



# Remake of a Classic Sloop

**Smitten by the sleek lines and pedigree of a 40-year-old Pearson Vanguard, this couple purchased the boat in good faith, then spent a few long months on repairs, upgrades and equipment additions getting it cruise ready.**

## Classic 1965 Pearson Vanguard.

*"The result of all our work is a boat that draws a crowd wherever we go. Although most of the other sailors in our homeport are familiar with our boat, a recent trip to Sheboygan, Michigan, is an example of what we have come to expect when we travel. Before the docklines were tied, there were four sailors on the dock wanting a closer look at this classic beauty."*

Story and photos by Dave and Barb Heilman

When we first saw "On Location," our 1965 32' (9.7m) Pearson Vanguard it was buried under 2' (61cm) of snow and had been on the hard, uncovered for three years, braving the winters in Northern Wisconsin. As previous owners of a 1971 Pearson 26, there were only a few builders in the 30' to 36' (9.1m to 11m) range that we would consider and this boat was at the top of the list.

Our first rule of thumb for purchasing an older boat is that we must truly love how the boat sails. Second, the boat must be safe. Third, and by no means less important, we must love how it looks (or can look). Of course, time and the cost of ownership is also a consideration. "On Location" met all of these requirements nicely. However, we also knew that any older boat is a refit candidate, even if the boat has been refit many times before. Our goal was to sail, not to refit an older boat but, as anyone who buys the perfect 40-year-old boat knows, there are continual upgrades and upkeep needed to meet their changing sailing styles and lives. So, when we met "On Location," we fell in love and planned to have a long-term relationship of mutual tender loving care.

The Pearson Vanguard had the lines we adore and they were accented by lots of teak trim. The added bronze touches and beautiful spruce boom and spreaders were a plus. If you're familiar with older Pearsons, most of the interior was originally finished with a tacky, vinyl-covered pressboard. This was a bad imitation of light oak. To the builder's credit, it did not cut corners with the boat's construction, exterior hardware or brightwork. The boat's previous owner had totally redone the interior with cedar and teak. Red cloth cushions replaced the originals, which had been aqua vinyl. At our initial pre-purchase inspection, we found the interior to be esthetically pleasing.

## Negotiable Details

Although we did not hire a surveyor, we did do a complete check of every little nook and cranny, every hose, every inch of the boat, inside and out. Our previous experience with older boats (this is our fourth) made us feel comfortable doing our own survey. Also, we have always been lucky dealing



with owners who are overly honest about the inadequacies of their boats. One major concern was the original Atomic 4 engine. As there was no way to put the boat in the water and test run without a great deal of added expense and time, we had to trust the owner's assurance that it

ran as promised. [Ed: Beware the "an old granny sailed this boat on sunny Sundays" sales pitch. Purchasing a used boat can be risky business without a thorough professional survey and, if you expect to be able to insure the boat, you'll be required to prove its insurability with a survey by a surveyor accepted by the underwriter.]

This has definitely proven true. In fact, since we had no previous experience with an inboard engine we were reluctant to try to start the engine before relaunch. The previous owner



January 2003: Our first look at the future "On Location." Navigating the snow at the helm is "captain" Barb.

told us that while the fuel was three years old it did contain his special mixture of Marvel Mystery Oil, a lead substitute, Stabil and Heet gasoline antifreeze and a water inhibitor and should start and run well enough to get us from the launch area to our mooring. So we launched and hoped for the best. We pulled the choke and pressed

the starter button. The engine started and purred like a cat. All we have done since then is to keep using his special mixture of additives and each spring, we drain the water out of the water separator, change the plugs and change the oil. We



Deck work begins with removal of all hardware.

deck hardware. In retrospect, we were somewhat blinded by our infatuation with the boat, as well as our naivety about deck repair. Although we did negotiate the price down from US\$19,500 to US\$17,000, based on the deck problems, it did balance out somewhat in cost, not counting our time investment.

This was January 2003. Three months later we had the boat transported by a professional boat mover the 360 miles (579km) to our local marina. Being optimistic, we set the launch date for the end of April.

### Repairs Before Launch

We began our true survey as we made lists of things that had to be done, what should be done and what would be nice to do. The “had-tos” related to the deck. As we had no knowledge of deck core problems and repair, we first had to educate ourselves about this process. The results were not pretty, as we now know that “small” soft spots can indicate major problems with deck core integrity. The condition of the deck suggested that the whole deck needed refinishing, as did all the brightwork. Since we also wanted to reinforce stanchions and other deck hardware with improved backing, the only viable solution was to totally strip the deck of all hardware and brightwork. This task took two people two full days.

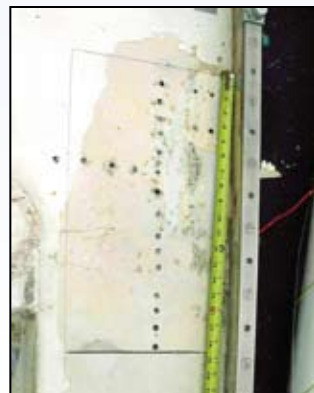
Launch date was moved back to early May but the real launch date evolved to mid-June. We began the work in earnest. All brightwork was brought to our studio's camera room where it was stripped of all old finish. Any damage was repaired and then refinished the wood with two coats of Cetol Marine Light and four coats of Cetol Gloss. Each spring, we give all the brightwork a light sanding followed by two more coats of Cetol Gloss.

see no reason to replace a perfectly good engine.

Overall, we found very little wrong with the boat, except two small soft spots on the deck, chalking of the deck paint and general deterioration of brightwork finishes on the exterior. Also, the boat lacked essential (for us) backing plates under all lifeline stanchions and

Three year's exposure to the harsh Wisconsin winters (a good reason to cover-up in the winter) had left the deck in very poor condition. Severely chalked paint stained the recently painted topsides. In addition to this, there were the two soft spots along with numerous areas of cracking and blistering. Having no experience with this problem, we consulted the repair staff at our marina for advice. Their opinion was that some sort of material had been applied over the original non-skid deck surface and that this was starting to let go. They felt the only real option was to grind the deck down below the gelcoat and start over, which they would be happy to do for a cost of about twice what we paid for the boat! A call to the previous owner net zilch as the deck refit was done before he bought the boat eight years before. So, at this point we turned to the same source for advice as we had for the brightwork, namely the magazine and it's free Technical Helpline and, in our opinion, one of the web's best owner's groups, [pearsonvanguard.org](http://pearsonvanguard.org).

After much research in past issues and online, we decided on the following course of action. First, wash the deck with a strong detergent and then give the deck an acetone bath to make sure all traces of grease and oil were gone. Next, we cut away the gelcoat from the two areas of soft deck and removed the entire wet core, replacing it with one of the newer foam core materials (i.e. Divinycell, Klegecell or



Wet deck repair: (clockwise, top left) Pilot holes drilled in deck to determine extent of wet core. The small area got larger with every drilled hole; Outer skin and core removed from area of core repair; Removing the wet core; New foam board in place with one layer of System Three resin.

equivalents). By covering the foam with mat and resin, we were able to level the repaired area with the older section and then we sanded the entire deck with a belt sander and ground out all of the areas where cracking and blistering occurred. Jamestown Distributors recommended using System Three resin, a pre-mixed system that's a no brainer for first-time users of epoxy resin. Once set, it sands easily and is compatible with Awlgrip fairing compound. Next, we faired, sanded, faired, sanded, faired, sanded and then we faired and sanded some more. Two coats of primer and four coats of non-skid paint later we were finished. We reinstalled all the deck hardware with 1/4" (6mm) aluminum backing plates. A year later, the repairs seemed to be holding up quite well.

## Interior Refinements

Pearson made two interiors for the Vanguard, the standard layout that was big on seating but short on storage and berths and the dinette, which was short on seating but slightly better on storage and much better on berths. The interior of "On Location" started life as a dinette version and had evolved to a hybrid of each, with the goal being a comfortable cruising environment for a couple that rarely, if ever, would have overnight guests. It's a boat that will drink six, feed four and sleep two.

All exposed interior areas of the hull are covered with a thin layer of foil insulation followed by white cedar strips, fitted into place. The result being an interior that remains cooler or warmer longer as well as having a more pleasing and bright appearance. A custom louvered door for the rope locker gives the vee berth a more finished look. To complete the wood interior look, all bulkheads are covered with Western Red Cedar strips. All wood is finished with a mixture of equal parts gum turpentine, spar varnish and linseed oil. Each spring, this finish is wiped on the wood, allowed to set for a couple of minutes and then wiped off.

Some time in the boat's past, the owner removed the sink and its plumbing in the head, as it was redundant with the



New replica cockpit coaming emblem of cast bronze.

galley sink only two steps away. At that point, the toilet was replaced and the cabinets were refinished. The hanging locker was divided and shelves installed to make the space more usable. A hand-made cherry-wood table with fiddles replaces the original pedestal supported dining table.

In the galley area, the original icebox and cabinets were removed and the sink moved aft. This area now includes a small settee and open shelves with removable fiddles. A non-pressurized alcohol two-burner stove replaced the

original pressurized alcohol fueled two-burner stove with oven. This change allowed space for an icebox as well as dry storage areas behind and below the stove.

Where once was the starboard quarterberth, we now had additional dry storage that is accessible from both above and in front. A new bulkhead made the starboard cockpit locker an ideal sail storage locker. At this time, new breaker panels were installed as well as a cabinet for the radar and GPS just aft of the starboard port lights.

The port quarter berth was also removed and replaced with the following: two fiddled shelves that run from the dining area to the new bulkhead installed at the forward end of the port cockpit locker; a DC refrigerator and, just to the starboard side, two small storage bins. An opening port light was installed just above this area at the cabin's aft bulkhead. Two house batteries now live in an area below the quarter berth on a piece of marine plywood that was glassed to the hull. [Ed: Always install batteries in acid-proof boxes or trays with hold-down straps and terminal protections.] These batteries are charged by both an 85-watt solar panel mounted to the stern rail and, when the engine is running, a high-output alternator. The engine start battery is located in the original battery compartment and charged by the alternator only. There is a two-position battery isolator/selector switch along with Heart Interface monitors that let us know the system is healthy. The cockpit locker has been divided into two sections with the forward compartment holding tools, a Zodiac life raft and a ditch bag. The aft compartment is for line and reserve anchor storage.

The aft section of the salon was modified by raising the engine compartment cover approximately 6" (15cm) to the new countertop height that now occupies the space where the original quarterberths were. This made a much more friendly access to the engine. Also, the additional overhead room for the engine made for lower temperatures in the engine compartment. This is important because many Vanguard owners have had problems with ignition coil failure due to excessive heat in the engine compartment. We have not had to move our coil away from the engine onto the bulkhead, as many others have had to do to combat the problem. Two small opening port lights added to the forward end of the cabin top step down improve lighting and ventilation below. All cabin lights were replaced with Alpen Glow fixtures, two of which have red LED chart lights.

## Finishing Touch

One exterior change that was purely cosmetic was the reinstallation of the Pearson cockpit coaming emblems. These factory emblems were pot metal and had deteriorated beyond reclamation. When we unpacked some boxes of stuff that came with the boat we found the original emblems. Both were broken into several pieces but one of them had all the parts. We sent the parts to Bristol Bronze, where they used the pieces to make a mold and then cast three new emblems of bronze.



Brightwork was stripped then coated with Cetol Marine Light followed by Cetol Marine Gloss.

The cost of repairs and equipment upgrades reached US\$19,000 (see DIY Bill of Materials on page 60). Was it worth it? If you purchase a mostly original, in fair condition, mid-60s Vanguard expect to pay around US\$10,000. To bring it to the condition similar to our boat, expect to invest another US\$20,000, depending on your taste and budget. You can have a classic 40-year-old 32' (9.7m) yacht like the Vanguard, in pristine condition, that can take you anywhere in the world and turn heads wherever you go for about US\$30,000 or a new 32-footer for US\$100,000 or more? It's your call.

**Future Delights**

As we draw closer to the possibility of selling our business and having more leisure time, there are some things we may want to do in order to live aboard part of the year and possibly do some bluewater cruising. At the top of the list is a new mainsail with a flaking system that works, if there is such a thing. I need to finish and install a cherry wood cabinet, install a good cabin heater,

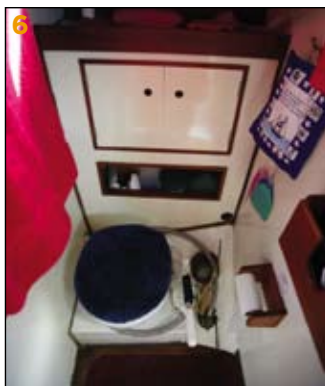
Interior refit shows (1) cedar strips lining the vee berth and cabin sides; (2) new dinette table and cushions; (3) starboard galley with new ice-box, sink, stove, storage and forward seating area; (4,5) starboard countertop and icebox, new circuit breaker panels on aft bulkhead and custom cabinet above for GPS and radar, and redesigned port quarterberth with battery storage locker underneath shelves; (6) modified hanging locker; (7) new head.



Launch day, June 2003.

air-conditioning system, smaller and opening portlights in the salon, solar shower system and the boom gallows that came with the boat but has never been installed. We need a teak mast step box with storage for winch handles and sail ties and a companionway sea hood. We need to refinish or replace the cabin sole and make the hull-to-deck joint watertight. (This is an issue on all Vanguards.)

**About the author:** Dave Heilman is a professional photographer and former canoeist until he meet his to-be wife Barb, who had owned a Newport, then a Cape Dory and now sailed a Pearson 26. When it came time to move up she had two guidelines: no bleach bottles and the boat had to talk to her the very instant she set foot on board. The Heilman's cruise "On Location," a 1965 32' (9.7m) Pearson Vanguard, from their homeport of Manitowoc, Wisconsin.



Original interior: (top) View forward of original interior with starboard galley and port dinette. (bottom) Port and starboard quarterberths and companionway details.



Photos courtesy of Mark McEvers, owner of "Vagabond," Pearson Vanguard hull number 355.

**DIY Bill of Materials**

**Interior Remodeling**

The previous owner did the remodeling of the interior, to the best of our knowledge, over two off-seasons. He first developed a plan and materials list. Then, one season he spent doing the work with the materials cost (no hardware) being just over US\$1,000.

**Exterior Restoration**

With us working on alternating days, Monday through Friday, and both of us working on weekends we did this work. We started in mid-April and finished in late June, a total of 10 weeks. Prices quoted are 2004 material costs in U.S. dollars.

1 gallon (3.78L) of Cetol Marine Light	\$95
1 gallon (3.78L) of Cetol Marine gloss	\$120
1 gallon (3.78L) of System Three resin	\$69
1 gallon (3.78L) System Three filler	\$18
1 gallon (3.78L) System Three hardener	\$94
Fiberglass woven matt	\$15
Foam board deck core	*A
5 gallons (18.9L) marine-grade stripper	\$250
Sandpaper and nylon stripping pads	\$100
5 gallons (18.9L) acetone	\$50
5 gallons (18.9L) mineral spirits	\$70
Several rolls of blue painter's tape	\$84
3 badger hair paint brushes	\$60
1 gallon (3.78L) Awlgrip fairing compound	\$47
2 gallons (7.5L) Interlux deck primer	\$160
2 gallons (7.5L) Interlux non-skid deck paint	\$224
1 gallon (3.78L) Interlux 333 thinner	\$38
1 6' (1.8m), 3/4 by 5' (19mm by 1.5m) teak board	\$95
3 cast bronze cockpit combing emblems	\$225
1/4" (6mm) aluminum backing plate material	*B
Various grinding wheels for a power drill	\$25
1 gallon (3.78L) brass polish	\$72
1 gallon (3.78L) Interlux bottom paint	\$185
Disposable rubber gloves	\$25
3M 101 polysulfide caulk	\$36
2 gallons (7.5L) Awlgrip topsides paint	\$368
Miscellaneous	\$175

**Total** \$2,700  
(Remember the marina's estimate for just the deck work!)

\*A We got a break here as the marina had just completed a large job and had several scrap pieces of 2" (5cm) material that they gave to me. I cut and ripped them down to the correct size of 1/4" (6mm) and then sanded to a bevel that worked on the side deck.

\*B I had a piece of 1/4" (6mm) thick aluminum on hand that I cut down.

**Equipment Upgrades**

Apelco VHF radio	\$200
Garmin GPS unit	\$699
Raytheon Radar	\$1,140
Datamarine Depth sounder	\$239
Navico Tiller pilot	\$649
Pioneer AM/FM/CD player receiver	\$269
20 gallon (75L) holding tank	\$119
Igloo 12-volt DC refrigerator	\$130
Raritan PH11 Marine toilet	\$350
Two brass cowl vents	\$450
Two teak storage boxes	\$400
Magna Propane grill	\$249
Bronze builder's plate	\$50
Teak cockpit grate	\$500
3 cockpit cushions with self-draining foam	\$500
85-watt Shell solar panel and controls	\$1,000
Breaker boxes, three panels	\$479
Alpen Glow interior lighting fixtures	\$480
ABI bronze, double action windlass	\$2,363
Bronze boat hook with mahogany handle	\$165
Two-burner, non-pressurized Origo alcohol stove	\$570
Four-person Zodiac liferaft	\$2,500
Ditch bag (self-made)	\$200
Medical kit (self-made)	\$200
Danforth Compass	\$130
Boom preventer	\$120
Boom gallows *C	\$200
Water pump	\$200
In-line fuel filter	\$5
In-line fuel/water separator	\$85
Balmar High-output alternator/regulator	\$400
Heart Battery monitor	\$370
Battery isolator/switch	\$35
3 deep-cycle 12-volt marine batteries	\$390
PSS shaft seal to replace stuffing box	\$250
Electric fuel pump	\$85
Crankcase ventilation kit	\$80
3 blade stainless-steel propeller	\$149
Electronic ignition	\$100

**Total** \$16,500

\*C For bronze fittings only as the wood arch was hand-made by us.

**REPRINTED FROM DIY boat owner 2005-#4 ISSUE**

**Website: [www.diy-boat.com](http://www.diy-boat.com)**