LACHLAN BEATON

Lachlan Beaton is a second-generation boat builder. He was born in Scotland and came to America when he was 15. His dad built boats in Scotland and passed the trade to his son. When Lachlan came out of high school in 1930 the nation was in the middle of the Depression and it just so happened that his dad got a job building boats at the Johnson boat works.

In 1936 Lachlan's father started his own boatyard; he later sold his share. The second boatyard, which is still in the same location, was empty land, and all the buildings were built on pilings cut by hand from Forge Pond. The first boats they built at Beaton's Boat Yard were launched on wooden rails.

Lachlan's dad wanted things to work for his sons despite the Depression, so he worked hard to be successful. Lachlan worked diligently at the boat building business, too, and acquired his knowledge by building models and laying them out so he could take patterns off them. His models were the 5800 class 50 inches long.

Beatons Boat Yard had plenty of local cedar to work with, but they had to order Sitka spruce for the masts six months ahead from Alaska. They began to make small sailboats for racing in the bay; one winter 40 new sailboats of 13, 16 and 19 feet were built.

One reason Beatons built sailboats is that everyone was making skiffs. They used to build the little 12-foot duckboats for Christmas presents for customers' kids.

The boating season was different back then. When Labor Day came, all the boats were hauled out for storage and everyone left for home.

All the same, Beatons started building 40-foot class boats for the yacht club people. At one time three-quarters of the sailboats on the bay were made by the Beatons. They worked with hand tools because they had no electricity. After seeing them use a car engine to run a planer, one influential customer had electric poles put in.

Nowadays it costs 40 to 50 times more to build a 28-foot A-Cat and requires about 5,000 hours of labor. Lachlan's son Tom has an A-Cat under construction now. The plans for this boat were discovered in a chest of drawers in an antique shop in South Toms River by a first mate on a schooner that was undergoing repair work in the area. The plans were turned over to Lachlan, and Tom is building the boat.

Lachlan recalls that when he was working for Morton Johnson, one of the top guys there was building a boat and when he was finished, he just turned around and started to build another one without stopping. Lachlan always thought that when you build a boat you should stand back and take a look at it, then go on to another. Lachlan always gives his dad all the credit for Beatons' success. He says, "Without Dad there would be no boatyard."