

## **Robert H. Baker (Nov. 1927 - Sept. 1983)**

Beginning with childhood summers spent in the bays and marshes of Westport, Massachusetts, Robert "Bob" Baker loved boats. Even as a child, he would find old boats and, often as possible, bring them home with him. Out of practical experience and careful observation, Bob arrived at his own remarkable technical and aesthetic understanding of watercraft.

Bob was an artist and a craftsman of the highest order, and his interests and talents are evident in his work. As Jon Wilson of **WoodenBoat Magazine** wrote, "Bob loved things traditional, and taught others to love them, but he was not bound by tradition. ... His unfailing eye for proportion and detail was thus the object of considerable admiration for all who knew him. His subtle touch was in evidence everywhere around his shop, his house, his boats, and in the numerous designs he created."

When Bob Baker died in 1983, he left a legacy of extraordinary work — beautiful boats and boat designs, models, carvings, and a large collection of photos, sketches and plans. In many instances, Bob's work captured and illuminated the vanishing craft of wooden boat building. "There is not much new around," he said. "It's really old stuff reworked or modern ideas are designed without environment or medium in mind. Eventually. People will return to what does work. Like traditional small craft."

Bob spent his life with boats, sailing them, drawing them, restoring them, and, whenever possible, taking lines off them. His plans and drawings are a reflection of his love and understanding of design and of the sea. Bob had the ability to see and understand shape, an art that few people achieve and this art of perception is what guided him all his life.

## **Baker Boat Works**

The history of Baker Boat Works began with Bob in Middletown, RI at St. George's School where he taught boat building, under the name Dragon Boat Shop. His shop grew and developed, moving around the southeast area between Newport, RI, Warren, RI, and Westport, MA. When Bob left St. George's School the shop changed to Baker Boat Works and Restoration where

Bob and Anne "Pete" Doolittle began working together. Bob focused on boats while Pete focused on house restoration, though each often helped the other with their perspective works.

In 1966 Bob and Pete married. Each had several children from previous marriages and together they had two children. When Bob died Pete (Anne Baker) held up his legacy and began Baker Boats Works plans sales. Plan sales began from a paper catalog she created and published, then later the catalog moved to the internet where it can now be found on By-The-Sea.com and via Mystic Seaport Collections.

In 2011, Anne "Pete" Baker died. Because interest continues in the works of Bob, his children continued to make the plans available. However, in the greater hope of allowing the works and plans of Robert "Bob" H. Baker to be available to anyone interested all of his works (including plans sales) have been donated to the Mystic Seaport Collections Library in Mystic CT.

Just prior to her death, Pete finished a short book about the life of Bob. In September 2014 the book was finally published with much help and great effort by friends and family. The book is titled *Robert H. Baker - A Legacy of Small Craft*.

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For more information about Bob, Pete, or Baker Boat Works Baker two of the Baker children, Steven and Sarah, can be contacted by email at:

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