid likes to build with Kaufman. There are about a dozen of them out there now, ranging in size from 28 to 44 feet. When times were booming in the early and mid-2000s, the shop usually had one under construction and another waiting to be started. For those of us who like lobster-style boats adapted for the Bay, a Thomas Point is as good as it gets.

"We have had to replace our large new-

Simmons Sea Skiff that he plans to build this winter. "She'll be fitted with a small four-stroke outboard, easy to tow, and easy to enjoy." Reid adds, "People seem to want smaller boats that get them out on the water for a few hours or a day with less hassle and cost."

Reid has been working on boats for about three decades. Most of us who have followed his career or coveted one of his boats assume he is just a boat guy. But, having seen him tooling about the yard in an old Porsche convertible, I change the subject to cars. He loves cars, unusual ones, too. "Oh my," he says when I ask him to name some of the cars he has owned over the years. "Well, there was the Citroën, the one with the hydraulic suspension that moved up and down when you pull up to the curb, and the Hilman, a British four-cylinder station wagon that I had to have, a couple Volkswagon buses and Beetles, a few Volvos, including an 1800, and my Porsche. It's an old one. I bought it from a customer when times were different," he says.

Despite the heat outside, it is cool in the shop. Reid is thinking. He can tell I'm ready to wrap things up. He hesitates for a few seconds and says, "I have seen lots of kindness and generosity in this business. We help one another out during good times and bad."

"Do you plan to retire?" I ask. "No," he says without hesitation. "I think I'll just slow down a little." I point out that Lowery was still working in his 80s... up until the time he died in a car accident. Reid smiles and his blue eyes light up. He looks down at the Lowery Craft insignia on the bench. "He had a good life." We both agree.



Joe Reid, a car guy at heart.

boat work with smaller new boats plus maintenance, repair, and restoration of older wooden boats," says Reid. "These are different times, and they have lasted longer than most of us expected..." Reid adds, "But the boat business is filled with good people; people who know how to adapt to changes and take care of each other and our customers." He shows me a sketch of a new 22-foot open boat reminiscent of a