

US Coast Guard, Fort Macon Sail and Power Squadron, and Morehead City Fire and Police Department to Escort Sylvia II to the Morehead City Family Boating and In Water Boat Show



Photo Credit: [Provided](#)

One of few working survivors of her class, Sylvia II played a pivotal role in the development of the local fishing industry.



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Owner Bob Simpson and boat model with birthday cake; back row, Bruce Brill, Paul Heim, Tony Dill, Chuck Verret.

By [JB Bagby](#)

Fort Macon Sail and Power Squadron

MOREHEAD CITY, N.C. – On Saturday May 16, 2009, the Sylvia II will emerge from her home on Peltier Creek and make her way to the Morehead City Family Boating and In Water Boat Show. Escorted by the US Coast Guard Group Fort Macon, Fort Macon Power and Sail Squadron, and the Morehead City Fire and Police Department the

Sylvia II, will make a return visit to the Morehead City waterfront where she spent decades as a working Core Sounder sink net fishing boat.

Owner Bob Simpson, a well-known outdoor writer for the past 60 years with a long-standing Sunday News and Observer column asked for a special escort to the Sanitary Fish Market in Morehead City, N.C., for the boat show after being gussied up with a trip to nearby Taylor Boatworks.

Simpson describes the Sylvia II as a "classic 36-foot wooden-hulled vessel" in loving terms, having rescued her in 1976 from a watery fate stuck in the muck of Bogue Sound: "To be a Core Sounder requires being an efficient working boat capable of hauling net and fish, working long hours under less than desirable conditions. Its unique design features a rounded, tucked-under stern making for a stable working platform; its sharp entry, a straight stem and shoal draft, known for seaworthiness, provides economical operation.

"It proved itself, for its style reigned, supreme from the early 1900s, successfully marking the shift from working sail to plastic, a classic design lasting well into the late 1970s," he adds. "For every 4 feet of length, there is a foot of beam, which makes her a 'quarter boat.'"

The boat - one of few working survivors of her class - played a pivotal role in the development of the local fishing industry. The current owner was a 7-year-old living in North Dakota when the boat's keel was laid in February 1932 at the foot of 10th Street in Morehead City. Shipwright and fisherman J.R. Willis built the vessel. He earned the nicknames "Just Right" and "Double Dip" Willis by insisting on using the best materials of the era, including double-dipped galvanized fastenings.

Sylvia II survives in part because of that solid construction, but mostly because Simpson and his late wife Mary embarked on a multi-year salvage and restoration project in the 1970s that's recounted in his book, "When the Water Smokes."

The future of Sylvia II will likely depend upon a maritime trust, foundation or museum to preserve her for use in educating the next generation. Simpson says he would like to donate it to such an entity if

the boat could be maintained in working condition and used for a good purpose, such as taking children out on educational trips. (Editor's note: Discussions are under way to place the Sylvania II in the permanent care of the proposed North Carolina Salt Water Fishing Hall of Fame.