



# A Unit of Water, A Unit of Time: Joel White's Last Boat

*Douglas Whynott*

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In a time when racing boats are mass-produced from synthetic materials, a dying breed of craftsman continues to build wooden sailboats of astonishing beauty. Boatbuilding is an ancient art, and Joel White was a master. Son of the legendary writer E.B. White, he was raised around boats and his designs were as sublime and graceful as his father's prose. At a boatyard in Maine, White and his closely knit team of builders brought scores of his creations from blueprints into the ocean.

In June 1996, six months after being diagnosed with cancer, Joel White began designing the W-76, an exquisite racing yacht. It was his final masterpiece. Douglas Whynott spent a year at Brooklin Boat Yard, observing as this design took shape, first in sketches and then during the painstaking building of the wooden craft.

The result is the poignant tale of both a genius at work and the people devoted to his art. Evoking E.B. White's New England and its salty residents, *A Unit of Water, a Unit of Time* is a classic portrait of dignity, charm, and humble magnificence-and of a maritime community that keeps a vanishing world alive.

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