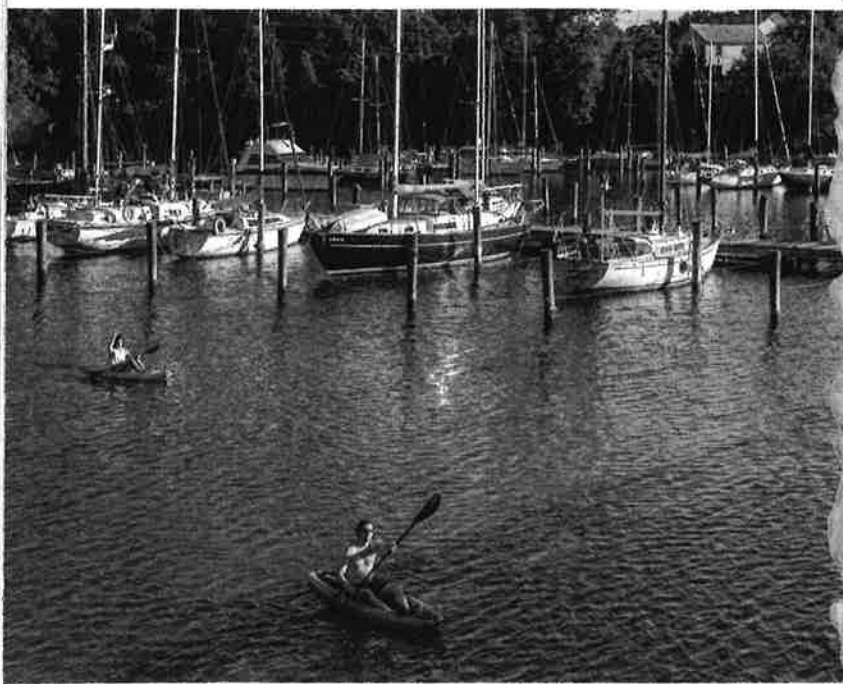


THE 90-SLIP MARINA IS BACK IN THE FAMILY

By Karen Newton

You can take
the girl
out of Kinsale,
but that's
no guarantee
the woman
won't return.





Kayaks, canoes, and paddleboards are available to rent from spring to fall. A sand beach is a 15-minute paddle away, perfect for swimming and a picnic.

Harry Lee Arnest Jr. opened Kinsale Marina in 1956 in the former Parks Brothers Tomato Cannery—slogan: “Pride of Kinsale”—creating a community hub that offered a bit of everything from boats and used cars to milkshakes and shotguns. When he sold it in 1984 to focus on his real estate business, conveniently located in the family’s adjacent General Store complex, Harry Lee probably didn’t imagine the property returning to the family.

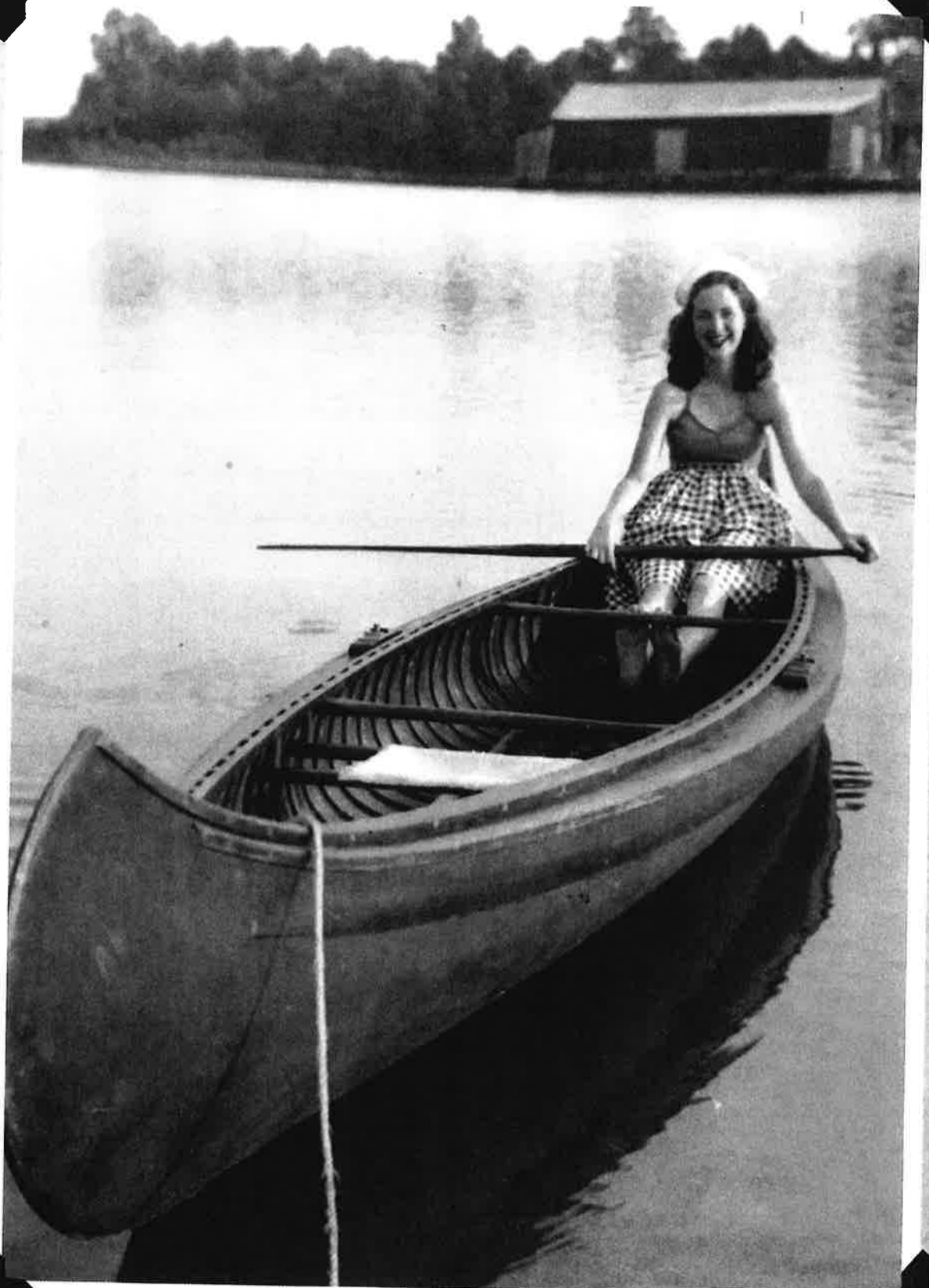
Although her grandfather had sold the marina by the time she was born, Annie Arnest grew up in Kinsale, her childhood shaped by the river. Her father died young, so Annie and her brothers spent lots of time with their grandparents who lived a mile away. “Our grandparents were a big part of our childhood. They lived right on the Yeocomico River and we were there most days,” Arnest recalls.

When it was time to go to college, Arnest opted for University of Virginia because her architect father went there. She took a job in Philadelphia after graduation, traveling extensively, scouting locations for clothing company chains and living in New York City from 2014 until 2019. “Then I decided to head back here where I could work remotely and hang out with my grandmother,” she says.

It’s at that point that Arnest feels the stars aligned and her path was chosen



The importance of local history and family legacy runs deep at The Slips. Annie found old photographs in her grandparent's attic that she displays at the marina and uses for postcards and marketing. Her grandfather Harry Lee is pictured left, and grandmother Betty is shown below in a photo taken around 1940 in a canoe on the Yeocomico. The other vintage Kinsale photos were taken by Annie's father, Harry Lee Arnest III, in 1970.



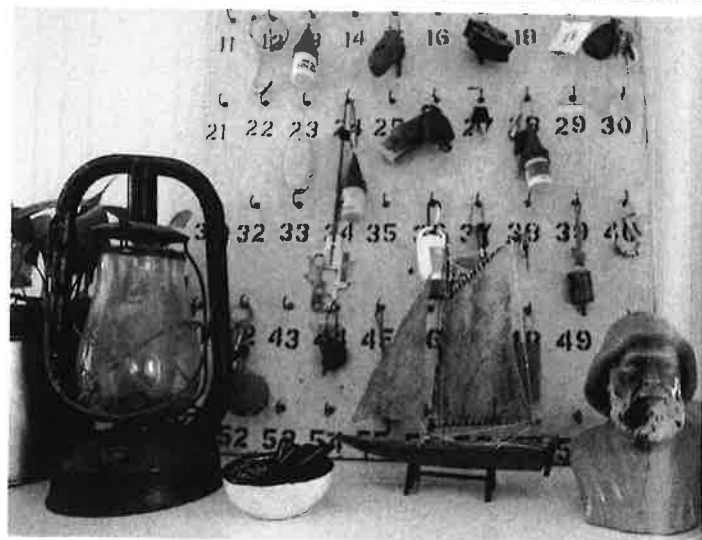


2021 was a year of ongoing projects at The Slips, addressing the many issues inside and out with the help of friends, interns, neighbors, and sailors. By 2022 most of the property was up and running, busy with activities, boat rentals and hosting yoga classes every Sunday on the newly constructed roof deck. The Slips has been attracting younger sailors to Kinsale, too. Pictured above are Holly and Eric, who renovated a 37-foot Alberg and taught themselves to sail in the Chesapeake Bay.

for her. Originally, when the property went on the market in January 2020 a group of neighbors, including Arnest, planned to buy it, but when COVID hit, that plan dissolved, and it was just her. "In June 2020, I drove out to the owners' house in Front Royal, sat down with them at their kitchen table and told them my plan for the marina. When they saw the passion and motivation I had, they agreed to sell it to me," she says. "We settled on a price right then and there."

Working with the bank took time, but the deal was signed in November, officially transitioning the former Kinsale Marina into The Slips. Then the real work began, cleaning out old furniture and debris, dealing with leaks, removing rotted drywall and fixing a variety of issues with the building, the docks and property erosion. "I had to get the property back to a stable position," she says, adding that friends from all over came to visit and lend a hand. "I served as the contractor, subcontracting everything out and getting help from some of the boat owners staying here. Basically, I figured it out as I went along."

The 1986 bathrooms were significantly upgraded with the help of a sailor who knew tiling and another willing to learn, and the three docks repaired board by board. By June 2021, her focus was on catering to existing slip holders and trying to attract new people. To that end, Arnest brought in rental kayaks, canoes and paddleboards, which brought in guests from local Airbnbs. Next up are sailing lessons and rentals. "One of my main goals was to provide waterfront access for everyone. There's so much coastline here but few ways to access the river," Arnest says of the potential of the deep-water



Overlooking the marina and adjacent to the old general store, Annie runs this Airbnb, which sleeps five. The eclectic, light-filled loft was designed and constructed in a former storage building by Arnest's father in 1979.



90-slip marina. "This had been a community center in the past and I knew it could be again."

Last summer saw the kickoff of the Yeocomico Club, named for the river on which the marina sits, a tributary of the Potomac. Anyone can join the club for \$40 a year, a bargain considering members get access to the clubhouse, tennis and pickleball court, rooftop deck, grills and multiple events throughout the year. In their first summer, the club hosted a July 4th party with a band, food trucks and boat parade; a Labor Day Weekend party with a DJ and visiting chef; pool parties; crab boils; a raft-up on the final day of summer; and an array of potlucks and cookouts. Every Sunday at 10 a.m. waterfront yoga is offered by local instructors, on the rooftop deck when the weather allows and in the sunlit studio otherwise.

Educational events are also part of the fun at the club. The Tidewater Oyster Gardeners Association (TOGA) presented an Introduction to Oyster Gardening class, and there are plans to offer more classes on oyster growing and cooking. Last fall, they hosted the 78-foot schooner Huron Jewel from Michigan, offering tours and presenting a talk on schooner life and history. The club threw a cookout with the Northern Neck Sail & Power Squadron, who'll be offering courses on boating safety and boater certification. "So many people came last year, and no one seemed to mind our unfinished status," Arnest laughs.

One of the unfinished projects was the pool, which hadn't been opened in years. A summer intern from Bates College in Maine assisted with various efforts and wanted his final project to be bringing the

The marina draws a diverse group of people and shakes off any preconceived notions of exclusivity that can be associated with the boating elite. The clubhouse celebrates the local maritime history and culture.



pool back to life. Step one was cleaning it out, a job that began with relocating the thousands of tadpoles inhabiting it to a nearby pond before draining and giving it a thorough cleaning.

Then the jungle of plant growth around the pool was removed before painting it and converting it to a saltwater pool. "Our painter gave us a pool motor he had, and we opened Labor Day weekend," Arnest says. "It became one of our main offerings in 2022 and really helped open up the property to town residents. A lot of marinas have an exclusive feel, like you must have a boat to be there, but that's not us."

The clubhouse itself is a sunny, welcoming space, with table tennis, a bar, comfy chairs and merchandise for sale. Most striking are the huge photographs that cover the walls and tell the 20th-century story of marina life, the Arnest family and Kinsale. Offering a glimpse into another time are pictures of her grandparents—photos of Harry Lee from his time in Hawaii during World War II, pictures of her always-stylish grandmother Betty lounging in a boat—along with marina and General Store employees and views of river life. One shows a male relative, nattily attired in a button-down shirt and chinos, proudly standing in his boat, Date Bait.

Upstairs the views feel bird-like, both from the enormous window of the yoga space and outside on the rooftop deck. Again, it was transient sailors who pitched in to build the deck's new railings. The space beside the General Store is now The Granary Apartment, a loft-style Airbnb that takes its name from the building's original use: grain storage. There are plans to reopen the historic General Store as the Kinsale Market. The new tenant is renovating it to be a market and deli, featuring offerings from his farm and other local farmers' produce and goods. Says Arnest, "I'm trying to revive what my grandfather created in the sense that this is more than just a marina."

If 2021 was about surviving and stabilizing, 2022 was about opening up the entire property and filling it with people, developing Arnest's initial vision. "2023 is about getting the bars open in the clubhouse and rooftop deck on the weekends," she says. "We want to have chef pop-up events and food trucks on a regular basis. Eventually we'll offer our own great food, just not in a traditional restaurant concept." Some of her slip holders are small business and restaurant owners from Richmond and around the state, who'll be helping put on events this summer.

Arnest is the first to admit that because she acquired the marina on a bit of a whim, she's been making it up as she goes along, which has allowed more people to get involved and create their own personal connection to The Slips. "My work in real estate development means I've been dealing in place-making for a while, but it's been awesome to see it happening in real time here," she says. "The Northern Neck is a very authentic place that people connect with, and I want to continue to encourage and provide a place for that."

It's enough to make The Slips the pride of Kinsale.

The Slips | 285 Kinsale Road, Kinsale | 804-472-7018 | the-slips.com
Granary Apartment in Kinsale | airbnb.com/h/granaryapt