

The Log Newspapers'

Shelter Island

50-YEAR ANNIVERSARY TRIBUTE



THE  LOG
California's Boating Newspaper
Specialty Publications

Koehler Kraft: Giving Old Boats New Life

By Karen Scanlon —

Koehler Kraft Company was one of the first leaseholders on Shelter Island. Established in 1938 as Mercury Marine by the late Clarence F. Koehler Sr., the business was moved from Front Street. By now, the island was being recognized as a place that had modern techniques in boat building.

San Diego's first patrol-and-rescue boat *Point Loma* was built at the Koehler yard in 1956. At the time, the ultra-modern craft carried radar, had firefighting capabilities, and boasted a top speed of over 40 knots.

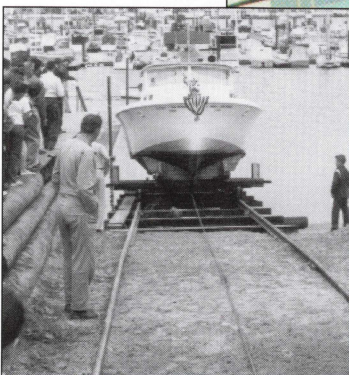
Among Koehler's other successes were his custom mahogany runabouts that raced on San Diego Bay in the late 1940s. Some were also used as express sportfishing boats that were made popular by San Diego's avid sport-fishermen.

C.F. Koehler Jr. plans to return in 2004 to custom building the runabout based on his father's designs.

Today, the yard is operated under the direction of C.F. Koehler Jr. In recent years, Koehler Kraft has moved away from new construction toward repair and restoration of wooden and fiberglass boats.

Noted restoration of Koehler Jr.'s 1928 60-foot yacht *Sally* is the showpiece of the yard. Several Kettenburg PCs were also restored at Koehler Kraft — the sloop *Puff* and, recently, *Wings PC #8*, the oldest known in existence, notes Koehler Manager Kim Van Dort. *Wings* will be displayed at the Maritime Museum of San Diego.

Koehler Kraft has kept up-to-date with the latest in boat-building technology while keeping the traditional methods alive. The yard



Courtesy Koehler Kraft
Koehler's Point Loma was the first Harbor Patrol boat, shown in the above photos, 1956. At right, the 60-foot Sally, in 1995.



has gained recognition for its hybrid techniques for restoring boats, that combine high-tech materials and old-world craftsmanship.

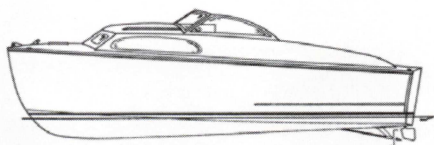
Routine maintenance and repair services for modern craft include mechanical and structural work, fine carpentry and cabinetry, and linear polyurethane paint applications.

The annual "Festival of Wooden Boats,"

hosted by Koehler, demonstrates to the public how beautiful wooden boats can be. It's a tight fit, but up to 100 boats are on display — from 2-inch models to sleek 85-footers. Seminars are held inside — on sailmaking, planking, and painting — to show people how care and refitting of wooden boats are accomplished.

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