BOAT BUILDING CHANGED FOREVER

By Richard Sorokin

A friend just gave me the Mariner's Catalog from 1973. That's only 36 years ago. It's amazing the changes in boat building that has accrued in this short space in time. r quote. "Within the short space of the past three decades, chemistry has brought more radical and far :reaching changes to boatbuilding than took place in the previous 3,000 years. Since World War II, a large number of synthetic, man made materials have replaced to a considerable extent older boatbuilding materials of natural origin, that is to say wood hemp, manila, cotton, turpentine, pitch, linseed oil, and others."

Just think, you can go back to the Vikings, Columbus, the Romans and all the other eras in great sailing. All have been from natural materials. In just a short 36 years all construction materials for boating has changed. It all now comes out of the chemical laboratories.

Sails and cordage are now made from synthetic fibers: Nylon, Dacron, polypropylene. Modern marine paints and finishes are synthetic. The most important change in ship building is fiberglass. All production pleasure boats are now made from fiberglass. Only larger commercial and military vessels are made in metals.

Making a wood boat is a dying skill. A great hobby but not practical!

I built my first sail boat from a kit in 1961. It was a wooden boat but with modem adhesives. It was a GP 14. We raced it for a few years and then they came out with the fiberglass version. It was so much easier to take care of the glass boat and a great deal easier to produce. Wood has lost its day in boating .But there is something about a wood, hand made boat that glass just doesn't match.

What is happening in boat construction today?

Glass boats are getting bigger. The batting between the outer and inner hull is a lot better.

New welding methods have made aluminum boats easier to construct and they are replacing some glass boats. Aluminum can take more punishment than glass.

Catamarans are increasing in popularity.

Changes are occurring a lot faster than they have in the past. It will be interesting to review this subject in just a few years.