

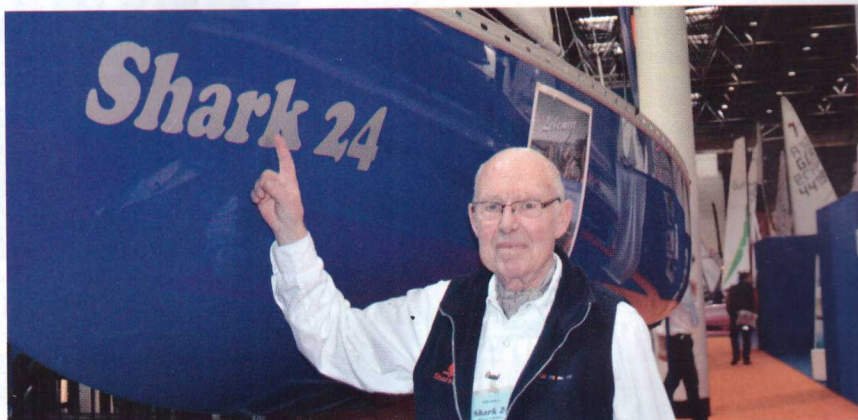
It's Alive

I was excited to be in Dusseldorf checking out Boot, Europe's hugest, most packed-with-great-stuff boat show when I spotted a boat that instantly caressed the warmest corners of my sailing heart. There in the middle of the hall crammed latest and greatest was – boom! - a Shark 24, the wonderful sailboat designed by George Hinterhoeller in 1959. Built initially out of plywood in Niagara-on-the-Lake, then a cornerstone of C&C when it was established, the Shark is still much beloved right across Canada.

What was this brand new Shark doing in Dusseldorf? I knew that Hinterhoeller had grown up in Austria and that the Shark was his antidote to the folkboat and other full keel boats of the day. Somewhere along the line, I had heard that back in Austria a few Sharks had been built as well. But you could have knocked me over with a tiller extension when I saw a gleaming blue sweetheart of a Shark on display among the huge fleet in this German mega-show.

A lot has happened over the intervening 57 years; boats have been steadily growing and speeding up. The narrow, compact Shark, once viewed as a family racer cruiser would be laughed at by today's mom and dad. Former CY Editor Penny Caldwell told me nobody blinked when her family sailed from Toronto to Montreal's Expo 67 in their Shark and all slept aboard.

No-one would confuse a Shark 24 with a modern-design racing boat like the J80 or the many high tech composite hull, deep dagger open transom flyers that populate Hall 15 of the Dusseldorf show. But time has stood still and in 2016, this brilliantly-designed Canadian boatt is still living happily in Europe, still



The "Euro Sharkfather", 78-year old Bodo Günther is keeping the action alive.

selling in reasonable numbers (six at this year's show) and drawing fleets as large as the ones in Canada. There are 1,000+ in Europe, 350 members of the German Shark 24 Association alone. Europeans love the boat for its low cost (under €25K base price), narrow beam making it easily trailerable, and its active level racing action.

The interior of the boat is clean and modern and, yes, quite livable. The decks are simulated teak giving it an almost shocking high-end look. If you didn't know the story and weren't aware that hundreds of Sharks are still sailing from Victoria to St John's, you'd likely be baffled when you came across the old-school design Shark next to the modern beamy speedsters. You'd be both surprised and charmed by the enthusiasm of the many owners, old and new, who crowded around the new boat to beam proudly.

Every bit as noteworthy as the continuing popularity of the Canadian classic is the Euro Sharkfather, 78-year old Bodo Günther. Bodo's son acquired the molds from the former Austrian builder and the boats are now manufactured in Poland allowing the cost to remain reasonable. They are very much true to their tradition although they are a whole lot more attractive than the Shark Penny's clan spent a



Simulated teak decks give this 1959 design an almost shocking high-end look.

month on.

Bodo's first Shark Worlds was in Port Credit in 1971! He has been to Canada for 40 Worlds but this year will be at the Worlds in SC Ebensee, Lake Traunsee, near Salzburg, Austria. There are already five Canadian crews entered as well as boats from Germany, Switzerland and even Greece. As with most great one-design classes, registered owners can borrow a boat for the event at no cost.

Then, apparently continuing to drink from the Shark fountain of youth, Bodo will join a contingent of Euro Shark sailors coming to Toronto for yet another Shark Worlds at RCYC in the summer of 2017.

Resisting the forces of modernization, and for that reason among others loved by sailors on both sides of the Atlantic, this sweet sailboat defies the odds. And there it was - Shark power in Dusseldorf. •

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