



# The Nor'Sea 27 Owners Newsline

Issue #27

The newsletter for Inspired Nor'Sea 27 Owners

Fall 2002

Lyle Hess -

Lyle Hess, designer of the Nor'Sea 27, and many other notable sailcraft passed away this month (September 2002) at the age of 90. His legacy lives on in all the great boats he designed and that are still sailing the 7 seas... A nice article on Lyle is available on the Web on the Nor'Sea Yacht Website.

Nor'Sea 27

By my calculations the Nor'Sea 27 is 25 years old this year. Yahoo!!! Congratulations to the late Lyle Hess on successful and endearing design, Dean Wixom for putting them into production and to Bob Eeg for continuing product all the way to today... YAHOOO!!

Editors Note:

It has been better than 6 months since the last News-

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## Founders Feature by Dean Wixom

### More Disconnected Ramblings

When sailing downwind in heavy weather, use as much jib and as little main as possible. The worst thing would be to do the usual; douse the jib and run main alone. Running mostly jib will greatly decrease the helm effort as well as any tendency to broach. You might want to keep some main up, but flattened in hard. This will decrease rolling.

The prices of used Norsea are climbing. This means the fleet is being valued and maintained, assuring classic status. I've always felt my finest legacy would be a fleet of boats that will be relevant, useful, and treasured long after I'm gone. Looks like it's going to happen.

The essence of seamanship is not experience, it is preparedness, physical and mental. We all understand the necessity of a well found boat with good safety gear. Fewer understand the necessity of a well found skipper.

The well found skipper amuses him/herself by playing "what if". e.g. "what if" the upper shroud breaks? \* The well found skipper will always have a mental catalog of options to every "what if".

I once asked Super Sailor Larry Pardy "In your lifetime of sailing have you ever been in a situation where you had no more options and were in the hands of fate?" His answer - "Never." You never let yourself get into a situation where you don't have adequate options. You always play "what if".

In my own 40,000 plus miles of voyaging I have never felt I was in imminent danger. I once had a lover-crew person jump ship, saying "you never have any adventure". Guilty as charged. Adventure is what results from bad planning and poor execution.

Where to go cruising? Everyone thinks south; palm trees, white sand beaches and rum punches and bare breasted maidens and ... Its ok, perhaps necessary for a while,

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### A Nor'Sea Moment by Greg Delezynski

We had owned Guenevere about a year. At the time, we were sailing her on Lake Lanier, Georgia.

We had invited a couple of friends out for a day sail. We left our marina and sailed around for a few hours, when we decided that it was time for lunch. There was another marina on the lake that had a good hamburger stand. So we headed that way.

We did not usually go into this marina, as it was primarily a powerboat hang out. It also had a lot of rental boats, so you had to be on the lookout for many very novice, and sometime tipsy new boaters! But, it did have a nice guest dock at the end of a long finger dock.

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*(Founders Feature, continued from page 1)*

but I might still be cruising if I had stayed or headed back north. There's something mind numbing about coconut cultures (The rutgut rum?) after a while. "Polynesian Paralysis" is real, not a joke. The north is where sharp minds do interesting things. Take Italy for example. In the south they stomp grapes and shoot each other. The north spawned Michelangelo, Vivaldi, Galileo, and Ferrari. For long time cruising satisfaction, I need to get off the boat and exercise my mind. There's simply more "there" up north.

In the beginning, night sailing is scary. You can't see the waves hitting you. You fear (far too much) hitting something like those fabled containers lost at sea. You strain to discern stars on the horizon from ships' lights; real ships' lights don't always make sense. But in time it all passes and nights start to become the best. There's just you and yours under this big bowl of lights that exists just for you, all the way to the horizon.

The stars are always in their place, always will be. Man's insanities don't exist out here, just things that make sense; the stars the wind and the water. Life is elemental, pleasures are primal. In a good boat your as safe as anyone could be anywhere in the world. Make love in the moonlight. Commune with your God. Dream about the future. Make memories.

Nights are the best.

*Fair Winds*

\* You tack asap.

*(A Nor'Sea Moment, continued from page 1)*

We tied up our Nor'Sea at the far end of the guest dock, and went up for lunch. We took about an hour to eat, and watch a lot of boat action on the water.

After lunch we walked back toward Guenevere. As we walked down the dock, we could not see Guen, as there was a crowd of at least 20 people on the dock looking at something. As we made our way through the crowd, it turned out they were ALL looking at Guenevere! WOW, what an ego booster. We all acted as casual as we could, and made a very nice and smart departure.

As we were slowly departing the marina, just after moving away from the dock, I saw what appeared to be a brand new 25 to 30 foot plastic powerboat coming into the marina. It's crew, a young man, a woman, and boy that looked about 10 years old. All dressed in what looked like brand new "Yachting Attire". The guy, at the helm, was looking very proud of his new toy. We were about 20 feet away from the dock, about 30 feet from the crowd of people watching us, when the young boy on the power boat looked over and saw us. In the middle of the marina at the top of his lungs, the boy hollered to his dad at the helm, "Look dad, that boat is way prettier than ours! Why didn't you get one like that?" This got the boy a reward of a slap on the back of the head from the wife. Poor kid. His mother then said to him, in a very disparaging tone of voice, "That's a pirate boat".

Our guests were duly impressed, and we could not stop smiling for a month!!

### **Refitting an 1978 Nor'Sea by Dean Wixom**

Reading this story might scare the daylights out of anyone contemplating the rebuild of an older NorSea. It shouldn't. Several factors made for more work on "Chinook" than most restorers would ever consider.

"Chinook" had experienced nearly twenty years of hard voyaging, enduring more wear, tear, and corrosion than a marina boat would ever see. We have seen the decks so white with salt that it looked like snow. We left footprints in it. We sat in it, we tracked it below. We greased our butts with lotion or vaseline to prevent salt ulcers. We watched the varnish dull out on one two- week passage hard to weather. With all that "Chinook" never experienced a structural failure, never gave us a scary moment. We didn't just wish to "fix up" Chinook, we wanted to make her ready for another twenty years. We had a window of time, money and a good boatyard where you could do your own work.

We moved off the boat, removed the cushions and most of the stored contents to have a good look at everything. We were immensely gratified that there were no weaknesses; nothing needed to be done structurally. All bonds, bulkheads etc were intact. There was one area under the top of the mast compression post where the interior pine had some blackening. This we had caused ourselves by installing halyard turning blocks with insufficient backing plates. The blocks eventually lifted, breaking the seal, and allowed water in. The deck core material in this area was marine ply, not balsa as elsewhere, and was undamaged. To solve this problem we made a stainless mounting plate that circled the mast and received the halyard turning blocks, then fashioned a teak cover for the damaged wood below. The next job was to remove the engine. We knew this was easy, we had done it once before in a Mexican anchorage when the gearbox failed. In Mexico we had used the boom as a lift point, the vang as a hoist, and the engine went up through the companionway. It was remarkably easy. Of course I was younger then and had a lithe young lady to get to the tight spots. This time we had the luxury of a boatyard with a "C" frame. All the bolts and nuts were unfrozen, thanks to my mania for keeping the engine in alignment. My wonderful wife Jackie volunteered to clean the engine compartment of twenty years of gunk, while I looked at the engine, the original Yanmar 2QM15. The engine had 2000 hours, and was in great shape inside. I costed out replacing or rebuilding all the ancillary parts to last another twenty years; pumps, fuel systems,

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## Dean Wixom

One great advantage of a NorSea is you meet people. Just pull into an anchorage and soon there are dinghys dropping by to ask questions. You know them, "is it wood," etc. Most you would want to know, a pair we called "Snake" and Robbie we could have done without. We were snugly anchored in the Berry Islands when an old weekender anchored nearby. We knew we were in trouble when they just threw out an anchor and drifted backward. Of course in the middle of the night they were yelling for help. They had drifted aground. Good Samaritan Dean piled a good spare anchor in the dinghy, rowed it out. I then rowed the bitter end to them. All was well until I tried to row against the wind to "Chinook". I had to row hard against the wind. I knew water was splashing over the pram bow, but didn't know about how much until the boat sank from under me. The dinghy had flotation so I hung on to the painter. The oars and cushions were gone but I was determined to save the dink. I was making little headway towing the dink. If I stopped to rest I lost ground. Then, miraculously my feet touched bottom. Once Jackie realized I would make it, she began hurling unladylike invectives at the pair that made this sailor blush. The next morning we were alone in the anchorage. The pair had skulked off with our anchor! A few days later we arrived in Nassau to hear someone hailing us. It was Snake and Robbie! It turns out they drifted with the tide out the narrow, rocky opening and awoke at sea. They had used up all their fuel and had sailed on to Nassau. They bought us a fine dinner ashore, replaced our oars and tendered profuse apologies. I couldn't help asking what they were doing at sea with such an ill equipped and unsuitable boat. They freely volunteered they were on their way to Jamaica to pick up a load of "ganja" and wanted to look like weekenders when they returned.

## Dean Wixom

I had been bouncing around the Caribbean for a couple of seasons, and was ready to do some serious sailing again. I had enjoyed the company of a number of visitors from stateside, all were delightful, but not experienced sailors. I sent a letter to Lin and Larry Pardey, saying "do you know of any serious sailing ladies looking for adventure over far horizons?". My letter arrived in a large packet of mail they picked up in Penang, Malaysia after crossing the Indian Ocean. Just under my letter was one from a 27 year old who had built her own boat from a bare hull and deck, an International Folkboat. She too was tired of puddling around the Caribbean, and was looking for a serious sailing man. Mother Linnie the Yenta put us together, and we corresponded. We agreed to exchange pictures. I sent one of me pouring a large bucket of water over my head to rinse off shampoo. The cascading water made much of me still a mystery, hid my bald spots and assorted wrinkles. I needed all the help I could get because I was NOT 27 years old. Jackie sent a photo of her in a string bikini, that

used about three feet of yarn. She looked not 27 but 18. The only problem was I was in the Abacos and she was a thousand miles to windward in the British Virgins, a voyage that would make any experienced sailor think twice. Well, her picture prevailed, I caught a huge Norther that carried me downwind all the way. I learned just how good the Norsesea is in following seas of 20 feet plus. Many years later we called on Linnie to arrange our marriage in Falmouth, Cornwall, England. We wished to be married aboard Taliesin, their new Lyle Hess cutter. English law didn't allow that, so they arranged the next best thing, ceremony in an ancient church just up the street. The reception was attended by dozens of people, none of whom we knew, ranging from Cornish Fishermen to Royal Yacht Club Commodores. We made a world of new friends, and oh yes, we are still happily together.

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starter, alternator, etc, versus my builder's cost of a new 2GM20. (Thanks to Bob Eeg, the current builder of Nor'Seas.). I guess I was flush with bucks at the time, and opted for the new one, donating the old one to friends whose boat had survived hurricane Hugo, but the engine had not. After the engine compartment was clean Jackie said "this doesn't look right"., and pointed out pinhole corrosion on the top of the fuel tank. I was horrified. All work came to a stop for a few days while I wallowed in misery and indecision. I guess I was one of the first to discover the corrosion proof marine series aluminum, used for fuel on most West Coast boats, was not as represented. Twenty years of shaft log drippings running across the top of the tank had done the dirty deed. I recalled that my old Hatteras and Bertram sportfishers had fuel tanks made of fiberglass. A call to their tech people found that the fiberglass tanks were successful, and were replaced by metal only for cost and insurance reasons. Their tanks were made of isophthalic resins. All hulls of Nor'Seas I built were also made of isophthalic resins, so I did not have to worry about leaking fuel harming the hull. I opted for covering the top and front side of the tank with fiberglass and epoxy resin. Back into the engine room went my tiny wife, a respirator, goggles and a grinder. I stood by to pull her out by the heels when she tired. She would come out white with fiberglass dust, and say "this is fun"!.....!! (Advice to all sailors, marry a tomboy). Then it was to the shower, where I joyfully scrubbed her down with a cotton washcloth, pulling out all the needles of glass, and made sure the clothes she put on were all cotton. Synthetics seem to aggravate any itching. Once prepared, the West epoxy and fiberglass went on fast despite clumsy gloves and clothing. A large box fan on the other hatch pulled out fumes instantly. The top coats were tinted white and the compartment looked better than new. The new engine was not a perfect fit, but mods to the engine beds were minor. We realigned the engine a couple of times until it and the rubber mounts settled in. The new engine was a joy; quieter, smoother, but not as fast until we changed the prop to suit the higher rpm engine and change of gearbox ra-

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## Dean Wixom

The first time I saw a Norsesea was in Lyle Hess' living room office. I had commissioned Lyle to draw a boat that could be trailered, yet could cross any ocean. The beam, therefore, was proscribed at eight feet. Working the ideal beam to length ratio yielded a length of 27 feet. I told Lyle I wanted a double ender of very traditional shape. I wanted a profile that said "voyager". Lyle dug through some ancient reference books, thumbed a page and said "is this what you mean?" I gaped, dumbfounded. I was staring at my dream boat! The design was called a Spitzgatter, a boat built in Norway first as a coal hauler and then refined to a yacht. The name came from going to SPITZBERGEN to GAT loads of coal. I remembered that a Spitzgatter name "Rollo" had done some memorable voyaging after WW2. This was the profile I wanted. But that was all I wanted. The underwater lines were dated. We wanted a much faster boat. Lyle said "Let me do some sketches based on what we have discussed". A week later I was in Lyle's office staring at the most beautiful hull I had ever seen on a small cruising boat. The sheer line was a delight; springy, sprightly, but purposeful, definitely not cute. The lapstrakes accented the sheerline and curved upward in the stern to accent the most delightful buttocks I had ever seen (on an inanimate form). Whew, got out of that one! The underwater lines were fast and powerful, with a long flat run to the buttocks. The garboard line looked more like the cross section of a baking pan, compared to the cross section of a saucer which was typical of the double enders of yore. The bow was quite fine, yet there was a fullness above the waterline that spoke of great gobs of reserve buoyancy as the bow immersed. (This is why the bow will slice off a few inches of a wave when running hard, but will never bury). The keel was a true foil, acting on water as an airplane's wing works on air. This was a fast, modern underbody topped by a hull that was a delightful anachronism. I was in love. The "house" or cabin structure was another matter. The drawing had a two level house, much like an old Pearson. It made the boat look "small". I sketched the cabin as we now know it. "Why can't we have this?" "Because to get your standing headroom we would have to do this", and Lyle drew a cabintop that was ridiculously high. I was adamant. "Maybe lots of crown on the cabintop, maybe....? Lyle said "lets try this", and sank the cabin sole deeper in the hull. It was no longer flat across, as before, but we reasoned that the sunken sole was ok when level, and actually helpful when heeled. We sank the sole, drew a cabintop with a bit more crown and we had it! We had a 27 footer that looked like a forty footer. The boat was perfectly proportioned, functionally and esthetically. That was my first look at a Nor'Sea, and I've been in love ever since. I lived aboard and cruised my own hull #77 for ten years, then realized that another ten would have me brain dead, a derelict, or both. I met my wife in the Virgin Islands, which is another story. "CHINOOK" is now up for sale, which does not sadden me. We have done it all. I am old, the boat is still young and seems to tug impatiently at her anchor, wanting to go again.

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tio. The proper prop is difficult to estimate beforehand, so plan on changing it later. With the new engine came all new hoses, nearly every hose in the boat. Many looked good, but were hard and stiff and therefore suspect. All were renewed with the proper type for the purpose.

Next were the pumps. Chinook has four pumps, all of which can pump the bilge. I had looted the stockroom when I commissioned the boat so I had double spares for everything. All rubber parts had gone hard, and were replaced. The head was next. The beloved? Wilcox all-bronze and china head had served well for years. Here there was a bit of corrosion, but all was repairable and I thanked myself again that it was not plastic. All the vented loops were also bronze. The little rubber disc valves had gone hard and the areas they seated on were cruddy. Again I had replacements, I would not expect to find them at today's yachting "boatiques".

I am not afraid of through-hull fittings, the proper ones with seacocks bolted through the hull. I check them at every haulout, scraping them to see if they are yellow, not red. Corrosion on the interior is easy to spot by green fuzz or red color. It had been a few years since checking all of them. They were disassembled and greased, then new hoses went on.

The gasketing on the bronze ports had gone hard, with cracks starting, but not yet leaking. Luckily I had laid on a supply, as it was hard to get in our size. Bob Eeg has noted that it is now again available.

While the boat was hauled out we decided to epoxy the bottom. There had been only pinhole blistering at the waterline, and I was tempted to let it go, because it was not a job I relished, nor could we afford to have the yard do it. My ever willing Jackie reminded me it would be a lot tougher when we were older, and I concurred with her wisdom. Twenty years of bottom paint came off with scrapers, grinders, paint remover, sweat and plenty of curses to the idiot who decided to extend the lapstrakes below the waterline, Me. The blessed day finally came when we had the relatively easy job of putting paint back on. We used the Pettit epoxy barrier system, and so far I have no cause to regret it.

While the boat was in the yard we unloaded all the anchors, chain, and anything else that might rust and had them regalvanized. We had the choice of hot dip galvanizing nearby or a long haul to an electro galvanizer. The hot dip worked great for all but the anchor chain. I had to break many of the links apart with a hammer. The chain was still stiff, and took many trips through the windlass to loosen up.

Before reinstalling the chain gypsy on the windlass, we tore it apart to have a look. This look confirmed that I am not a fan of Simpson Lawrence's lightweight design. The seal which kept the oil inside from going outside was one simple "O" ring, which once the round part wore off, leaked oil out and salt water in. Luckily S-L was very good about stocking and shipping parts. Still, if I were looking today I would accept a few more pounds on the bow and hopefully find an all-bronze one and damn the cost.

Have you gathered by now I am a fan of bronze? I wonder

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how many shipwrecks will be dug up centuries from now with workable stainless, aluminum or plastic? Jackie dug into the spare parts bin and serviced all six sheet winches. Despite decades of salt water bath, they required only new pawl springs as a precautionary measure. We were pretty sure the mast and fittings were good, thanks to Jackie's frequent inspections aloft, but it came down anyway. We used Zyglo, a crack detection system developed for aviation and available at aircraft supply stores, on every stressed area or fitting. We also inadvertently used it on the neighbor's mast which was being painted thirty feet away. The insidious dye had floated on no wind to brilliantly spot his paint job. Luckily it was his first coat, and we were able to wipe it off under his glaring stare. He was probably a mild mannered gentleman outside the boatyard or lived in a hovel, but when it came to his boat.....! The Zyglo revealed that only suspect areas were the standing rigging terminations that were due to be replaced anyway. Most of the work on the mast went into replacing the lights and wiring, which was hopelessly corroded at the lower end, though we had used MIL/SPEC connectors.

I debated much on how to replace the standing rigging. The swaged fittings had developed cracks after years of salt spray. Replaceable fittings looked attractive, but human error in fitting made for variables. We rejected any of the resin lock fittings as subject to variability of cure. We found a rigging shop that did rotary swaging, which is superior to press swaging. Swaging has its detractors, but few can deny it is the strongest connection. We used swaged fittings for the upper shrouds which are the most critical. We used Sta-Loc fittings on the lowers. Chinook has two headstays, a staysail stay, two backstays and fittable running backstays, so all these were looked over, but only replaced as needed. The same rigging shop did load testing where wire and fittings are pulled to a predetermined load. For a reasonable charge, all rigging was pull tested to rated working load. Before the mast went up, we pulled apart the halyard turning blocks at the top of the mast, freed them, and lubed them. We threaded all new running rigging up through the mast and back up it went. "Chinook" was a sailboat again. We next attacked deck leaks. When one considers the multitude of holes punched through the deck, there were remarkably few. We had no major leaks, but discolored bolts and nuts indicated some weeping.. Rather than re-bed the entire piece, we pulled the bolts, allowed things to dry out, and then did a trick which saved many labor hours. Jackie would stand below with a piece of flat metal or leather under the hole. I would push through Dolfinite sealer from above until the hole was filled and pushing out the bottom. Jackie then held the metal against the bottom of the hole while I threaded, (not pushed) the fastening from above. This forced the sealer around the fastening. This, with our relief, (and a bit of regret) ended the mechanical part of our refit. We had spent fifteen weeks, each of us averaging about fifty hours a week.

We had gone over every part on the boat. If it moved, ro-

tated, carried a load, carried electricity, or carried water we had given it a good look, rebuilding or replacing. Endless hours of cosmetics awaited us, but that was the fun part, working outside, joshing with our neighbors, stopping for cocktail hour and even gladly visiting with dockwalkers who were mesmerized by a Nor'Sea. We delighted in telling them it was near twenty years old.

And now for a bit of shameless bragging. How many boats, we wondered, had carried its adventurers for nearly twenty years, through storm and calm, and asked so little in return. There was no structural failure, nothing ever broke. We cared for the boat, then relied on it utterly. Believe it or not, in all that time, neither we or the boat were ever in any imminent danger. The boat always worked when we needed it to. When things were great it was a comfortable little home. When things were shitty, (sorry, but it fits) we just gave it sea room, made the proper adjustments and it took care of us, while we rested below. Oh, things were shitty about two percent of the time. I confide that to insiders. There are other versions for those who ask "what about storms"?

Fair Winds, Dean

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letter; and the primary delay is due to lack of suitable material from which to put together an issue; at least that's my story. One reason for this difficulty, I think, is the great convenience and proliferation of Web based sources of information, including our very successful Yahoo groups E-Mail list, which has recently seen more posting than ever before. I for my part will continue to publish these newsletter, as long as Y'all want them and I can get material for them, at least on a semi-annual (every 6 months) basis.

**Your Article, Clip, Reflection etc, can go here.**

*Nor'Sea 27 Newsletter*

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WE'RE ON THE WEB  
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**NOR'SEA's For sale, etc...**

After 15 years of sailing my NorSea 27 (hull #19) up and down the coast of California, to Hawaii, in British Columbia, Mexico and the Chesapeake, I'm moving up and ordering a new Tayana 37. This means my NorSea is going to be sold sometime in the next 4-5 months. I'll set up a web page next week with all the specs on the boat. Its loaded but some of the equipment would work on my new boat so I'm willing to trade price for some of the gear (like the monitor wind vane).

This boat is seriously for sale. If someone catches me before I get the varnish done, bottom painted, and install new batteries they could get it for around \$32 k (Now) with a trailer and all the gear. With equipment removed I could see the price dropping another 5 K. I have 4-5 months before my new boat gets here. When I get within a month of that deadline I'll strip the gear I want and start lowering the price 1k a week until the boat sells or it gets so cheap that I would be just as well off giving it to charity and writing it off. I'm also willing to sell components of the boat separately if the entire package does not sell by October. This is a very sound and well equipped boat. It could leave for Hawaii again as soon as new house batteries are installed and the beer stowed. John Lewis jklewissf@yahoo.com 510-521-0788

Hello to all. There has been lots of inquiry re "CHINOOK", but no takers, so I must conclude that the price is too high. This is the best equipped NorSea ever built, with over \$30,000 in options, custom features and cruising gear. It was built under my supervision when I was the president of Heritage Marine, the original builders of the NorSea. Several years back CHINOOK received a 2000 labor hour refit which included a new Diesel. This boat is equipped to go anywhere. Price is now \$39,500.

Dean Wixom Phone 386 467 3639 Email capttopsail@aol.com

We have a 1999 Nor'Sea 27 for sale. The boat is located in Harbor Springs, Michigan on Little Traverse Bay an inlet from Lake Michigan. We can be contacted at: 231-348-8378 seifert@freeway.net

1985 Aft cabin. Cream hull w/ Burgundy striping. Great condition. In storage since 1992. New fuel tank, Yanmar 2GM20 w/378 hours, both currently out of boat along with wiring and plumbing. 5 sails. EZ load tandem trailer w/ new brake system and tires. In Dallas, TX.. Asking \$32,500. Tom Riley 972-742-3050; jtomriley@juno.com

Ed Zacko regretfully offers his 97 Dodge Ram 2500, Cummins Diesel 5 speed 4wd. Outstanding condition. Tow your Norse at 12mpg. Available about December. ezacko@aol.com