



SoCal Classics: Brushfire

 Devon Warren  March 20, 2018

Boat name: Brushfire

Length: 51 ft.

Draft: 7ft., 4 in.

Beam: 12 ft., 6 in.

Year Built: 1969

The Origins: The tendency of Southern California's fires to burn up dry brush quickly seemed to also be an appropriate name for a boat. Hence Brushfire was born. The name seemed especially appropriate to Gene Trepte, the original owner of Brushfire, who had high hopes she would be a major competitor on the water. Originally built by Gerry Driscoll and Tom Henderson, Brushfire is an Olin Stephens Sparks & Stephens, design #1952 and is considered by some to be one of the most glorious vessel designs on the ocean. Stephens, who was one of the most recognized and acclaimed boat designers, was the mastermind that created six winning vessels of America's Cup – a record still standing today. Brushfire took two years to design and build. She is a wooden, single-planked vessel with plywood wedges inside between the ribs.

Similarities to Intrepid: Brushfire shares some similarities with the Sparks & Stephens, 12-meter vessel, Intrepid. Sailed and built by Driscoll, Intrepid won America's Cup in 1967. The underbody of Intrepid has a likeness to Brushfire's and both have a rudder and trim tab, located at the trailing end of the keel.

Complete & Total Re-fit: Ron Arnold, who oversees and manages Brushfire for the current owner, recently watched over her refit at Driscoll Boat Yard in Shelter Island, San Diego.

Of the renovation, which lasted three years, Arnold stated, "Brushfire is in impeccable condition, recently undergone a three-year refit, with a strong desire to keep the yacht as close to original as possible."

In the total overhaul, all exterior and interior was taken down to the bare wood, repainted and re-varnished. All hardware was removed, restored or replaced as needed. New cabin port lights, butterfly hatch, forward cabin sliding hatch, water tanks, fuel tanks, holding tank, electronics, galley fridge, navigation station and removable bow anchor roller were installed. A windlass, which was not previously aboard Brushfire, was added. The main sail traveler was relocated from the cockpit to the cabin top. Last but not least, the original bronze bilge frame was polished and a clear coat was applied.

The End of Brushfire's Racing Days: In 1969 and into the early 70s, Brushfire was actively on the racing circuit, winning notable races such as the City of SF Big Boat Trophy in 1969, L.A. Yacht Club Harbor Series and King Harbor Midwinter Regatta in 1970 and Lipton Cup in 1971. The adoption of the International Offshore Rule, which resulted in the implementation of a new measurement system for racing sailboats, meant the end of the line for Brushfire's racing days were numbered. The new rule negatively impacted Brushfire's rating, ultimately ending her racing career.

Home Base: Current owner Peter LaDow has kept Brushfire at San Diego Yacht Club. Of her, LaDow says, "When Ron [Arnold] told me we could get her, I was thrilled. She was not only a fine old wooden boat, but she represented my life, really. The Club, the people who mentored me, the boats I admired and sailed and crewed on. I grew up with wooden boats."



Brushfire is considered by some to be one of the most beautiful designs for a racing yacht ever built. Brushfire's owner, Peter LaDow, grew up sailing in San Diego and the LaDow family has been active for generations in the sailing community and San Diego Yacht Club. He was delighted when she became available. Ron Arnold oversees and manages Brushfire, and watched over her extensive, 3 year renovation / refit at Driscoll Boat Yard, leaving her in impeccable condition and as close to the original as possible. Exterior and interior were taken down to the bare wood, repainted, revarnished. Hardware was removed, restored or replaced; a partial list would include new cabin port lights, butterfly hatch, forward cabin sliding hatch, custom vang, tanks, electronics and navigation station. Brushfire is berthed at San Diego Yacht Club, and her team has resumed racing her in local Ancient Mariner regattas.

Her original owner, Gene Trepte of Trepte Construction, had been sailing in San Diego and other venues since childhood. His father purchased the 10 Meter Sally in 1941 and sailed her for many years. After selling his own Alden yawl, Evening Star, Gene worked with Paul Kettenburg to design a K-50, which he raced and then sold to Ken Bechtel. Gene Trepte and Gerry Driscoll visited Olin Stephens with their idea for a new racing yacht ~ the resulting design was Brushfire. Her lofting and construction were done by Gerry Driscoll and Tom Henderson; overall design and construction took 2 years. Brushfire was successful on the racing circuit in 1969 and the early '70's, winning the City of San Francisco Big Boat Trophy in 1969, the L.A. Yacht Club Harbor Series and King Harbor Midwinter Regatta in 1970 and the Lipton Cup in 1971.









Big Boat Series

Winner of the City of San Francisco Trophy in 1969, Brushfire.

LOA:	51' 0"
Beam:	12' 6"
LWL:	36' 0"
Draft:	7' 4"
Design or Class:	Keel sloop
Home Port:	San Diego, CA
Designer:	Sparkman & Stephens
Boat Type:	Auxiliary sail
Rig:	sloop
Gross Displacement:	32000
Sail Number:	7469
Sail Area:	1200
Number of Engines:	1
Engine Model:	Perkins 4-236
Total Engine Horsepower:	95
Fuel Type:	Diesel
Builder Name:	Driscoll Custom Yachts
Location Built:	San Diego CA
Year Built:	1969
Documentation or State Reg. No.:	520081
Owner Name:	Craig A. Mueller
Yacht Club:	SWYC