1-1-2014

Launching through the Surf Traveling Exhibit Panel 10: Fiberglassing and Painting a Dory

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Launching through the Surf: The Dory Fleet of Linfield

**Fiberglassing & Painting a Dory**

The image on the left depicts a ball of fiberglass roving. The image on the right shows Jim placing the ball of roving on top of the equipment frame.

The photos above depict Jim beginning the fiberglassing process at the bow, working one section at a time. He uses newspaper to mask areas of the dory that will not be fiberglassed. He first applies a catalyze to which he adds a red dye. This allows him to see the area on which he is working. Next, he applies the chopped fiberglass and resin to the dory’s surface. Once he has applied the chopped glass, he smooths out the surface with a solid metal, grooved roller, making certain to roll out air bubbles. He then paints the bottom of the dory with a roller, again using several coats of the Gelcoat. As he begins laying out the stripes for trim, he uses masking tape to form the lines. He relies primarily on his expert eye for aligning the stripes, using only the width of the tape to define their width. After the lines are marked by the tape, he masks the surrounding surfaces with newspaper before painting the stripes. Once the bottom and sides of the dory are finished, Jim applies three or four coats of paint to the sides of the dory. He then paints the bottom of the dory with a roller, again using several coats of the Gelcoat.

Wooden dories are fiberglassed to strengthen the sides and bottom as well as to provide more protection from the salt water and other elements. Most of the dories Terry Learned builds are fiberglassed by Jim Allen. This series of photographs captures that process for the Rebel, the 12th boat built by Learned’s Boat Shop.

To flip a dory, Jim secures the bow and aft ends to a chain hoist. On the aft end he creates a bridle, which is attached to a block and tackle. This allows him to lift the dory high enough to initiate a series of push/pull maneuvers to turn the dory over. Once the dory has been flipped, Jim places it on 2” x 4” boards on the floor and then paints the top surfaces.

Jim applies masking tape to define the stripes for painting.

Jim pulls the tape away after painting one of the stripes.

Jim uses a brush to paint one of the stripes.

The fibers of the fiberglass equipment include a 53-gallon drum of resin placed on a dolly that can be moved around the dory. The resin is shot through the lower part of the gun. The glass and the resin are mixed together, under high pressure, outside the chopper gun as shown.

Fiberglassing

The photo above shows the resin being fed out to the end of the articulating arm and then down to the chopper gun. The photo on the right provides a close-up view of the gun. The upper part includes a motor containing razor blades used to chop the fiberglass into pieces about 1-1/2” long. The polyester resin is shot through the lower part of the gun. The glass and the resin are mixed together, under high pressure, outside the chopper gun as shown.

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Once the fiberglass application has been completed, Jim adds the color. Gelcoat, a combination of polyester resin and pigment, is used to “paint” the fiberglass surfaces. A chemical reaction bonds the color to the fiberglass. Jim rolls the Gelcoat onto the larger surfaces but uses a brush for the trim. He first applies three or four coats of paint to the sides of the dory. He then paints the bottom of the dory with a roller, again using several coats of the Gelcoat. As he begins laying out the stripes for trim, he uses masking tape to form the lines. He relies primarily on his expert eye for aligning the stripes, using only the width of the tape to define their width. After the lines are marked by the tape, he masks the surrounding surfaces with newspaper before painting the stripes. Once the bottom and sides of the dory are finished, Jim uses a brush to paint one of the stripes.

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The fiberglassing and painting have been completed. Notice that some of the inside surfaces have not been fiberglassed. These areas will be finished with an oil-based product to allow the surfaces to breathe. At this point Jim has once again rig the dory to chain hoists. This allows the dory to be lifted so that the trailer can be placed underneath it. The dory is then lowered onto the trailer.

Jim places the dory on the trailer.