

TUG HALF HITCH - BUILT 1957

OFFICIAL NO. 274931

RIG - OIL SCREW

GROSS TONNAGE: 24

NET TONNAGE: 16

LENGTH - 44.8

BREADTH - 11.9

DEPTH - 7.6

SERVICE - TOW

HORSEPOWER - 300 H.P. CATERPILLAR DIESEL ENGINE

This little steel tugboat just 44 feet long was designed and built by Captain Will and Captain Ben Colonna for Norfolk Ship Salvage Co., Inc. later to become Norfolk Towing and Lighterage, Inc. at Colonna's Shipyard, Inc., Norfolk, Virginia. It was to be used at the shipyard for shifting vessels around its railways and piers but at the last moment was leased instead to Hitch Sand and Gravel Company of Norfolk for hauling sand and gravel from a point up the James River just beyond Hopewell to its plant south of the Gilmerton bridge on the Southern branch of the Elizabeth River just south of Norfolk, thus deriving its name Half Hitch from the company it was leased to. For Hitch, it usually towed three large wooden ex-molasses barges 170' x 34' x 8' loaded with huge piles of sand and gravel lashed together one behind the other on a tow line behind this very small tug making quite a sight as the size of the tow looked to be an impossible task for such a small tug making her a well-known sight and a topic of conversation in the Norfolk harbor.

NOTE:

I remember well my father W. W. Colonna, Sr. carving by hand a rather small piece of wood into a tug shaped hull which became the wooden model for the hull of the tug Half Hitch. I also remember him having me help lift the dimensions from the wood model and place them on a drawing showing the sizes and shapes to

be made for the construction of the tug and helping him draw these shapes on flat steel plates with soap stone and the cutting and welding together sections of steel flat bar then with these frames and other pieces fashioning together the steel skeleton along the east side No. 3 railway which eventually became the tug Half Hitch.

Although I didn't realize it at the time, it was a real experience and opportunity to observe and to help participate in a small way in the complete construction of a small steel tug boat from its very conception thru its completion with your father.

The original wood model as mentioned above hangs with pride on the wall of the old Colonna House<sup>BOAT</sup> at the foot of Seneca Avenue in Chesapeake, Virginia.

In 1964, the Half Hitch was placed on a No. 2 marine railway at Colonna's Shipyard cut in half, pulled apart and a 12 foot section was added to her mid section.

After the expiration of Hitch's contract on the sand and gravel run, she was used at the shipyard for her original purpose and remains there at the time of this writing still doing a good job shifting vessels and doing many odd jobs as necessary in and around the shipyard.



57 Years Old January 1987