

Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine," says Rick after seeing *Isla* for the first time in the movie "Casablanca." I know how he feels. Of all the ports in all the towns in all the world, two vintage 10-meter sisterships have, by chance, sailed into mine, San Diego, California, thousands of miles from their original berths.

It all started in the mid-1920s, when a group of New York Yacht Club members, looking for a more comfortable yet competitive boat for long-distance racing on Long Island Sound, commissioned a fleet of 10-meter yachts to be built by the Abeking and Rasmussen yard in Bremen, Germany.

With a narrow beam and lots of overhang, the new boats looked all business when they were delivered. But the designers, Burgess, Rigg & Morgan, built in plenty of headroom and creature comforts below that made long-distance racing a bit more civilized. Sail area was abundant, at 1,340 square feet, but manageable. All in all, the designers didn't maximize the International Rule for 10-meters and the result was a fast boat that was surprisingly seakindly and comfortable for a racing yacht—the ideal combination that designers seek today.

Abeking and Rasmussen built 14 of the 60-footers, which were sailed competitively on Long Island Sound for several years. Eventually the fleet was superseded by the next hot boat and the fleet scattered. At least five of the 10-meters from the New York Y.C. one-design fleet made it thousands of miles across country to Newport Harbor, California, where West Coast sailors raced them for years.

Today only two remain—*Sally* and *Branta*. These survivors from a bygone era now grace San Diego Bay, thanks to the dedication and hard work of their owners with a little help from space-age materials that are giving new life to classic wooden boats.

When sinking is a good thing

Sinking at the dock in the early 1980s was the best thing that happened to *Branta* in a long time. That might sound like upsidedown logic, but by that time, the 10-meter sloop leaked so badly her owner didn't dare sail her farther from shore than he could comfortably swim.

The former racer had been in the family since 1959 and Dick Reineman and his son Richard really didn't want to sell her, even if they could find a buyer for a wooden boat built in 1926. At the same time, the Reinemans were reluctant to commit to the extensive rebuild the old girl needed.

So when the yacht's engine room fire extinguisher exploded and blew a hole the size of a refrigerator out the side of her hull, sending her to the bottom of her slip, it was a new beginning rather than the end.

After raising her, *Branta* was put in covered storage for a year while the insurance wrinkles were worked out and a plan to rebuild was formulated. This let the whole mess dry out. Once dry, damaged planks were replaced and the hull was put back together. Rather than using traditional caulking between the planks, the seams were splined. The entire boat was saturated with epoxy resin and the planks soaked up a total of 55 gallons of the goo, applied by the shipwrights at San Diego's

Knight and Carver boatyard. New deck beams, and epoxy and plywood under new teak decks completed the structure. The interior was rebuilt from scratch to match the original layout and traditional German craftsmanship.

The finished product is a hybrid—a boat with the warmth and character you can only get with a wooden boat and the ease and convenience of maintenance afforded by space-age epoxies available today. Think of her as a plastic boat with a wood core, a mahogany heart.

A family boat

At the time Reineman's father purchased *Branta* there were five 10-meters competing out of Newport Harbor in Orange County, California. Nobody is sure exactly how they ended up thousands of miles from their original East Coast ports but they were a competitive fleet in their adoptive port.

The Reinemans acquired *Branta* from Hancock Banning, onetime owner of Catalina Island, Southern California's real-life Shangri La, which sits about 20 miles west of San Pedro. Banning employed a full-time, liveaboard skipper for *Branta*. In contrast, the Reineman family, with eight children, would cram onto their 8-meter for trips to Catalina. It's hard to imagine all those kids on an 8-meter—a notoriously narrow craft with a beam of about 8 feet.

A Tale of



Two 10s

By Jon Schmid with photography by Bob Grieser





The two classic 10s duke it out on the race course, a common sight off San Diego, California.

For the two Reineman boys—Richard was about 12 at the time—*Branta* represented more than just extra space for summer cruises to Catalina. The two brothers were hot on racing and *Branta* was their entree into true big boat competition. Eventually the Reinemans moved to San Diego and took *Branta* with them. The Newport 10-meter fleet is gone now and *Sally* and *Branta* are believed to be the only surviving members of the one-design fleet.

An exceedingly wholesome design

In 1926, the new 10-meters were all the buzz on the East Coast even before they arrived from the Abeking and Rasmussen yard.

“What promises to be the most talked of class of boats to be raced in this country next year is the one-design class of 10-meter boats, designed by Burgess, Rigg & Morgan,” reads an article from the December 1926 issue of *Yachting*.

The “Tens” were described as “exceedingly wholesome both in design and construction” even though the plans might lead one to believe they are “narrow and rather too long in the ends.”

Designed to eventually replace the 30-footers favored for longer distance racing on Long Island Sound, the 10-meters were large enough to accommodate more comfortable accommodations and two paid hands berthed in the forecabin, according to Clifford Mallory, writing in the 1937 book *Sailing Craft*, edited by Edward Schoettle. Mallory, former commodore of the New York Y.C., is considered the father of the 10-meter class and owned hull No. 1 *Twilight*, later known as *Coquille*.

While greater accommodations might have been one motivation for the original design, speed was obviously a priority and the boats have a beam of only 10 feet, 6 inches.

The 10-meters were originally delivered by steamer from their shipyard in Germany to Halifax. Several writers at the time marveled at how complete they were upon delivery, requiring only the installation of their rigs and provisions brought on board. Every item required, down to

the galley equipment, was installed by the shipbuilder, according to Gordon Raymond, writing in the July 1927 issue of *Yachting*.

The crews who delivered the boats from Canada also revealed at the seaworthiness of the racing thoroughbreds. Despite barroom prognostications of headwinds, rough seas and fog, the most punishment came at the end of a tow line. All was fine until the wind kicked up that first evening and the pitching became intolerable under tow. With no auxiliary engine, the 10s had accepted the offer from a Halifax schooner to act as a tug. The plan was to sail into U.S. waters under their own power to avoid being taxed, but the difficult conditions meant most of the 10s ventured off on their own sooner than planned. All of them arrived safely at their new home port.



Branta's owner Richard Reineman has lots to smile about, above. His fully restored 10-meter sails full and by off San Diego, top. It's a family affair aboard *Branta*, right and far right, as three generations often sail together. Above left, her redone interior glows.







The other surviving 10-meter, *Sally* hasn't undergone the extensive rebuild that *Branta* saw but she is in excellent condition nonetheless. C.F. Koehler first caught sight of *Sally* in the early 1980s when he was in Santa Cruz as part of his travels up and down the coast selling marine parts. As he was driving over a bridge in Santa Cruz he spied the top of her mast. He could tell she was a big boat but wanted to know more. Turns out she had been donated to U.C. Santa Cruz, he found. She needed a lot of work, but Koehler had to have her.

Koehler's roots in the marine industry run deep. His father Clarence founded Koehler Kraft in 1938. The San Diego boatyard specialized in building high-speed wooden powerboats, speedboats and fishing craft. Koehler Kraft won the contract to build San Diego's first harbor patrol boat in 1955. With a top speed of over 40 knots, the boat Koehler built exceeded all expectations and secured the yard's place in San Diego history.

Sally was a sailboat, not a powerboat, and the young Koehler was only in his early 20s. His father had recently passed away and the son seemed to be looking for something to throw himself into. He bought *Sally* for less than \$15,000 and got a few friends together to sail her down from Santa Cruz.

Koehler parked *Sally* at his father's yard and in his spare time refastened her, replaced a score of planks, installed new teak decks, covering boards, railcaps, bulwarks, installed a new interior and replaced the engine. While Koehler had worked at his father's boatyard all his life, it was restoring *Sally* that established his reputation as a master shipwright.

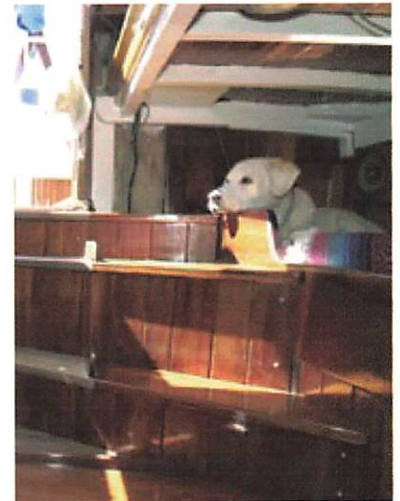
Once the work was done, Koehler campaigned *Sally* in West Coast classic yacht races and racked up an impressive record of wins from 1988 through 1994.

Today *Sally* is the showcase for the Koehler Kraft yard, which C.F. Koehler now runs.

It's a little ironic that *Sally* didn't get the same epoxy treatment that *Branta* received because Koehler Kraft now specializes in hybrid techniques for restoring wooden boats. In the past three years, Koehler has used the technique to successfully rebuild *Sprig*, a 1931 6-meter; a number of Pacific Class boats including *Alert*, a 62-foot Rhodes ketch from the 1940s; *Pacifica*, a 1948 Island Clipper sloop; *Scamp*, a 33-foot Stone sloop; and *Herta*, a 36-foot sloop.

As soon as he has time, Koehler plans on replanking *Sally* using the epoxy treatment too. The process involves encasing the planks and frames in epoxy, protecting them from rot and yielding a low-maintenance hull that rivals modern fiberglass construction, according to Koehler. Edge gluing the planks instead of caulking them creates a watertight seal and bilges typically stay bone dry once the boats are returned to the water.

Thanks to these space-age materials, *Sally* and *Branta* could grace San Diego Bay for decades to come. Both Koehler and Reineman have no plans to sell their boats. And that means San Diego was not just a destination for *Sally* and *Branta*. It is home.



Sally's owner C.F. Koehler navigates with a smile, above. *Sally* sails rail down, top, and makes a big hole in the ocean on a blustery day, left. *Sally* looking good in days gone by, far left. Irene relaxes in *Sally*'s aft cabin, above right.