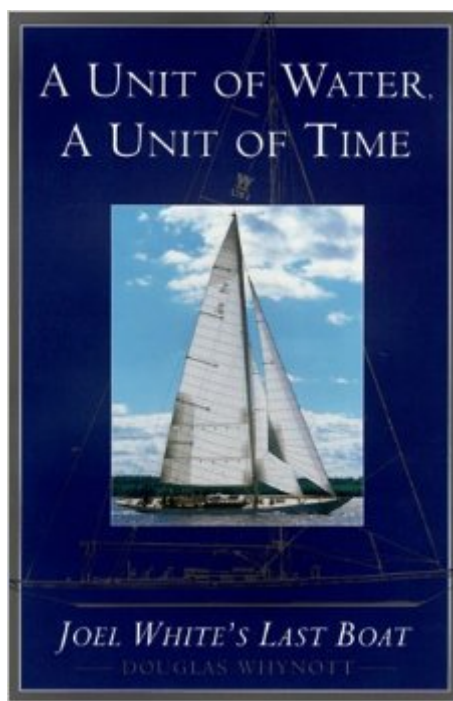


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# A Unit Of Water, A Unit Of Time



## Synopsis

Gentle and timeless, this is a lyrical portrait of men who still practice the timeless art of designing and building handcrafted wooden boats at the Brooklin Boat Yard in Maine.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (14 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

It is hard for me to imagine how Douglas Whynott was able to so skillfully capture the subtleties of the lives of the people he met in Brooklin, Maine. Without overly romanticizing his subjects, he shows these boatbuilders and boat owners as they are. At times the structure of the book seems to imitate the way life is approached Down East: things wander off sometimes, but eventually whatever is supposed to happen, does happen. I envy that Whynott got to go sailing on some of the most beautiful boats sailing those waters. Good job, Doug.

Douglas Whynott hung around the Brooklin Boat Yard for a year or so, and faithfully recorded the goings on. Much of the book is like a diary, however (today the garboard strakes were attached), and it does not really give insight into the people involved. Nor does it get very much into the gorgeous W-76, which it is purportedly about. For a good book on Joel White, which really shows his evolution as a designer and builder, splurge for Joel White: Boatbuilder/Designer/Sailor, written by two of his closest friends.

As someone who has spent time scraping and painting the bottom of a large sailing boat, this book

brought back all the sights and sounds of a boatyard. I could smell the dust and paint fumes, feel the smoothness of varnished rails, and sense the excitement when each boat was hoisted into the water. This book should interest all aspiring boat builders, and prepare them for the painstaking work of boat design, construction and restoration. Wynott does a superb job describing the interpersonal dynamics of a boatyard's personnel and the importance of good management. Though I found myself irritated at Steve, Joel White's son, for spending his winter in the Caribbean during his father's last year, Steve's management style is instructive for leading a group of talented artisans, be they boat builders, scientific researchers, or writers. I savored every page of this short book, sometimes reading each section twice as not to miss the rich details. It made me laugh, such as the passage about novice sailors who they ended being towed into port and decided to buy a boat anyway, and cry -- Joel's death. I recommend it highly for all who find satisfaction in "messin' around with boats." This book squarely dispels what every boat owner already knows: Boating only looks romantic!

This book combines information about designing and building wooden sailboats in Brooklin, Maine, with the story of three generations of the White family: E.B. White, the writer who sailed in his spare time; Joel White, the boat designer and builder who wrote about boats in his spare time; and Steve White, who expanded and runs the boatyard his father started. The book appeals to readers on many levels but had too much detail and too many technical terms about boat building for a lay person like me. As the story of the comeback of wooden sailing boats in the 1990's and a peek into the life of the White family in Maine, it succeeds very well. Readers who liked this book might also enjoy "The Survival of the Bark Canoe" by John McPhee.

I agree with the reviewer who suggested that this book really needs some illustrations. Wynott's word-pictures just aren't sufficient for those whose knowledge of sailing boats is limited. As a non-reader of *Wooden Boats* magazine, the source of much of the info here, I'd love to have seen photos or sketches of the boats mentioned, as well as the boatyard crew. And for the ocean-loving landlubbers among us, a good glossary would be a godsend. For example, what's deadwood? or a spoon-shaped bow? It's also a bit of a stretch to say that Wynott wrote this book. Take out the extensive -- and wonderful -- citations from the writings of E.B. White and his son, Joel that Wynott lovingly included, and not much of the writing came from the pen/typewriter/PC of Wynott. What did is quite well written, sometimes really well written, however. What this book really did is send me searching for my copy of E.B. White's "One Man's Meat." I'm not surprised to see this title in the

"others who bought this book" section here on .com.I'm also gonna check out "The Yard: Building a Destroyer at the Bath Iron Works," by Michael S. Sanders. The Boston Globe review of this book is what interested me in Whynott's book -- which the reviewer liked a lot.

I read this book while I was vacationing in Maine. It made me have an understanding and appreciation of what goes on in those boat yards along the coast. It also made me wish I knew Joel White and some of the other boatbuilders. I found the end of this book very touching. The author portrays White's illness, but doesn't make it seem maudlin or sentimental. I'd recommend this to anyone interested in boats or the people who live in Maine.

Excellent review of the Maine boat builders and poignant rendition of the individual, especially Joel White, who create the fantastic sailing vessels; time has not diminished the relevancy of this book.

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