

PARKER SNEAD RETURNS TO FORESTPORT AFTER BOATING MUCH OF THE COUNTRY

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I have been a lucky man for myriad reasons. Perhaps the best one was that I was able to make my living in pursuits I enjoyed. I was able to look forward to the next day's work. I am happy for those who can say the same. One of those is Parker Snead of Forestport.

I have known Parker, or Parky as he has been known by most locals, for years. Parker and his lovely wife Joan are the owner-operators of Forestport Boat Company. His roots in this area and love for boats had their beginnings at the same time – round the age of four.

He recalled the long trip in the back seat of a '52 Ford from his home in Richmond, VA, to the family camp on Honnedaga Lake. The camp had been in the family since the turn of the century. Access from the road at the head of the lake was by boat.

They arrived near midnight and a honk of the horn alerted Grandpere to their arrival. The absolute silence of the remote lake was soon broken by the VAROOM of the Chris Craft's powerful motor as grandfather backed out of the boathouse. Shortly thereafter he pulled up to the dock and the eager passengers and the luggage were stowed aboard and they were on their way to camp.

It was the beginning of a love affair that persists to this day. Four-year-old Parky was hooked on boats and boating and particularly in classic mahogany runabouts. The beautiful varnish and polished chrome created a spark that endures to this day.

In 1968, he bought a 50-slip marina in Lake of the Ozarks, MO, after vacationing in the area. They had specialized in wooden cruiser restoration, which further intrigued Parky. The master woodworker stayed on after Parky became the new owner. It was from him that he had his first real taste of wood boat restoration and refinishing.

The Ozarks did not match his love for the Adirondacks or his family; he sold the marina and joined his family in Dallas. Landing a job selling used boats for the Dallas Boat Mart, he soon became its manager and subsequently its owner. The oil embargo of '74 dampened his enthusiasm and he moved to Florida to start a charter boat business.

Business was good and life was great. He bought a 1966 wood 57-foot Chris Craft motor yacht and chartered to the Bahamas, Florida Keys and the East Coast. On a 1978 charter to Key West, Parky met and fell in love with Joan Cooke. They married on their yacht Abacos, in 1980.

Together they boated as captain and crew for the next six years. They ranged from the Bahamas, both coasts to Florida, Texas, Maine, the Chesapeake, Hudson River, Erie Canal, Thousand Islands, all the Great Lakes, Hudson Bay, North Channel and Trent Severn waterway in Canada.

Parker had taken over the family camp at Honnedaga in the late '70s. The couple missed their place in the woods and came ashore in 1986 in Forestport. They started the Forestport Boat Company; the business flourished and they have restored over 250 classic boats, including carpentry, upholstery, wiring, engines and drive trains.

The Sneads are especially proud of completely restoring the camp's 1950 Chris Craft and Parky's grandfather's long deck launch. She (Gypsy) was the first powerboat on Honnedaga Lake. It was brought in to the lake about 1905 over the snow and ice behind six horses. The Gypsy was once more returned to the lake in 1979, completely restored.

I reiterate in closing: Parker is one of those who have been fortunate to make a special interest in life's work. He provides a unique service in an area he loves. If that were not enough in itself, he has a helpmate in Joanie who enjoys their work as much as he does.