

## Lyford Stanley

Hall Quarry, Maine: The John Williams Boat Company mourns the loss of its main boat designer, Lyford Leverett Stanley, 82, who died on Nov. 30, 2007.

Stanley was part of the John Williams Boat Company from the beginning. An accomplished wooden boat builder, Lyford could tell that fiberglass was about to take over the fishing boat industry. He wanted to be part of this new medium.

Lyford and Jock Williams, the company's president and founder, started talking in 1971 about making a fiberglass mold from Lyford's 36-foot wooden lobster boat design. By 1973, the two began building what would become the Stanley 36 fiberglass production lobster boat.



The Stanley 36

Over 100 Stanley 36 boats have been launched and the model is still being built today. Lyford designed the majority of the boats sold by John Williams Boat Company. Lyford also created a Stanley 28, Stanley 36, a Stanley 38 and a Stanley 39. At the time of his death, he was working on a Stanley 42.

He built his first boat in 1950, when he was 25. Lacking a workshop, Lyford used he and his wife, Norma's, bedroom to

build the 22-foot wooden lobster boat, Little One. He had to remove the bedroom wall to get the boat out when it was time for launching.

Lyford was an authentic, traditional Maine boat builder. "He had an innate sense for the shape, proportion and performance characteristics of a properly-built boat," said Williams.

That innate sense for good boat design came from a life lived on the water.

In addition to building and designing boats, Lyford was also was a lobsterman, scalloper, halibut fisherman, purse seiner, clammer, harbor master, tour boat skipper and water taxi driver.

When they began working together, Williams said he learned a tremendous amount about boat building through Lyford's life. "We imbued that right into the boat," said Williams. "The things he knew from his experience in the water, he incorporated into the design of his boats," Williams said.

Lyford knew the important elements in designing and building a boat that could handle the tough conditions in New England waters. "We were looking for stability<the way a boat rides in a sea; how it takes a wave, how it turns up into the wind and how long it will stay up into the wind before it blows off," said Williams.

Lyford created his boats from a half-model that he would carve as a guide for each project. "Each boat was unique unto itself and he was always trying to fulfill and improve the performance," Williams said.

He had an eye for consistency in boat-hull shapes and contours. "He could quickly size up a boat on land and envision this boat in the water, then readily determine the position of the actual waterline," said Williams.

"This was a natural and intuitive process for Lyford, as opposed to a predetermined mathematical calculation."

After the success of the Stanley 36, Lyford carved a half-model for the Stanley 44, in 1977. At the time, the State of Maine's natural resources department was looking for a new warden patrol boat. The state picked Lyford's design and purchased two of the vessels. An additional 56 more hulls were molded and finished for fishermen throughout New England.

Lyford Stanley was born on Swan's Island on February 4, 1926, the youngest of four children. When Lyford was just two months old, his family moved out to Great Duck Island, five miles off Mount Desert Island, where his father became the lighthouse keeper.

When Lyford was attending Pemetic High School in Southwest Harbor, he became friends with one of the teachers, George Sawyer. It was Sawyer who encouraged Lyford to pursue a career in boat building. Also at this time he worked as an apprentice at the Sam Davis Boatyard in Bass Harbor.



Lyford and his wife, Norma

Lyford married Norma Sprague of Gotts Island in 1948; the couple had three daughters. During this part of his life, Lyford was part of the cleanup crew cutting down burnt trees from the Mt. Desert fire of 1947, went clamming and worked at the Underwood sardine factory.

He then got a job at the Frenchman Bay Boating Company. He also worked as a boat builder for the Southwest Boat Company and the Henry R. Hinckley Company.

Williams got to know Lyford's wife, Norma, first. In the 1960s, Williams ran the fiberglass production program at Hinckley, and Norma was one of his employees. "She kept telling me that I should get

together with Lyford about building lobster boats in glass," said Williams.

After building over 18 boats, Lyford felt that his 36-foot lobster boat was as good as he could make it. "We talked about making a glass mold off that boat, and that started the whole thing off," Williams said.

As someone who is from away (Williams grew up in Martha's Vineyard) Williams could tell that Lyford was assessing him at the start of their relationship.

"Once we understood each other, we became really close friends and trusted each other, intensely," Williams said.

Founded in 1971, the John Williams Boat Company combines the best of traditional Maine boat building techniques with modern technology and the kind of personal service that only a small company can provide. With just over twenty employees, our crew can take a very personal interest in your project. We can respond to a customer's very specific requests.

The company builds a line of seven beautiful and unique boats, which enjoy the ideal combination of form and function. The late Lyford Stanley, who was involved with the John Williams Boat Company from the beginning, designed five of these boats. In addition to building yachts, the company also offers full repair and restoration services, plus facilities for indoor and outdoor storage for 100 boats.

Jock Williams, the company's founder, has been around boats all his life. He served a year's apprenticeship in wooden boatbuilding at Paul Molich's shipyard in Hundstead, Denmark. He then joined the Hinckley Company as fiberglass production manager before founding the John Williams Boat Company. With a background in traditional wooden boatbuilding and a full understanding of the advantages of fiberglass hull construction, his boats incorporate the best of both worlds. As president, Jock must spend time in the office tending to business, but his first love has always been "simply messing around in boats."

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