

Lost Generation: A family keeps on going

STONINGTON, ME – The launch of any new boat is usually a mix of joy and pride, and often some anxiousness – the vessel needs to start earning its keep as soon as the celebration is over.

All of those emotions, along with some sadness, apply in the case of Lost Generation, a new 44' Calvin Beal scalloper finished by Light's Fiberglass in Corea, ME for Wally Gray Sr.

The phrase “lost generation” was first coined after World War I, used to describe both those who lost their lives and those who survived the conflict only to return home with their souls scarred by what they'd experienced on the battlefield.

In the case of the new blue-hulled dragger that will call Stonington, ME home, the name Lost Generation is quite literal. Look closely on the bow. Tucked under the pronounced flair is a graphic showing the Gloucester Fisherman's Memorial. Bordering the iconic man at the wheel is text that reads: “IN MEMORY OF THE FOXY LADY II – CHUB & WAYNE.”

“Wayne” would be Wayne Young of Deer Isle, lost at sea in December of 2012 when the 45' Foxy Lady II disappeared 15 miles off the coast of Provincetown, MA during a scallop trip. Young, who served as crew aboard the dragger, was 50 years old.

“Chub” was the Foxy Lady II's skipper, Wallace “Chubby” Gray II, who was already a veteran offshore fisherman at the age of 26.

He was the son of Wally Gray Sr. and his wife Carol. And he was the father of Wallace Gray III, who was only three years old when his father's boat was reported missing.

Chubby is the lost generation.

Wally Sr.

Wally Gray, 55, took a few minutes to sit in the wheelhouse of his new 44-footer on a mid-May afternoon. He and his crew – Steve Ingersoll, Mike Brown, and Jared Young – had hit the ground running a few days earlier, outfitting the Lost Generation with her dragging gear just days after the freshly launched boat arrived in Stonington.

“We're getting there,” said Gray. “A few more things to do and then we're headed south.”

Wally Gray first “headed south” in 1978, the year after he graduated from Deer Isle – Stonington High School. He landed a berth aboard a scalloper out of Gloucester just in time to spend the notorious “Blizzard of '78” offshore.

“Yep,” said Gray. “Gone 17 days and fished for three of them. They got 3'

or 4' of snow in Gloucester during the storm, but we were gone so long it had all melted by the time we got back in.”

That less-than-auspicious start didn't deter Gray, however. In the years that followed, he worked his way through the ranks of the offshore scallop fleet from Gloucester down to New Bedford from sheller to engineer to mate and, finally, to the skipper's chair in the wheelhouse.

By 1992, Gray was ready to move back to Deer Isle with his wife Carol, looking to get a boat of his own and start building a home. His first scalloper was “kind of like a Novi, but she was built in Eastport. I guess they went by what they could see from a distance.”

With the family settled in Maine, Gray continued fishing offshore, running out of Gloucester, Point Judith, RI, and Montauk, NY as he followed the scallops. By 2004, he'd worked his way up to purchasing the Foxy Lady II, a 45' Novi.

And his son, Wally II – “Chubby” – was following in his footsteps. By 2009, Wally Sr. was comfortable with his son skippering the Foxy Lady II himself. Chubby was a natural, a responsible captain and a good fisherman.

For Wally Sr., it was a chance to be around home more. He acted as shore engineer for the Foxy Lady II while tending a gang of inshore lobster gear.

It was a good situation for all.

Until Dec. 15, 2012.

Unanswered questions

One of the hardest things for Wally Sr. to accept is the fact that although the Foxy Lady II was equipped with a vessel monitoring system (VMS), it

provided no help in the search effort once the boat was reported overdue.

“They track me everywhere I go,” he said, pointing to the VMS system aboard the Lost Generation. “If the

Foxy Lady II had sunk in a closed area, they would've had a jet out – because you're breaking the law.”

He shook his head.

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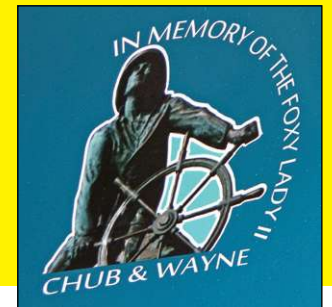


Brian Robbins photos

Carol and Wally Gray.

Lost Generation, a new 44' Calvin Beal scalloper built by SW Boatworks and finished by Light's Fiberglass for Wally Gray.

Commemorative image on Lost Generation's bow.



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Lost Generation

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"It's for law enforcement only, but why not use it for saving lives? All the data would be there afterwards. Once you save somebody's life, you could still arrest them if that's what you want to do."

He also questioned the reliability of present-day EPIRBs.

"You hear about boats sinking and the EPIRBs not going off," he said. "I know they're tested when they're brand new, but how long are they really lasting?"

"My old EPIRB was one of the great big ones. I couldn't get any parts for it, so I replaced it. It sat in my driveway for years. I finally threw it away. The Coast Guard called me about a month later. It had gone off in a landfill upstate."

There was never an EPIRB signal from the Foxy Lady II, outfitted with an up-to-date unit. By mid-January of 2013, Coast Guard Sector Boston confirmed that an underwater obstruction off Provincetown was the missing vessel. No trace of Chubby Gray or Wayne Young was ever found.

Carol and Wally Sr. both spoke of the "unbelievable support" the families received in the wake of the tragedy.

"People we didn't even know wanted to do what they could to help," said Carol. "It was amazing."

At the same time, it was disheartening how some of the



Brian Robbins photo

Lost Generation crew, from left, Jared Young, owner/operator Wally Gray, and Mike Brown. Crewman Steve Ingersoll wasn't aboard when the photo was taken.

The 44' scalloper Lost Generation is powered by a DI 13 Scania (400 hp @ 1800 rpm) and 2.6:1 ZF 260A marine gear, a package provided by Billings Diesel and Marine Service Inc. in Stonington.

mainstream press covering the tragedy ignored the family's wishes for privacy, including an invasive interview attempt by a journalist on the day of the memorial service for the lost men.

Wally said it took him a while to get back out on the water last year. He

did, however, tending his lobster gear inshore on his own with his 31-footer.

"But it wasn't for me," Wally said. "I was just beating myself up. I needed to get back scalloping."

"I needed to get another boat."

New chapter

To date, nobody had rigged a Calvin Beal 44 for dragging, but Wally Sr. felt the 44'x17' hull would be ideal for what he wanted to do.

"She'll take the weight, but should still push easy," he said.

SW Boatworks of Lamoine built the solid-fiberglass hull and molded top, which was then trucked down to Light's Fiberglass in Corea. Wally said he'd heard nothing but good things about Mike Light's work, and the experience of finishing the Lost Generation proved everything he'd heard.

"Mike and I hit it off from day one," said Wally. "I worked on the boat side-by-side with him and we had a ball."

"Mike told Wally he'd hire him anytime," said Carol Gray.

"Yeah, that would be a pretty good way to spend a winter, I guess," said Wally, smiling. "Mike does excellent work."

Billings Diesel & Marine Service in Stonington supplied the Lost Generation's DI 13 Scania (400 hp @ 1800 rpm) and 2.6:1 ZF 260A marine gear. The high-torque/slow-turning setup allows for a good-sized prop for dragging. A 34"x34" 4-blade from H&H Propeller Shop spins on a 2-1/2" AQ-22 shaft from R.E. Thomas Marine Hardware.

Wally praised the work of the various outside shops that also were involved in the finishing of Lost Generation.

"Rumery's Marine does a lot of Mike's wiring and hydraulics hookup," he said. "When it's time for Terry Rumery to get

involved, he just comes in and does the job."

Kennedy Marine Fabrication handled the task of welding up the new 44-footer's dragging rig. A chain sweep from New Bedford's Blue Fleet Welding lay on deck, waiting to hit the water.

Lost Generation's dual fuel tanks, 1,000-gallon total capacity, would be topped off before heading down the coast. Wally Sr. figured to be fishing out of Gloucester soon after our visit.

"It's time to get back out there," he said.

The youngest generation

"For all the changes the fishery's gone through, it's still a family business," Wally said, pointing to the crew atop the wheelhouse working on the rigging.

Mike Brown is engaged to one of the Grays' daughters. Jared Young is the son of Wayne Young, who was lost on the Foxy Lady II. And Steve Ingersoll, who wasn't aboard during our sit-down, is Wally Sr.'s stepson.

With family in mind, one can't help but think of little Wallace Gray III, now four years old.

"That's the part about all of this that makes me the most sad," said Carol. "He's growing up without his father."

She shook her head. "He looks just like Chubby."

"Yeah," Wally Sr. said as he got to his feet. He had work to do.

"I'm figuring to fish this boat for 10 years, pay things off, and then make a decision from there," he said. "I could maybe lease my permit. Who knows?"

Wally shrugged his shoulders.

"My grandson will be 14 by then," he said. "I'd like to get out of the fishery before he comes of age. I'd like to see him do something different."

Brian Robbins

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