

A Visit with Randy and Chris Streblow – by Kurt Rothe

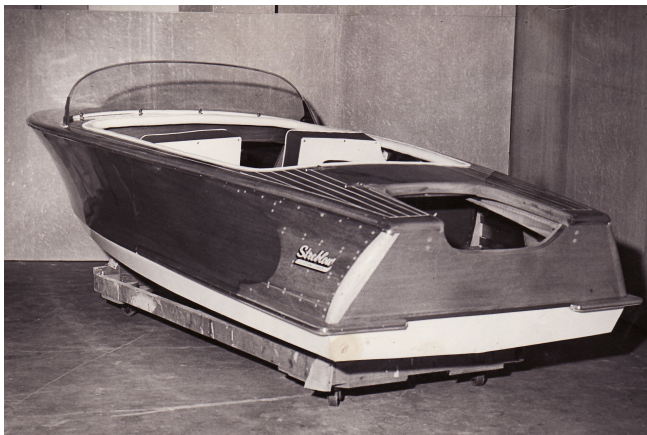
On a beautiful Fall day, Carol and I had the opportunity to visit the Streblow Custom Boat Company in Walworth, Wisconsin accompanied by our close friend, Don Taylor. Don spends a lot of time at Streblow's in the summer tinkering on his own 23 footer along with a few other boats that he is restoring and asked if we wanted to get a first-hand look at a new hull under construction and meet Randy and Chris Streblow, father and daughter owners of the company. Of course we took him up on his offer.

Randy and Chris greeted us with great warmth and made us feel right at home. And home it was, the place where many Streblows boats have been built over the past years and are still being cared for on Geneva Lake. We were truly amazed by the story of how the company began historically and by its current and well-planned operation.

In 1947, Larry Streblow, Randy's father, began building boats as a hobby. He loved to personally design small craft and was very good at it. He was encouraged by friends to start a boat company and build small outboard boats for other people. So he started his "hobby" in his garage turning out his first hull. Pretty soon his hobby outgrew his garage and in 1950, he moved from his garage to 75th Street in Kenosha where he rented a 3 stall garage so he would have more room for boatbuilding. Well, his boats became even more popular and the new location lacked sufficient space for his operation. In 1954, he moved to the south side of Kenosha and formally incorporated his business into Streblow Custom Boats, Inc. He still served as "the designer" and was responsible for creating all Streblow designs, from small outboards to outboard cruisers to inboards. Even today, all Streblow boats still carry Larry's basic hull designs. The inside of the boat has changed to incorporate contemporary styling and customer needs but the basic hull design is still that of Larry Streblow



A new 1950's Streblow outboard cabin cruiser!



A popular outboard model!

In the late 50's, his business moved more to inboards and in 1958 he designed an 18', 19' and 20' Rebel along with a 26' Empress. Larry was great at marketing and had trade names for every model. After 1965, the company moved to producing hulls of 21', 23', and 26' in length along with a 28 footer that incorporated twin engines. Randy joined the business with Larry in the late 50's and Randy's daughter Kris also joined the boat company in 80's.

A great emphasis was and is still placed upon construction techniques and using quality materials. All framing is white oak; bottoms consist of marine plywood with Philippine mahogany used for outer planking with fungicidal mastic placed between the inner and outer layers so as to allow the boat to breathe. Larry was a strong believer in the fact that wood had to breathe. He treated the wood with CPES along with other compounds and used 5200 for the chines and keels while using Sikaflex on the remaining parts of the hull. Douglas fir is used for the engine stringers along with all stainless steel fasteners for the hull. Streblow boats are now produced using either V-drives or straight drives.

At one point in time, the company employed up to 15 people and produced up to 50 boats per year. Streblow has built over 500 boats since its inception as a company in 1947. Today Streblow builds between 1 – 2 custom boats a year but serves as the year around maintenance facility for the 132 Streblows that call Geneva Lake their summer home.

It is important to remember that all Streblows are built to the customer's specifications, wants and needs. The customer gets their own custom boat. Each Streblow is unique and no two are alike.

Streblow boat owners are very loyal to the company. Each owner considers he/she part of the "Streblow family" and Streblow owners on Geneva Lake incorporate many wonderful social gatherings every summer to talk about their boating adventures along with enjoying each others company and chatting with Randy and Chris. They all consider themselves "family" and feel that they really are leasing the boats from Streblow as at some point in time when their boating days have ended, their boats will return to the Streblow Company only to be "leased" to another lucky owner for many years of future enjoyment.

The same hull finished and at the
2009 Blackhawk Show in Fontana, Wis.



A new 23 footer under construction!



It is now named "Rodan"!



A 26' Streblow on Geneva Lake!



The cockpit of a 28 footer with twin engines!