

# Years Of Craftsmanship, Frustration Mean Reward For Boatbuilder

By Jody Felton  
(Following is an article which appeared in the Sentinel Star in Orlando, Florida.)

Christmas came a week early this year for Rhea Adams, and its successful coming took some doing. Murphy's Law, which states that everything that can go wrong, will, prevailed at times.

Adams' story should tug at a responsive chord in the heart of every do-it-yourselfer, even though his project was on an unusually grand scale.

It took years of craftsmanship, frustration and pleas to suppliers, but his efforts were rewarded this last week with the launching of his homemade sailboat, Lucy II. The 36-foot vessel that he built from the bottom up was finally poised to hit the water at Whitley's Marina in Cocoa Beach.

Getting Lucy from Adams' front yard on Horatio Avenue in Maitland to the marina was a logistical nightmare in itself. Height was the main problem since the distance between the top of Lucy's cabin and some of the overpasses enroute left a leeway of just inches. The trip was a nervewracking one, but it was accomplished just like the construction process - slowly.

Four years ago Adams viewed the pile of lumber on his lawn, and, with some consternation, clutched naval architect Bruce Roberts' plans a bit closer. "I didn't have any special training," he said. "I went to the library and read every book I could get my hands on."

"It was more of a project than I had anticipated, though. A boat does not have a straight line, so it is not like building a dog house. You have to keep everything level as you work. It is a detailed, hand-made piece of equipment."

Rhea (pronounced Ray) Adams is the 55-year-old co-owner of Adams and Burgess Plumbing Service of Orlando. He and his wife, Lucy, for whom the boat was named, have three sons, all of whom were on hand for the launching ceremonies.

Son Lanse, 28, came down from Norfolk, and Albert, 26, who also lent a hand in the boat construction, was in from North Carolina. Twenty-year-old Marshall works with his father in the plumbing business.

Six weeks earlier Adams had relaxed in a chair in his somewhat cluttered office on Robinson Avenue and discussed the beginnings of Lucy II.

"So, you want to know how you build a boat?" he asked with a grin. "Well, first you build a wood mold and then you form fiberglass over it. When the hull is completed a cradle is built around it which becomes its temporary berth."

"A truck with a big crane came in then and flipped the whole thing 180 degrees," Adams said. "I tore out the wood mold and began the beam work. They are made of laminated mahogany."

When Adams first began building Lucy, some neighbors protested what appeared to be the beginnings of a shipyard in a residential area. The sight of Lucy's bow nosing toward the sky above the bushes on landlocked Horatio Avenue was a traffic stopper.

"People were fascinated and would stop by just to see what I was up to," Adams said. "Often they would ask if I needed help, and I always said 'sure.'"

"I bet I had at least two or three people every day. I've made lots of friends these past few years. Total strangers stopped and gave me a hand. In fact, if it had not been for this help I would not be as far along as I am now."

An admitted amateur in boat construction, Adams said the most important ingredient in his success was a "hell of a desire to do it."

"But anyone can do this if they really want to," he said. "I did build Lucy I, which was a 10-foot dinghy. Other than that, I have no experience."

Adams also doesn't mind admitting that he is an amateur sailor, again having limited himself to the small stuff. "First thing I gotta' do after I get it into the water is to learn to sail it," he said.

The learning process will entail staying close to shore, according to Adams. He plans to sail along the coast until he is confident of his boat and himself, and then he plans "to take off."

"I want to go up to Edenton, N.C., where I lived until I moved here. I'll dock right at the foot of Broad Street, and sure, I'll just show off my boat to the town."

After the trip north, Adams and his wife plan to do some island hopping.

The Lucy II has been thoroughly checked out and certified by the U. S. Coast Guard.

According to Adams, this includes a measurement, after which the weight of the boat is carved on an inside beam. This acts as an identification symbol and takes the red tape out of

foreign travel, he said. Adams said that actual construction problems had been surprisingly few. The plans by naval architect Roberts were excellent. The only time he had a major difficulty was when he tried to deviate slightly from the architects' design.

"I was installing a larger engine than his plans called for, and this threw other things off. But I did some homework, asked lots of questions and got to know my sources of supply. It's important to have faith in your suppliers."

"That does bring up the other difficulties I did have. This is a bass and ski boat area, not an off-shore sailboat community. Consequently, I had trouble finding just the right materials."

The finished product is 36 feet long with a 49 foot tall mast. Lucy II has a jib, mainsail and staysail. She is powered by a four-cylinder, 47-horsepower Ford diesel engine, has 800 square feet of sail, carries 6,200 pounds of steel ballast in her keel

and weights 11 tons. She will sleep six. As Adams said, "That a lot of boat!"

How much is the boat worth?

Adams is loathe to place a

price on his work. "It involved three and a half-plus years of my labor, and how do you put a price tag on that? All I know is that I could not afford to buy her."

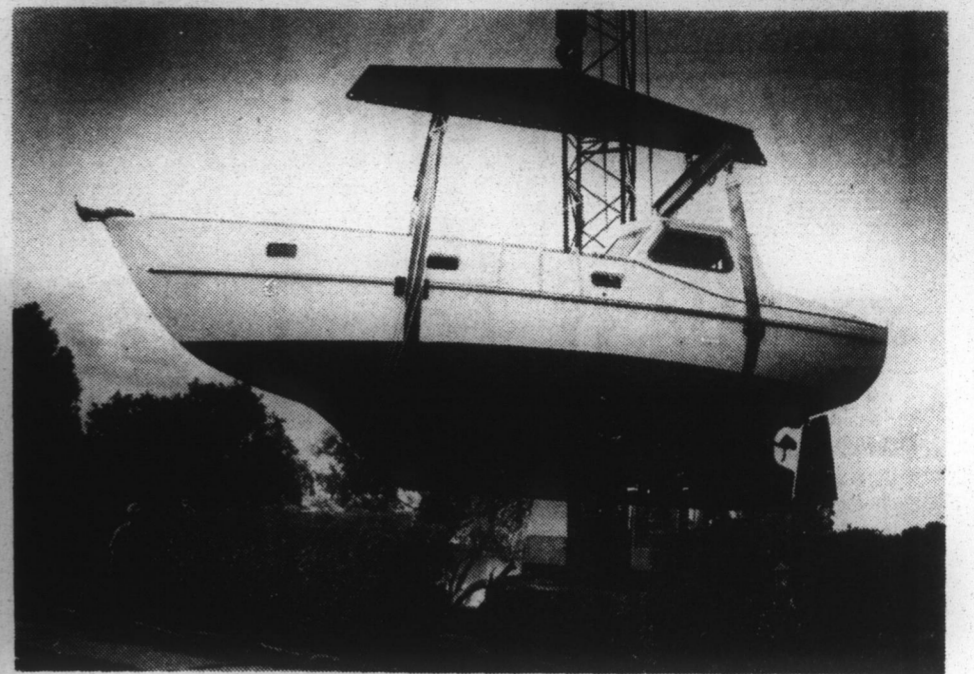
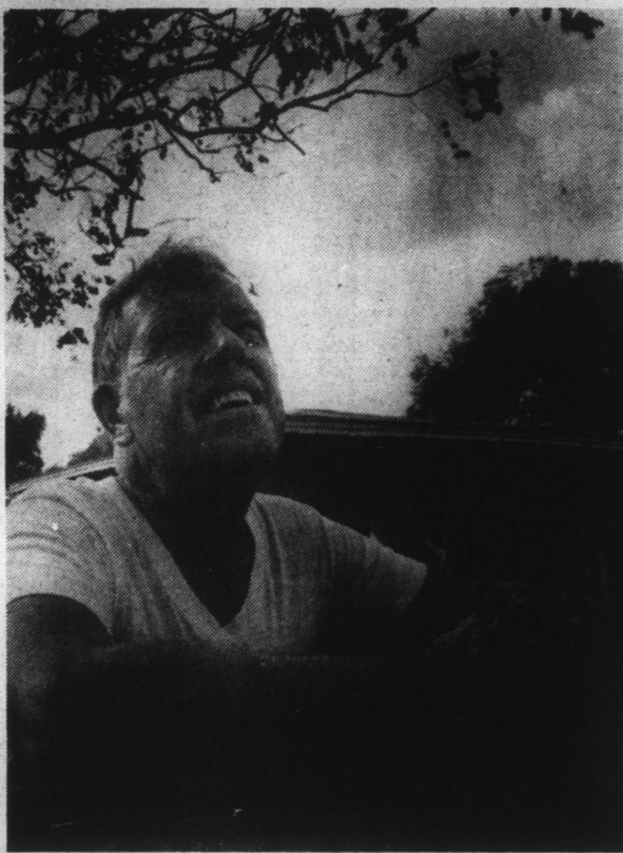
As Adams carefully planned the building of Lucy II, he also has definite plans for how he'll use it.

"I will work another five years and when I hit 60 I will

retire and change my whole lifestyle. I have been planning for 30 years to some day have an off-shore sailboat. It will be a whole new way of life for us.

Eventually, we will live on board."

Even though Rhea Adams is a methodical individual, there is still a bit of the dreamer in him.



BOATBUILDER — Rhea Adams began building his sailboat four years ago with just some plans and a pile of wood. "I didn't have any special training," he said. "I went to the library and read every book I could get my hands on." The completed boat was loaded on a trailer last week and taken to Cocoa Beach to be launched.

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