

Kent & Audrey Lewis

Customer since: 2015

Location: *Navarre, FL*

Specialty: *Small Boat Sailing
& Restoration*

Kent and Audrey Lewis are avid sailors who specialize in the restoration of vintage Sunfish, Alcort Sailfish, O'Day Daysailers, plus other small canoes, kayaks, rowboats, and runabouts. While the two have saved many vintage Sunfish (even authoring *The Sunfish Owner's Manual*), their fondness for all classic small boats made them a natural fit to restore the historic rowboat Barbashela.

Captain Thomas P. Leathers of Kentucky designed this 21' tender in the 1880s. He was known for his friendship with local Native Americans, and Barbashela is the English variant of the Choctaw word for 'friend.' The boat was built as a gift to Varina Anne 'Winnie' Davis of Biloxi, MS, daughter of Jefferson Davis. The skiff was rowed on Oyster Bayou at the family home at Beauvoir in Biloxi for many years. Although a partial restoration was done in the early 20th century, Barbashela gradually fell into disrepair, and was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

From their restoration blog:

"The hull was deformed vertically, causing the beam to be widened. The entire port side of the boat is missing, as well as the forward 6 feet of the bow planking and the stem. The starboard side and hull bottom are mostly intact, although several sections of the forward starboard hull are broken off. The transom is partially intact, as well as the stringers. Fortunately three of the thwart seats remain, which will help determine the original beam shape."

Relying heavily on a photo from 1921, and a 2001 informal survey of the vessel, Kent and Audrey embarked on an intensive 11-month restoration effort that concluded with Barbashela's transport to the Beauvoir Museum in Biloxi, MS, where she will be on public display.

Visit Kent and Audrey's blog smallboatrestoration.blogspot.com for detailed descriptions and images of the restoration process, and to explore their other projects.

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The finished Barbashela is on display at the Beauvoir Museum in Biloxi, MS.



Recovery day shows just how little was left of this historic skiff.



With the three thwart seats that survived, Kent and Audrey were able to determine the original beam shape.

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' We wanted to send a note to say thanks for the assistance provided by your tech help team. We are restoring a cypress rowboat for the Beauvoir Museum in Biloxi, MS and have had several questions along the way. The boat belonged to Winnie Davis (daughter of Jefferson Davis) and it will be on display in the Museum once we finish. There are very few, if any, of these boats left in existence along the Gulf Coast so it is important to take as much care as we can in material selection.

Your team has helped with product selection for the silicone bronze screws, cotton caulk, caulking irons, epoxy and seam compound. We appreciate the support of fellow boat builders that has helped us take each step along the way with the resurrection of this historical vessel.

*Cheers
Kent and Audrey*



They based the restoration on a photo from 1921, and a 2001 informal survey of the vessel.



Kent and Audrey nearing the end of the intensive 11-month restoration.



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Cover: "Tuva", a 1929 Gray Boats power cruiser is launched in Brooklin, Maine. Photo by Benjamin Mendlowitz