



Smiles all around for Peter Crenier and his son, John, taking their restored 1984 Whaler for a spin.

# A PERFECT PAIR

When Peter Crenier restored his 13-foot Boston Whaler, it had to be done in the likeness of his Sabre 38

BY CHRIS LANDRY / SENIOR REPORTER  
PHOTOS BY RICH ARMSTRONG

**Y**ou can buy a kit with all the mahogany necessary for replacing the wood on an old 13-foot Boston Whaler. But Peter Crenier was seeking a different look for his 1984 Whaler, one that matched the colors and wood type of his big boat, a Sabre 38 — an express with traditional New England lines, a pilot-house and ample brightwork.

“I wanted the Sabre to have a ‘mini-me’ of itself,” says Crenier, 54, of Hingham, Mass., referencing Dr. Evil’s diminutive sidekick in the “Austin Powers” movies. “I wanted it to look very yachty, for lack of a better term, and different from the old Whalers.”



Crenier’s scenario illustrates a couple of advantages of retrofitting an older boat: creating something to your own liking and controlling — or at least trying to control — how much you spend on your “masterpiece.” However, boat owners who go the refit route often struggle to meet the budget for the project. They usually reference — albeit jokingly — the grief they receive from their better half after she becomes aware of the final bill.

“I completely went over budget,” Crenier says. “My wife will slap me around a little bit, but this is what we do. It is a disease one has.”

And it can be an expensive disease to treat. Crenier bought his Whaler for \$2,100 and spent about \$13,000 on the upgrade. “I’m a nurse, and the joke was I was going to have to take on more shifts to pay for this,” Linda Crenier says. “Yes, he did go over budget, but he hides those bills, so I don’t know by how much.”

In addition to replacing all of the wood, Crenier replaced the 40-hp 1984 Johnson with a new Evinrude E-TEC 2-stroke (with electronic fuel



injection) of the same horsepower. He bought a custom fuel tank; had all of the hardware rechromed through Nu-Chrome Chrome Plating & Metal Restoration ([www.nu-chrome.com](http://www.nu-chrome.com)) in Fall River, Mass.; replaced the steering system; and had a stainless-steel steering wheel and knob from Gem Products ([www.gemlux.com](http://www.gemlux.com)) in Orange Park, Fla., installed.

He and his 13-year-old son, John, ground down the hull and all surfaces to remove stress cracks, and they used resin and glass to repair the dozens of holes (from hardware fasteners), small chips and gashes around the deck and hull. A 3-inch hole in the starboard side was repaired, too, and Crenier hired a friend to professionally Awlgrip the boat in the same oyster white that coats his Sabre. Jeff Perette supervised the father-and-son team's work and then completed all fiberglass finishing and fairing. The Creniers also helped with the painting.

"Peter and John wanted to really get into the project with their hands," says Perette, 29, who recently launched East Coast Fiberglass ([www.eastcoastfiberglass.com](http://www.eastcoastfiberglass.com)) in Marshfield, Mass. He has been spraying Awlgrip since he was 22. "So I said, I'll put the gun in your hand and you can prime the boat. Peter is a businessman, a shirt-and-tie guy. You put a grinder in his hands and he starts sweating."

Crenier is a senior vice president with a company that supplies technology to the investment industry. He has an extensive sailing background and raced the Frers 33. "I have raced over in Europe," says Crenier, who spent the early part of his youth in California and Hawaii and moved to coastal Connecticut when he was in eighth grade. "I raced all over the U.S. on the East and West coast."

### 'Stuck in my mind'

Crenier knows boats, and he and his son weren't afraid to dig into the grunt work of grinding, says Perette, who carried out the final priming prior to the Awlgrip. Perette also used Awlgrip to paint the non-skid, using a dark mustard tan like the Sabre. Perette wanted to show the boat in his display at the New England Boat Show and asked Crenier to help him prepare it. "The response we got from people at the show was spectacular," Crenier says. "Some didn't even realize it was a Whaler or a retrofitted Whaler but a great-looking and unique boat." And that's just what Crenier wanted.

"The boat looks awesome and it was a show-stopper," Perette says. "I am really stoked about how it turned out. It's a great little boat. And it's different — the colors are different."

The preparation for the boat show turned out to be the hardest part of the project, Crenier says. "I spent a couple weekends down there at Jeff's shop when we were getting close to the show," says Crenier. "I would be up until 4 a.m. It was stressful because a part would not come in when expected and you would lose a day of work. It was a rush, but tough."

There's no doubt about Crenier's favorite aspect of this project: spending time with his son. "We would drive to Jeff's shop; we would go to lunch," says Crenier. (The Creniers also have two grown children, Beth, 27, and Kate, 23.) "We worked until 4 or 5 p.m. and headed home. John actually was able to do the work and see what it entailed and we were just together."

The Creniers will use the Whaler for fun and relaxation. "We'll do a little water skiing and a little gunkholing," Crenier says. "This isn't the boat I would take out into the bay in 5-foot waves. There is a lot to do within a short distance."

His son will use the Whaler to commute to his summer job at the



Michael Ide, of Ide Woodcrafts, and Teak Decking Systems crafted the Whaler's woodwork.

local yacht club. "If he even scratches it, I will cut off his left arm," his father quips. "John knows at dusk, when the parents want to go for a quick cruise, we have rights to the Whaler."

Crenier bought the boat in September 2011, and he and John began the refit in October. They launched her in May. A friend's Whaler inspired Crenier to take on the project. "I keep my boat in Hingham at a place called Hewitt's Cove Marina," says Crenier, who began searching for a project boat in the winter of 2010-11 on the website craigslist. "One afternoon, my friend [Jeff Camuso] pulled up in his retrofitted Whaler. The image of the boat just stuck in my mind because it was so stunning. It was highly varnished with teak and he had custom everything."

Two years later, the image of his friend's Whaler was still fresh. "So last winter I said to John, 'Let's check out Craigslist and see what's around.'"

They hit three states, inspecting about 10 Whalers. "We ended up finding one only two towns away," Crenier says. "It was a two-owner boat. The first owner kept it indoors and the second outdoors. It was in really in good shape."

As they looked for a boat, Crenier also researched Whaler restorations. "I found this whole subculture online, such as [[www.continuouswave.com](http://www.continuouswave.com)] and various Whaler sites," he says. "It is just wild, and if you get into some of those sites and start asking questions, you would be amazed at how quickly some people get back to you."

Before trailering the boat to East Coast Fiberglass, Crenier sold

the engine and existing woodwork and stripped the bottom paint. The Whaler had no water in the foam that fills the hull skins, so no structural work was required. "When you have a good foundation to start with, the finished product is going to be that much better," says Perette, who used a moisture meter to check the hull and weighed the boat. It was close to the original weight of about 330 pounds.

Though dry, Crenier's "mini-me" needed work. "I would say it was in fair condition, but fair condition in the 1984 Whaler vernacular is pretty good because the boats I saw — some of them — were fully waterlogged and had massive spider cracks in the non-skid," he says. "You wouldn't believe what people put on Whalers. And they decide they don't want these components, and they fill the holes with silicone. Some of these boats looked like Swiss cheese. So it is all relative whether I rate it as fair, good or poor condition."

### Teak-nically perfect

The woodwork was another project altogether. "I am fairly good with woodwork, but I didn't want to ruin the teak, which was \$38 to \$40 a foot," Crenier says. He hired Michael Ide of Ide Woodcrafts ([www.idewoodcrafts.com](http://www.idewoodcrafts.com)) in Hingham, Mass., a furniture maker who also does marine carpentry. Ide based his design on the teak woodwork of Crenier's friend's boat.

Going with all teak was more expensive than mahogany, but the

result was worth it. "Peter wanted to do this first-class," says Ide, who spent about 45 hours on Crenier's boat. "He wanted to do everything right and everything had to be perfect. And I think ultimately it was."

Ide dovetailed the sides of the console for strength. "There are no screws used," he says. "It is all joined like furniture would be joined. I think the result shows. It is high quality. I think the boat will last a long time."

For the tops of the anchor locker and the forward and aft bench seats, Crenier found a company that specializes in pre-manufactured teak decking, Teak Decking Systems ([www.teakdecking.com](http://www.teakdecking.com)) in Sarasota, Fla. Ide thought going with Teak Decking Systems was a good idea. "They specialize in deck material designs," he says. "Their pricing is more effective, and their shop is set up to do this type of manufacturing."

Teak Decking Systems uses teak for its decking but replaces the holly with a black rubber silicone, says Peter Wormwood, the Teak Decking Systems project manager for Crenier's work. "Essentially what we are doing is creating a modular kit," he says. "Once it's all done, the kit is shipped to the customer with adhesive and caulking for installation."

The decks are usually based on templates that the owner or boatbuilder provides, Wormwood says, but Crenier's project required no template.

Teak Decking Systems supplies decks for a host of big-name production builders, such as Sabre, Chris-Craft, Hinckley, Sea Ray, Viking, Bertram and S2 Yachts (Tiara and Pursuit), as well as megayachts and cruiser liners. The rubber silicone is a proprietary seam compound, SIS 440 Teak Deck Caulking, and the epoxy is specially made for bonding teak to the subdecks, Wormwood says.

Crenier's project might have inspired Wormwood to restore his own 13-foot Whaler. "I have the exact same Whaler as Peter," he says, though he has no clue what year it is. "Mine looks like his 'before' picture. Doing his has made me think more seriously of [renovating] mine."

Perette coated the teak with one layer of Epifanes varnish and then three coats of Awlgrip Clear. "Awlgrip Clear has a 5-year guarantee if it is sprayed on," Crenier says. "This combination eliminates yearly varnishing and provides a very durable high-gloss finish that pops when you see it." Crenier also had Perette use Awlgrip Clear over the entire boat for extra shine.

The woodwork captures the attention right away. The bench seats stretch across the boat's 5-foot, 5-inch beam, fore and aft of the starboard-side console. The aft bench has a backrest and lifts on two hinges to reveal storage behind. A second storage compartment is integrated into the aft side of the backrest and also opens on hinges.

A 16-by-10-inch carbon fiber faceplate holds the ignition key switch and trim/tilt and bilge switches. Teak fiddles rim its top. The steering wheel and gauge panel are mounted on a console face that's angled at 45 degrees. A center readout gives the engine vitals, such as speed, rpm and fuel burn. Two smaller identical gauges track the volts and fuel. The three sit in a recessed area covered with UV-protected windshield glass. A stainless-steel frame holds the glass. Port and starboard stainless rails about knee-high flank the midships area. The companion portion of the console extends from the helm to the starboard gunwale.

Crenier had the shift/throttle affixed to the inboard side of the console. "No, I am not left-handed," he says. "We just didn't have a good spot for it on the starboard side."

OK, so the boat has one imperfection. ■