



ODYSSEA (ex-FLORALIN)

A full-powered houseboat

A big houseboat such as ODYSSEA offers comfortable living aboard, and for the past 90 years while under several owners that's exactly how she's always been used. Space abounds on a craft this large, the main saloon and wheelhouse occupying the top level with everything else located "downstairs." "Everything" includes several staterooms, a big engineroom, a dining space with adjacent galley, a washer and dryer, heating and air-conditioning units, and tankage for 200 gallons of water and 650 of diesel.

The Wildey family lived aboard for the first 40 years of the boat's existence and, later, designer Jay Benford and his family became the resident owners. Jay sold this floating home in 1999, and the couple who bought her have been living aboard ever since. Recently, however, they've become overwhelmed by the boat's upkeep, so plan to move ashore after selling the boat. Our hope is that, after changing hands, ODYSSEA will keep on doing what she's been doing for many years to come. Although she needs some rather major repairs, she's afloat and usable, and a new owner could move in and work on her while living aboard.

ODYSSEA was built of longleaf pine, an extremely durable wood that's sometimes referred to as American teak. Although quite some time has passed since Benford hauled her for a survey, her hull at that time was pronounced okay and, because her galvanized fastenings were driven into pine instead of acid-containing oak, they were still holding well.

She's not exactly a sea boat, but able enough thanks to her pointed bow, ample freeboard, and the big diesel that drives her. On the trip from Long Island Sound to the Chesapeake

Particulars

LOA	75'
Beam	19'
Draft	3'4"
Displacement	about 90,000 lbs
Power	220-hp GM 6-71 diesel
Designer and Builder	Wildey Shipyard, Seaford, Virginia, 1926

Inside, ODYSSEA is more house than boat.

in some rough going, ODYSSEA proved she could take it, cruising at around 6 knots and using only a small fraction of her available power.

Although she's a big critter in terms of length and beam—too big for many marinas—she's also shallow and flat, so that creeks and backwaters could be a mooring option. Ingenuity should make this work despite ODYSSEA's size and the inevitable constraints and regulations.

Taking on the stewardship of ODYSSEA could be a wonderful experience, but it also means work, even to take care of the routine maintenance, let alone the known repairs. Then there is the big unknown: the condition of her bottom, which hasn't been inspected for a number of years. Worms could be residents in ODYSSEA's hull, and since hauling her for a survey is more than the present owner can swing, the extent of worm damage is a risk the new owner must accept. The last through-hull cut smelled like turpentine, and one hopes nothing wants to eat it. Diving and probing while she's afloat could surely boost one's confidence, however, and very much on the plus side is the fact that those planks of heart pine have never undergone the wetting and drying cycles most seasonal boats have to endure. With luck, they could be as sound as the day ODYSSEA was built. 

For a full description, be sure and check this issue's Extended Content at www.woodenboat.com where you'll find Jay Benford's informative brochure, prepared back when he placed ODYSSEA on the market. ODYSSEA lies at Fairwinds Marina near Annapolis, Maryland. To visit and inspect the boat, contact owner Bruce Kerr, brucekerrjr@gmail.com.

RJ 5-11-17

Maynard Bray is WoodenBoat's technical editor.