

MARCH 1, 1995 IS THE 25TH ANNIVERSARY OF HAARSTICK SAILMAKERS

By Steve Haarstick, 12/16/94

In our last Newsletter, I wrote an article about the Twentieth Anniversary of the Cutter in March of 1974, recounting some of the events that lead up to the introduction of automating cutting to the Sailmaking industry. Just one year later, March 1995, and it's the **25th Anniversary** of *Haarstick Sailmakers!*. When I originally thought about the nature of the article I should write to commemorate this event, recounting the history of *Haarstick Sailmakers* seemed an obvious choice. There have certainly been many adventures along the way, from the ridiculous and hilarious, to the desperate and sad. From the initial events that got me into sailmaking, to the start-up of my own sailloft in Ithaca, NY, or the move to Rochester, the fire in 1983, and then onwards to the present, any of these would make a good story. However, as I began to write, I realized just how personal this Anniversary was, and that retelling a few humorous and perhaps entertaining stories wouldn't express what I really felt.

This feeling that just wouldn't go away was how LUCKY I have been all these years! I don't usually think in these terms. Those who know me would definitely not use the term "Happy- Go-Lucky" to describe my personality (there are many other choices, I'm sure). But 25th anniversaries don't come around very often, and as I thought more about my personal journey in sailmaking, I kept coming back to my incredible good fortune: A series of seemingly insignificant events, or "cross roads", where you made your turn without really thinking at the time where each road lead, each turn unknowingly, but inextricably steering me into sailmaking. How can anyone know in the beginning that they have stumbled into a career that would never cease to excite, to challenge, to provide moments of true satisfaction, and the endless opportunities to learn? There have certainly been lots of disappointments, disasters, and despair along the way, but there have also been those moments of joy and elation. Most importantly, sailmaking has always provided the fuel to feed the fires inside. I still can't think of any other alternative career that I could have pursued.

I also thought just how LUCKY I have been to receive the support of so many loyal customers for so many years. It may be simplistic to state that without the customer, there would be no anniversaries to celebrate, or ponder, but it's a fact that can't be emphasized enough. The kind of trust and support that *Haarstick Sailmakers* has received all these years, can not be simply be explained by our efforts to achieve excellence in our products, performance, or our service. The truth is, there are many other variables that determine why we are selected instead of the vast numbers of alternatives. I really don't know how to thank all of you that have made it possible for me to spend my life at my passion, other than to say I am truly grateful. I hope in the years ahead I, and all the rest of us at *Haarstick Sailmakers* will continue to be given the opportunity to earn your trust and support.

Third, and but no means least important, no company stays in business for this long without the considerable contributions of all the people who have made and continue to make *Haarstick Sailmakers*, both here in Rochester and elsewhere, the company it is today. No organization of any merit is a one-man band, and without the efforts of so many talented, dedicated, hardworking people, over so many years, *Haarstick Sailmakers* would not be the company it is today. While I have difficulty expressing thanks or appreciation in person (chewing ground glass would be my first choice), I feel this occasion cannot pass without thanking you all for your many contributions over these past 25 years.

And lastly, a personnel note to my son and my best friend, Chris. I can only hope that as you pick your path to follow at the crossroads of your life, you will be as LUCKY as your Dad in finding a lifelong challenge that will keep your fires burning.