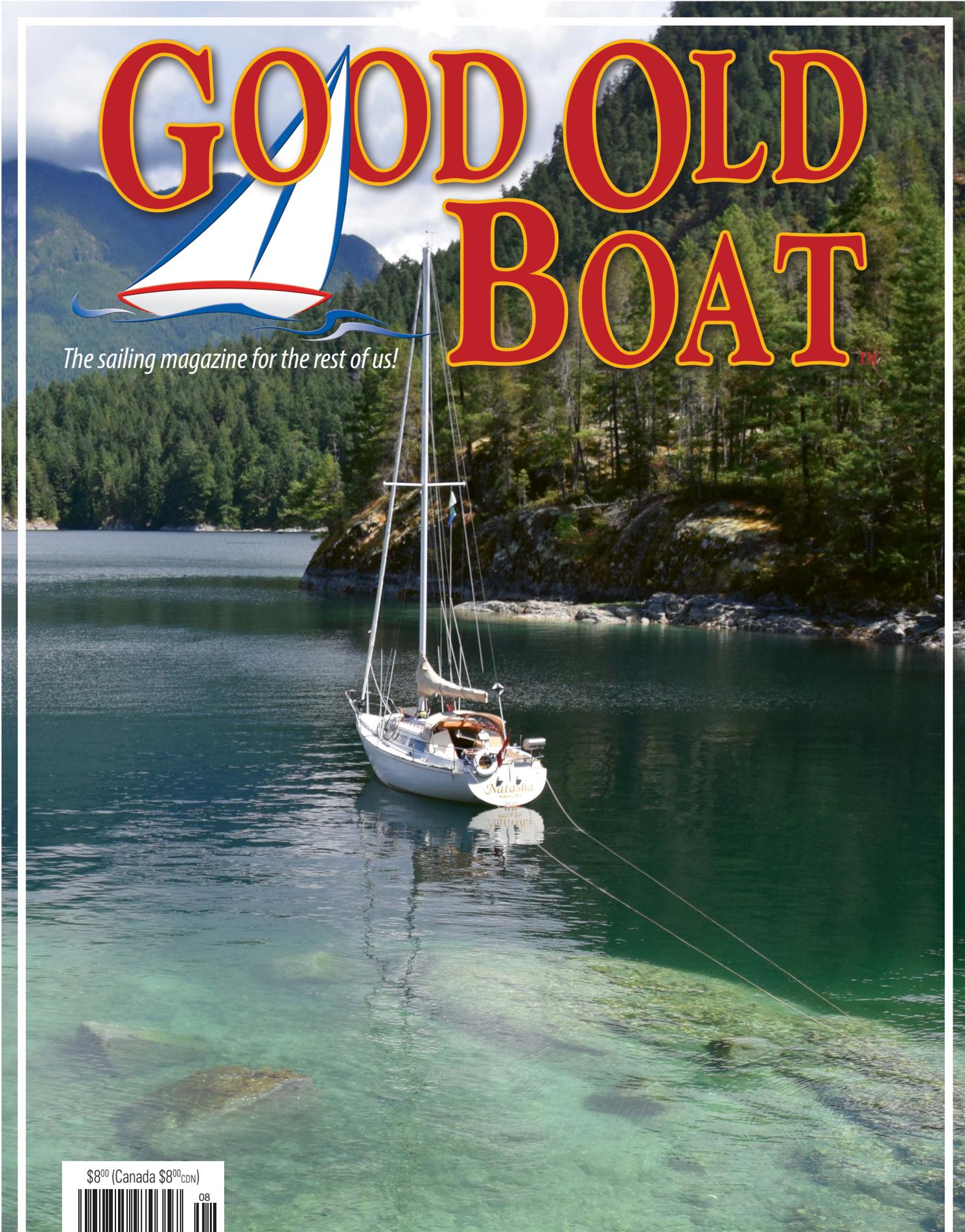


# GOOD OLD BOAT™

*The sailing magazine for the rest of us!*



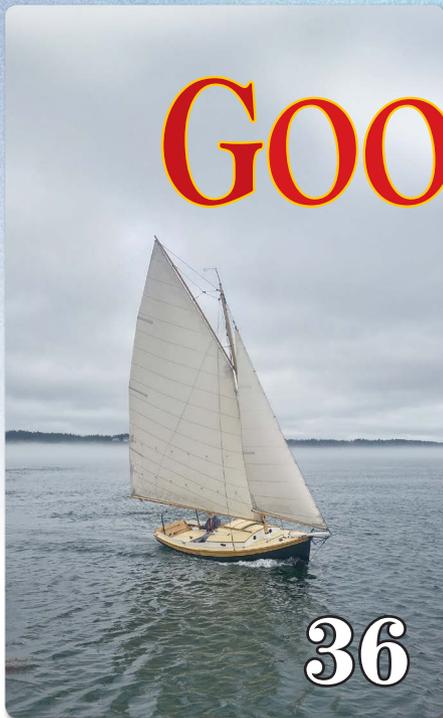
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One can only presume that, on the day George Vancouver named Desolation Sound, in British Columbia, the weather was not the same as when longtime contributor Bert Vermeer took this photograph.

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# Refurbishing a Spinnaker Pole

BY ROBB LOVELL



It gets a new look and loses its fishhooks

**W**e were in the middle of a race and Sam was up front, jibing the spinnaker pole over to the other side of the boat. “Ouch! Dammit!” She drew back her hand from the pole. A moment later, drops of blood hit the deck. Poor Sam had laid the pad of her thumb wide open. Fortunately, it was nothing a couple of Band-Aids and some Polysporin couldn’t fix.

We finished the race without further incident, and back at the dock, Sam and I went up to the foredeck to examine the spinnaker pole. The wire bridle on the pole lift was badly frayed, and she had caught her thumb on one of the fishhooks. I felt terrible, and promised her I’d fix the problem.

The pole itself was straight and free of dents, but the anodizing had worn off in large sections. The trip lines, also made of wire, were loose and frayed as well. It happened that this was the last

race of the season, so I carried the pole down the dock, strapped it to the roof of my Jeep, and added it to my winter list of things to fix.

My plan was to simply replace the wire bridle and trip wires with new wire, but when poking around online, I learned that many racers are replacing wire bridles with Dyneema and trip lines with thin Spectra cord.

Dyneema rope is approximately 15 times stronger than steel wire of the same weight, and it is easy to splice. It worked well as a replacement for the bridle. I tied simple loops in the Dyneema to replace the stainless steel rings that had served as attachment points for the topping lift and downhaul shackles. I was pleased to see them gone, as the old rings were forever banging on the deck and gelcoat.

I considered coating the pole with self-etching primer and then sanding

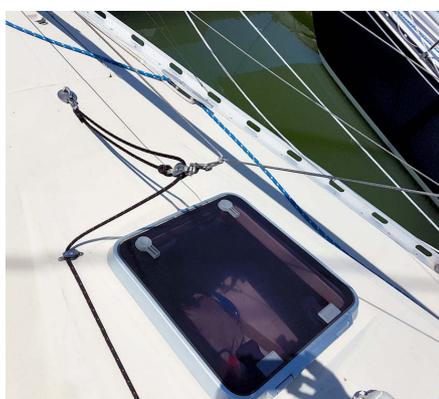
and spray-painting it, but I figured that if the anodizing had worn off the pole, then spray paint wasn’t likely to hold up either. After a bit of research, I concluded that powder coating would be the way to go.

In the powder-coating process, a positively charged powder is sprayed onto a clean grounded metal surface, to which it sticks electrostatically. The metal surface is then baked at a high temperature, at which the powder melts into a uniform film that cools to a hard coating that is more durable than paint.

---

**The spinnaker-pole topping lift attaches to a loop made with an overhand knot in the gray Dyneema bridle, top left. The bridle is attached at each end of the pole with eye splices, top right. For the trip line that opens the pole-end jaws, Robb used brightly colored Spectra cord.**

To make it easier for the crew to handle the newly red spinnaker pole in strong winds, Robb rerigged the downhaul, with a 2:1 tackle, below.



I found a local company willing to powder coat my spinnaker pole for the very reasonable sum of \$75. After they had media-blasted the pole to clean it, then powder coated it, I was left with a durable and beautiful finish on my very red spinnaker pole.

I followed this up with a bit of splicing work, and installed the new Dyneema bridle and a set of brightly colored Spectra trip lines.

In the spring, I completed the project by finally addressing the fact

that hauling in on the downhaul had always been difficult in a strong wind. I dead-ended the downhaul at the deck and attached a block-and-tackle combination to the pole to give the crew a 2:1 mechanical advantage.

The new setup is a vast improvement, both in form and in function. From here on, we will let the red spinnaker pole be the eye-catching item on the boat (and skip the bloody thumbs). 

*Robb Lovell grew up sailing on Lake Huron aboard his family's Endeavor 40, where he caught the sailing bug. That was about 20 boats ago. Rob enjoys buying and restoring boats, and is an avid racer and cruiser based out of Lasalle Mariner's Yacht Club (LMYC) in Ontario. He currently races on a Cal 9.2 named Jade but owns three other sailboats and a tugboat . . . yes, he has a problem!*

## Terminology

-Editors

While America and Canada share a common language, their vocabularies differ, and that shows in nautical terms. When Robb (Canadian) writes "topping lift," Americans would say "pole lift." And where he writes "downhaul," Americans would use "foreguy."

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