



Power Cat Redux... by Frank Alguire



We moved to Coeymans Hollow (south of Albany) in 2004. We hadn't been here long when my wife Gail mentioned she wouldn't mind having a boat again. Our last boat had been a cuddy cabin, but she knew I hadn't really enjoyed it, and suggested a smaller boat would be fine.

I saw this really slick small speedboat sitting on the side of 9W (a major north-south road in our area) one day and stopped to take a closer look. It was a Glasspar G-3 and I fell in love with it on the spot. I couldn't afford it, but took a bunch of pictures.

It wasn't too long after that I found a web site that catered to old classic fiberglass boat enthusiasts – Fiberglass.com. My first forum "handle" was "wannag3." I had fallen in love with that G3 and hoped I might find another one I could afford. As I kept checking out craigslist and the local want ad digest, I answered an ad for this guy selling an old Sears fiberglass boat. He lived in the boonies. I found him, but was not impressed with the Sears boat he was trying to sell. He had another boat sitting in the middle of his huge front lawn (no trailer or motor) that I took some pictures of before leaving.



When I got home I posted pictures of the boat sitting in the lawn on the main forum of fiberglass.com and somebody replied "I think that's a Power Cat. If it is you should grab it!" So back I went to this guy's place to inquire about his lawn ornament. Turned out it was a Power Cat, and low and behold, he had the transferable registration for it. For some reason the

Power Cat side emblems had been removed and he had those along with the manufacturer's identification tag in a little zip lock bag. It was smashed and poorly repaired in the starboard bow, and obviously needed a new transom. He wanted \$200 for it. I didn't even try to haggle him down.

This was late summer 2006, and I had just had rotator cuff surgery on my right shoulder. Fortunately a good friend of mine had a snowmobile trailer and came down

and helped load it up and deliver it to our house. Then the work started. Little did I know what I was in for.

It would be 4 years before this old boat saw water.

Power Cat made two models of this boat, the standard 14T and the 14T Deluxe. I had bought a 14T Deluxe, and soon came to find out what the difference was - the standard had tiller steering, a 40 horsepower limit, and no windshield. The same model in "Deluxe" had a steering wheel, windshield, and an 80 horsepower limit. In part, that higher limit was because the deck was fiberglassed to the hull from the inside.

I was able to learn a great deal about my boat in large part due to the efforts of Danny Leger, son of the Power Cat corporation owner and designer Ray Leger. Danny, who had worked as a youth in his dad's plant in southern California, now kept his father's legacy alive through development of a web page honoring his dad and other relatives and friends who shared in the history of Power Cat boats. His website is a treasure trove of information and includes history, available Power Cat products, and web pages for the many lucky people who are still driving these boats today. Power Cat has a rich racing tradition that is continued to this day by many owners. More information can be found here: <http://www.powercatboat.com/>

First I needed a place to work. The deck needed to be split from the hull to not only repair the damaged starboard bow area, but the transom was "toast." It ended up in half of my 12X20 unsided lean-to pole barn. Here you see my oldest son Gregg drilling out rivets in the rub rail because my left shoulder was in a sling.



It took a number of tools to finally separate the deck from the hull. For the most part, it was an old 3/4" wood chisel and a 16oz hammer, and a couple of big pry bars. With the use of block pulleys from the rafters of the pole barn putting constant strain on the seam, we were finally able to get the deck lifted. I had professional assistance separating the deck from the hull at the transom by Brian Lawson, owner of Classic Boat Works of Albany (NY) and who lives close by.



The transom was toast...

The transom came first. After reviewing a number of other Power Cat owners' restorations, I decided to customize mine by increasing the transom height from the short 15" stock one to one of 20" for a standard shaft motor. (I already had my motor - more on that later.) First was cleaning the inner skin of the transom.



Next was making a template for the new transom.



Then the new transom was made from 2 pieces of 3/4" marine mahogany plywood. No gaps or voids in this stuff. This was done Spring of 2007.



Work progressed. The newly made transom core was fiberglassed in with two cross braces. The original Power Cat had one cross brace, but I wanted a rock strong transom. It was glassed in overlaps tying it to the sides of the hull as well as the floor.



Next was sanding and then painting the interior. This is actually a two part epoxy coating. As can be seen clearly here, the hull is the floor. Watch your step!



With that done, the hull could be flipped for work on the exterior. There were substantial gel coat cracks all over it.





It took most of 2008 to get this hull done, mostly due to health problems. The hull was blueprinted in restoration. Basically that meant perfectly flat sponsons, sharp edges on the sides of the sponsons and where the sponsons met the transom. With the hull done, work turned to the trailer. That needed to be done so I could easily move the project around. Those little casters on the hull stand didn't do so well in our gravel driveway.



The trailer was mostly the remains of an old 3500# capacity EZ Loader trailer. It looked a bit odd with a 300# fiberglass boat on it, but because of the uncommon beam of the boat, it fit between the fenders easily, plus the trailer had a dropped axle so it towed and launched low. I replaced the heavy 3X4 tongue with a shorter piece of lighter gauge 3" square tubing, and put a light winch on it. Even fully loaded, I would never have over 1,000#s in this boat, at least on the road. The original 3X4 tongue will be back on this year for a number of good reasons.

There was still some work to be done underneath the deck, mostly new wood behind the dash, and along the center of the bow. Also, I had shaved the four cleat "bumps" on the deck, and backed those areas with 3/4" marine plywood. Finally, I glassed 1" sections of 3" plastic pipe along under each gunnel for ease of support of steering and control cables. Again, I was fortunate to have some assistance from Brian Lawson with some of this work.





Once the deck was on, it was time to carefully trim the old splash pan out to construct a new one for the taller transom. The top crossmember had been placed in part to be a rest for the 1/4" luan plywood base for the new splashpan. Doing this also securely tied the rear of the deck to the hull.

Finally, after a great deal of finish work, the new splash pan looks factory.



With the splash pan completed, attention turned to the deck. The deck had numerous cracks and spider webbing that all got ground out, then filled. This picture shows the major rebuild of the starboard bow. A similar rebuild had been done on that area of the hull earlier.





Finally the deck was done and in primer the summer of 2009. Towards the end of the summer health issues again surfaced, putting off more work on the boat for a few months.

Over that fall and winter, the motor got finished. That is a story in and of itself. I wanted a motor of similar vintage to the boat, and lucked out.

I had got this motor by driving 35 miles away to pick up a boat offered to me for free. I later got rid of the boat (an Arkansas Traveler, shown here with the motor). Through connections made through Fiberglass.com, I got in touch with Tim Calmes of Perry NY, a well known vintage Mercury outboard mechanic. Tim essentially rebuilt all the external components of the 1963 Mercury 1000 (100 horsepower) outboard and got it running, but it had a knock to it that sounded like a rod knock. Sure enough, a plastic baggie had at some time got sucked through the lower carburetor into the motor, blocking air flow to #5 cylinder, melting the needle bearings and ruining the crankshaft. I was very lucky to find a parts motor in the area relatively inexpensive. I was even more fortunate to find that it had a good powerhead. Dave Cummings (a local friend made through AOMCI) helped me diagnose my knock, and then combined parts from the two powerheads into one good one. I installed the powerhead and had a good running motor - at least on a stand.



The fall of 2009, the year before initial launch, the motor got "pretty." It took a lot of time, but once one thing looked new, there would be something next to it that needed it. Pretty soon the entire motor had been painted inside and out, most with color than clear coat. It wasn't painted stock. Instead of using Mercury Phantom black, I used all metallic colors, black, red, and silver.

In winter 2010 I re-wired some of the motor, removed the stock rectifier and replaced it with a voltage regulator, and added in a circuit breaker for basic protection.



In early 2010 the deck was done and ready for rub rail and fiberglassing of the seam between the deck and hull. We glassed a 3" strip in first, then a 6" strip overtop of it. We didn't get all the way to the bow peak (it's a bit tight in there), but we got most of the way.



With the deck attached to the hull now inside and out, it was time to install the outboard and power trim/tilt that had been adapted to the motor.



Power trim wasn't available till 1967, but Mercury published a guide for installing the later model trim on the earlier Mercury outboards. It took a while, but came together with parts from a number of sources.

Finally, the boat was in the water! I had some motor problems resulting from my incorrect installation of an impeller in the water pump, but we got that figured out. The next problem we ran into was screwy timing. It happened at our 1st outing with the boat, an informal classic 'glass meet on Silver Lake the 1st weekend in June 2010. Turns out in putting the motor back together I had not torqued the top flywheel nut enough, and it caused the flywheel to slip, ruining the flywheel and in the process messing up the timing.

Fortunately, Tim Calmes was at this meet (he lives within a mile of the boat launch!) and had parts in his shop in town to fix the motor. He brought me the parts and lent me a few tools and let me at it. We got that working, but now had prop concerns.



In the meantime, my wife was not enthused with the inexpensive folding seats I bought at WalMart. She went shopping and got the seats she thought belonged in our boat. I think she did great. Here the seats were mounted above the hulls. Later on, I built seat bases that lowered the bucket seats down into the hull as far as they would go. It looked much better and I didn't feel like we were top heavy out in the boat. You can also see in this picture the outboard tachometer I installed in the center of the dash. A tachometer is necessary to get the boat propped correctly.



It took a lot of time and money before we found the right prop for the boat. Initially I had too much pitch, was not getting to the rpm's I needed. Plus we had way too much porpoising. Also, we couldn't take passengers. Two was the max. Finally, after installing Smart Tabs to assist in controlling porpoising, we ended up with a stainless steel three blade cupped prop in a pitch that made this old boat fly without porpoising. Now we could actually take passengers and the boat worked the way it was supposed to





Now we had a boat, a bit more than 4 years from the day I bought it off a front lawn in Greenville New York, no motor, no trailer, just an old junk boat. While I have always been somewhat handy, I had never done fiberglass work or bodywork, and as a result, everything took an incredible amount of time compared to how long this would take a pro to do. Nevertheless, it was a great feeling of satisfaction to be mostly done. We ran more than 200 gallons of high test through it in 2010, so you could guess we're happy campers.

