

KEITH NELDER

CUSTOM BOAT BUILDER



Keith started his boating career at the Point Yacht Club in Durban, South Africa. A keen dinghy racer; he built and sold his first boat at age 15.



As a Design Draughtsman in South Africa in the 1970 ties, Keith was involved with many projects including equipment for offshore supply vessels and deep sea salvage tugs .



Keith started building cruising boats in 1970 and sailed his own 12 metre yacht to the Caribbean in 1979.



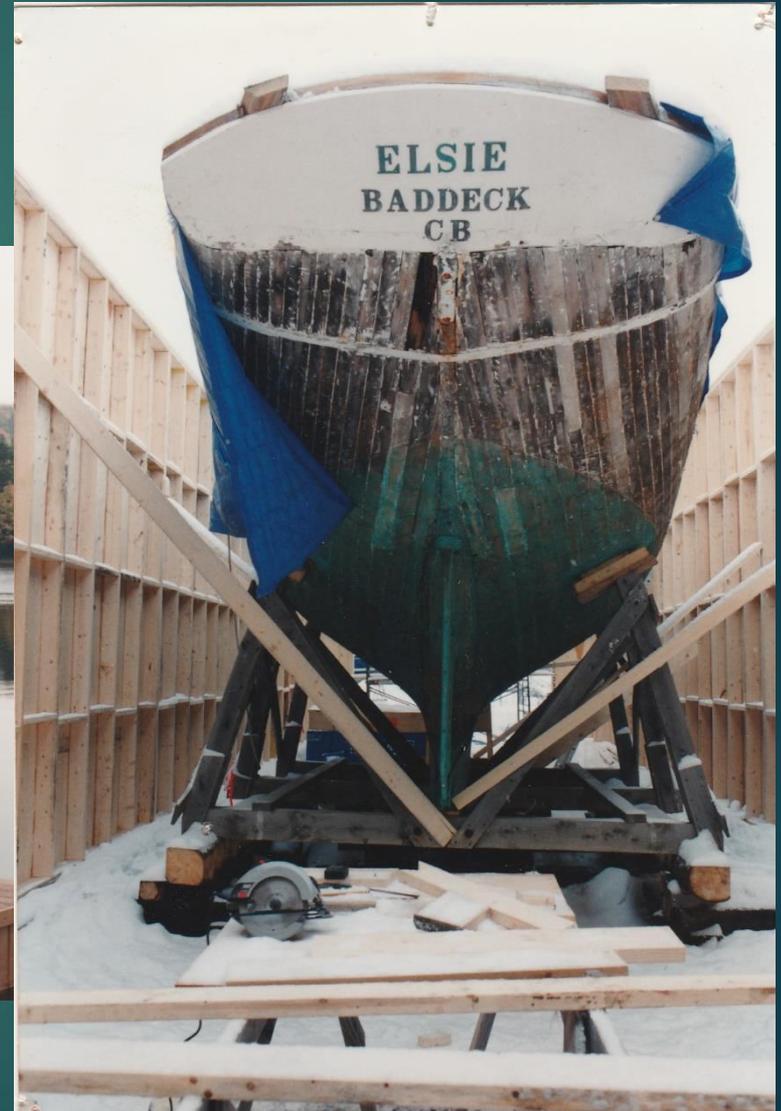
Keith worked in the marine business in the Caribbean on the island of St Maarten owning and operating Tropicalsails NV, which was a full service stop for yachts and fishing vessels operating in the Leeward Islands.



In 1989 he moved
to Cape Breton,
Nova Scotia,
Canada



After working on some interesting restoration projects,



Keith established Big Pond Boat Shop in 1991
Construction projects ranged from small elegant sailing
and powered craft to large restoration projects, museum
exhibits and 15 metre motor yachts.



A member of the Nova Scotia Boatbuilders Association since its inception, Keith became a Certified Nova Scotia Boat Builder and a Certified Nova Scotia Marine Service Technician as soon as the certifications became available. He has received many ABYC certifications.



This boat yard employs at least one
Nova Scotia Certified Boatbuilder.



This boat yard employs at least one
Nova Scotia Certified Marine Service
Technician.



In 2008, Keith accepted a contract as Program Manager of The Boat Building Academy in Cape Town, South Africa. Keith worked with the industry and the South African education department to bring relevant education to current boat builders, and the boat builders of tomorrow.



BUOYANT: Boatbuilder Keith Nelder at his office in Westlake.

PICTURE: LEON LESTRADE

Staying afloat in the industry

WHAT does your job entail? At the moment I'm head of the academy where we train boat builders, so my job entails teaching and administrative work as well as actual boat-building.

Before moving to South Africa, I had my own boat-building business in Canada.

Your day to day work will depend on what aspect of boat-building you are involved in. There is the production side of the industry and then there is custom boat-building, where you have a customer asking you to build a boat from a set of drawings produced by an architect or a boat designer. A good boat-builder will be able to take the drawings and interpret them and build a boat from start to launch.

You will have to order all the materials, according to the specifications given by the designer, and carry out all the installations of electrical and other technical equipment used on a modern boat.

Average workday: Building a boat is seldom a one man job so you will always work with a team, whether you are a production builder or a custom builder. In the morning you generally get together with the members of the team to discuss the day's work and find out if there were any problems the day before that still need to be resolved.

There is a whole sequence to building a boat. Materials and equipment must be ordered on time so as not to slow down construction, which sometimes is a bit of a balancing act between cash flow and "need to have".

Towards the end of the process, managing it becomes more complicated because more and more systems are being installed.

Best part of the job: I am a custom boat-builder, so I enjoy discussing projects with customers and helping them fulfill their dreams.

Worst part of the job: I love everything about this business.

Why did you choose this career? I was a member of a yacht club and started sailing at the age of 12 and the job developed from there.

I have been building boats for 35 years and for 20 of those I have been self-employed.

When I started out, there were no specific qualifications or training programmes and everyone learnt on the job from other experienced boatbuilders.

What else would you have liked to do? The only other thing I would really enjoy is sailing.

Are you paid enough? Yes, but like any trade, if you excel you will earn more than someone who does not take the time and effort to do a good job.

Rate your work stress on a scale of 1 to 10: If you are working for a firm it's about 5. As the responsibility increases the stress levels go up accordingly.

Customers who are spending their hard-earned money, sometimes millions, will expect you to deliver to specification and on time.

What do you do in your leisure time? I spend a lot of time sailing and I design boats.

Travel opportunities? Yes, I have worked in many countries and have never been out of work.

How to become a boatbuilder

BOAT-building includes everything from drawings to launch, project management, design and consultation with clients and marine surveys. So you should have an interest and some experience in boating. You must also be good with your hands.

There is a world-wide shortage of good boatbuilders, so the job prospects are very good. There is a big drive for boat-building schools all over the world, because so many experienced builders are getting older and there is no one to replace them when they retire.

You will be required to do practical training while studying. Good students are often asked to stay on and work for the boatbuilders where they did their practicals.

Qualifications needed: Fibreglass, carpentry, cabinet making and marine systems qualifications

Real jobs, real people



By Sarah-Jane Bosch

Every Monday Sarah-Jane Bosch interviews real people at work in Cape Town.

- **Today:** Keith Nelder
- **Job:** Boat builder
- **Qualifications:** Boat Builder Qualification Nova Scotia, Canada, Master Technician, American Boat and Yacht Council
- **Place of work:** Boat Building Academy, False Bay College

are a good start. The marine industry generally has different requirements to land-based construction.

Where to train: The Boat-Building Academy runs a three-year training course. Six months in each year is spent at the academy and the rest of the year in practical workplace training.

Expected earnings: Recently qualified boatbuilders can expect to earn from R8 000 to R12 000 a month. After that your income will depend on how well you carry on your trade.

Contact: Keith Nelder on 021 702 3834 or keith.nelder@falsebayccg.za

In 2010 Keith returned to Canada; to Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia and re-established Big Pond Boat Shop which now specializes in new construction of recreational boats, power and sail up to 8 metres.



Since his return, Keith has been involved with instructing several Marine Service Technician sessions for the Nova Scotia Boatbuilders Association, and a project with the Memorial University of Newfoundland's Marine Institute to create a traditional Boat Building curriculum in Grenada WI.





Dayna is currently a MST apprentice working with her father, and Allison is a draughtsperson and a manager at Mahone Marine ...chips off the old block!