

Boat Building

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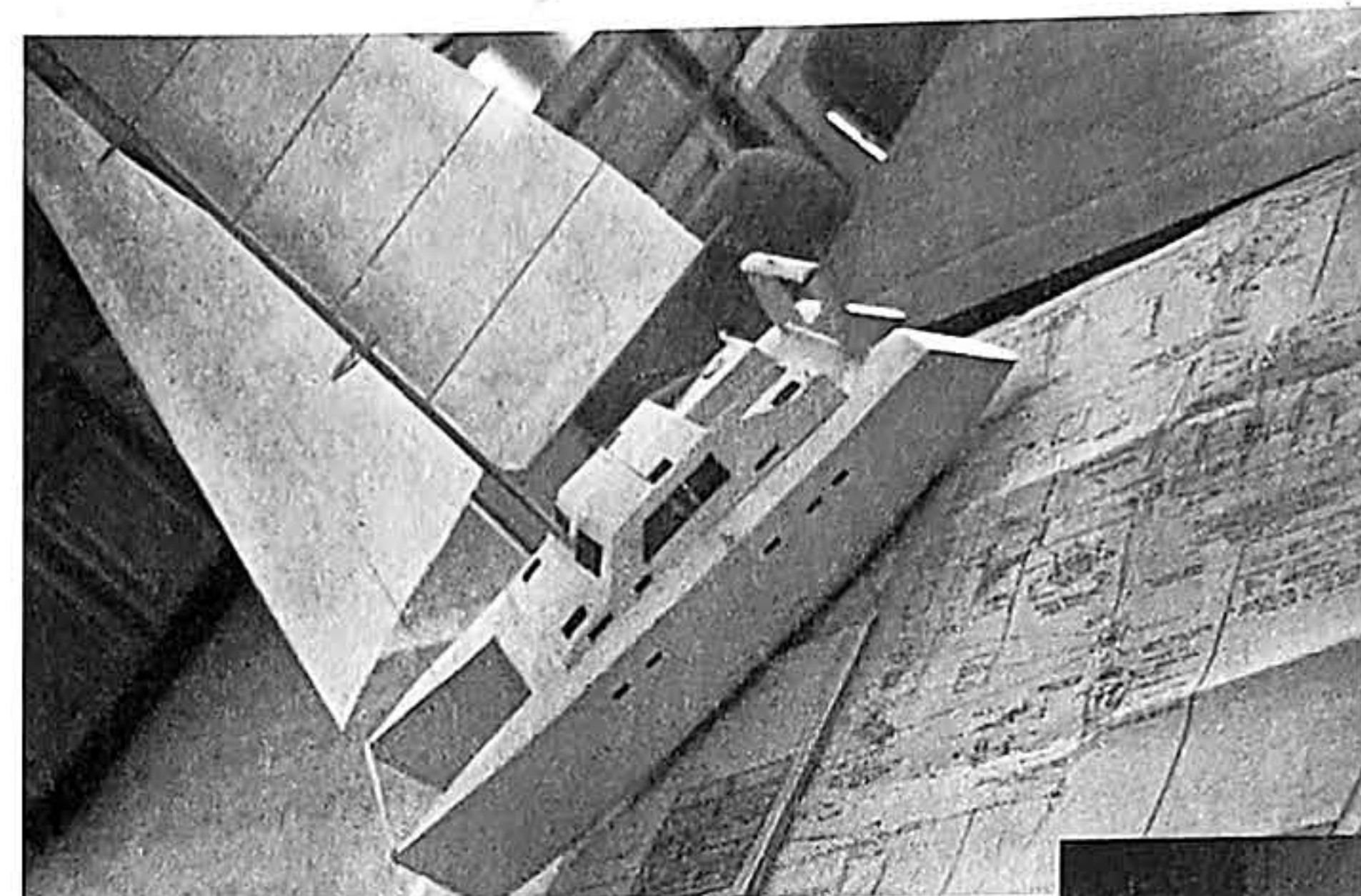
A dream teaches a few lessons

by Donne Waldburger

The reality of Russ Campion's dream came with three-and-a-half years of unexpected education. That education started with a plan and will continue long after his dream sails.

Rhumblin, his 48-foot aluminum catamaran, started teaching its lessons in 1997 when it took shape on paper. Russ, a self-employed Fort Collins welder, never imagined his boat would take on such size, dimension or resources.

To date, Russ has used about 575 pounds, or 54 miles, of welding wire, 7 1/2 tons of aluminum and close to 1,800 extra kilowatt hours of Poudre Valley Rural Electric Association electricity on Rhumblin, which weighs in at 15,000 pounds empty. And it is empty. Russ still has the cabinetry, insulation, furniture, floors, walls, water and



Left: The paper plans from a naval architect led to a to-scale model of Rhumblin before any welding began.

Below: Russ stands with the center section of Rhumblin in its many pieces in his garage.

gas tanks to build into the boat in addition to all the appliances and luxuries the boat will offer.

The idea of building a boat began to take shape in Russ' imagination in 1995. A naval architect cranked out the dimensions on paper for Russ in 1997, and the real fun began. He quickly learned that building your own boat, especially one of this magnitude, was more than he had bargained for. The original plan was to use steel for the frame of the boat, but steel is too heavy. Instead, Russ opted to use aluminum, a lighter and much more expensive option. "Aluminum takes noticeably more power than steel to weld," and is a more expensive metal, Russ said.

In preparation for the frame, Russ built a 50-foot garage in his back yard to house the boat as it took shape. That, too, proved to be a lesson. The 45-foot hulls almost run from end to end in the garage, and the boat only fits inside the structure when it is in pieces. Russ could have built a warehouse and felt cramped.

"I thought, 'I don't know what I'll do with this much boat,' and then I told myself that it just looks big in the shop; get it all together in one piece and 500 miles offshore (and) it might look small," Russ said.

Russ started the hulls in 1998, taking about nine months on each one. He then began the area that would house the galley and navigational equipment. The cockpit (area under the boom that includes the helm) was the last welding done before



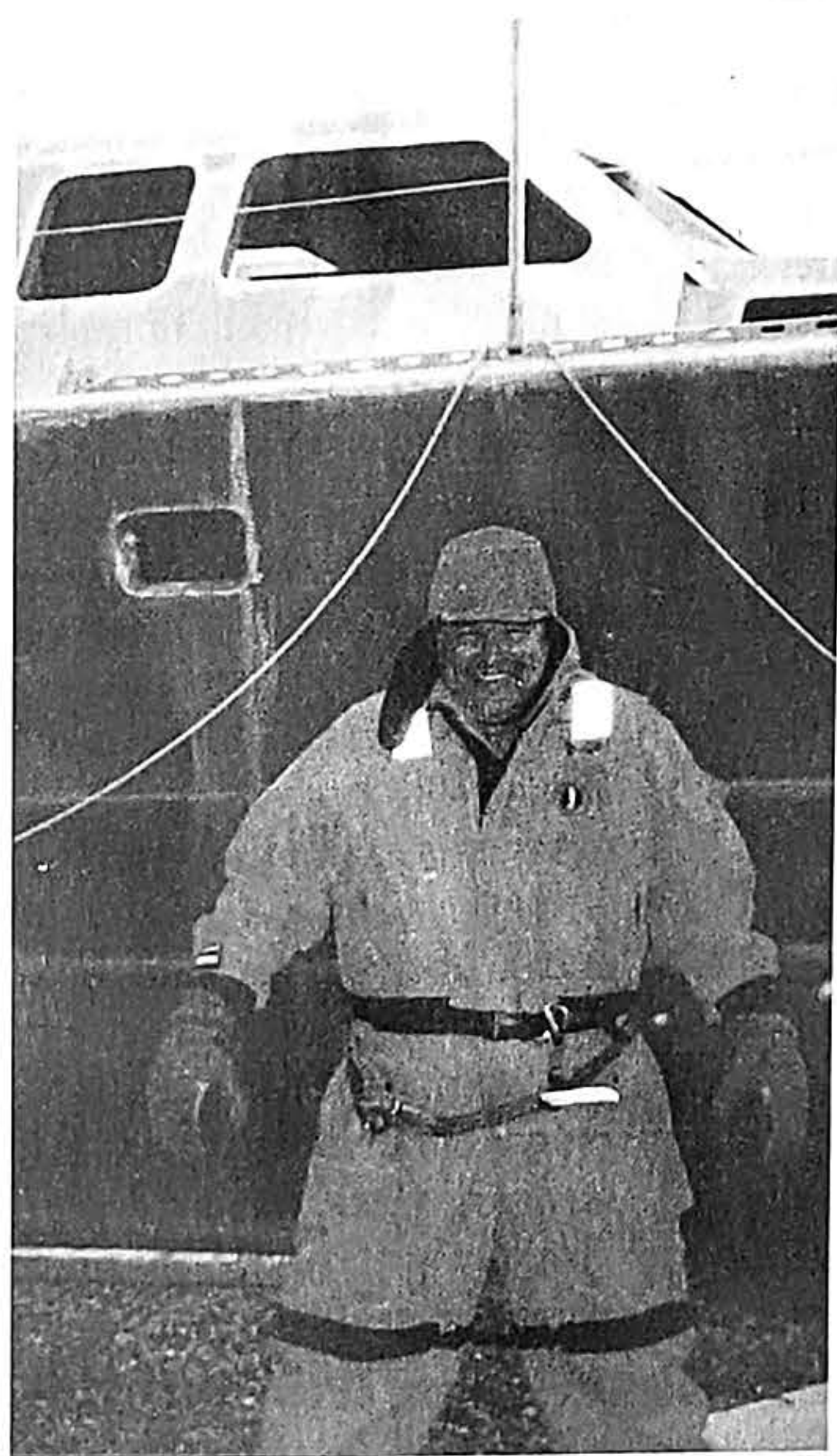
Sailor's advice:

After three-and-a-half years of playing with aluminum in his back yard, Russ advises others to learn from his lessons. "People who mess with boats eventually want to build one, usually in their garage, but I tell people to save their money for now, play golf and then buy a boat. Don't build it."

Russ tested the boat as one piece.

After three-and-a-half years of playing with aluminum, Russ pulled everything out of the garage in June of this year and presented his "empty" boat to guests. Rhumblin was outside in its complete form through June until Russ dismantled it for more additions.

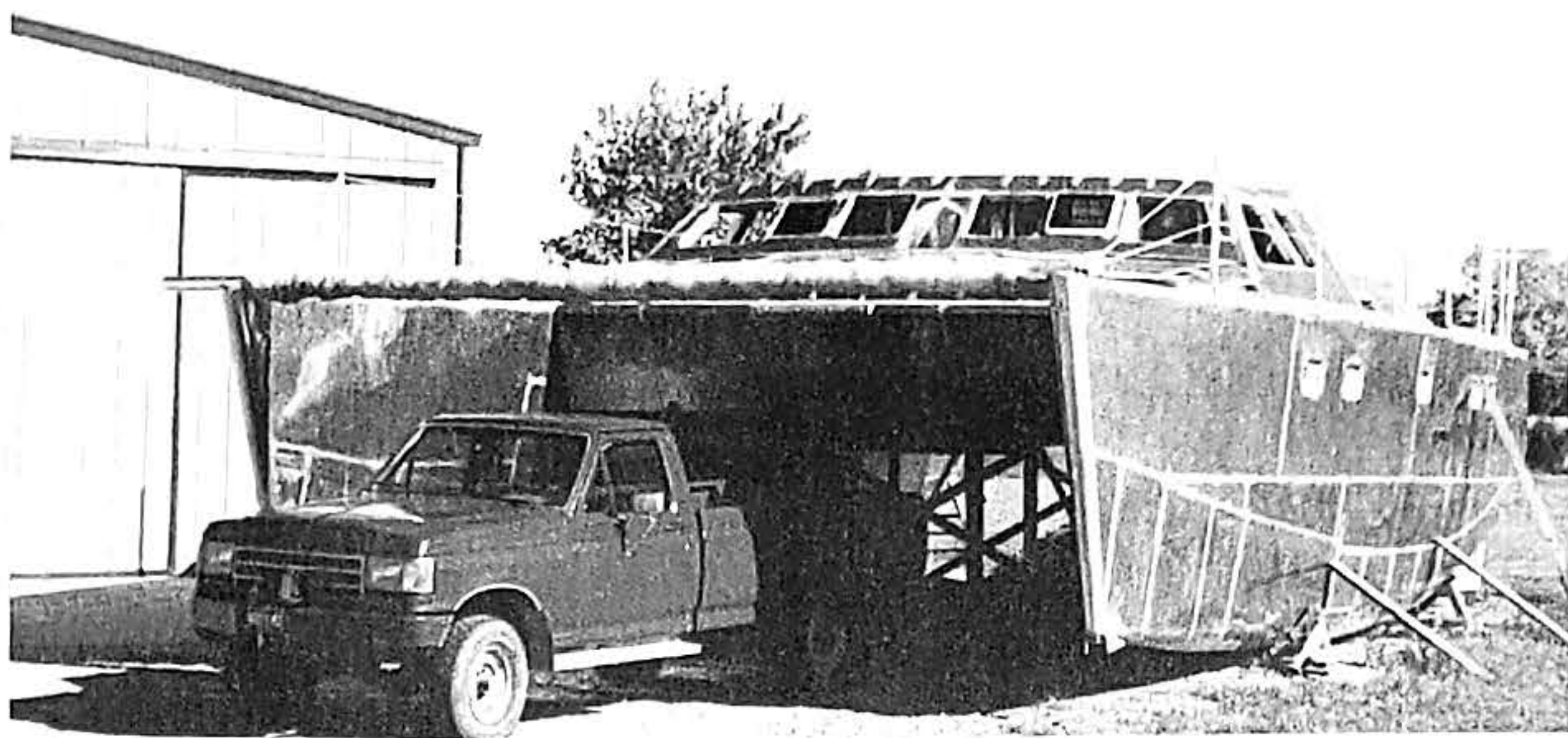
Russ hopes to hit the road in the spring of 2002 for Omaha, Nebraska, with Rhumblin in five pieces. There he will weld the pieces together, paint the boat and install all the interior pieces before launching on the Missouri River. With engines churning, Russ will take the Missouri to Saint Louis, where he will jump over to the



Russ Campion, a Fort Collins resident on Poudre Valley REA lines, stands with Rhumblin during a late June snowstorm.



Russ works with the crane driver to piece Rhumblin together in front of his garage.



Above: Russ parks his pick-up truck between the hulls for a size perspective.



Left: Russ pulls one of the 48-foot hulls out of the garage with his pick-up truck.

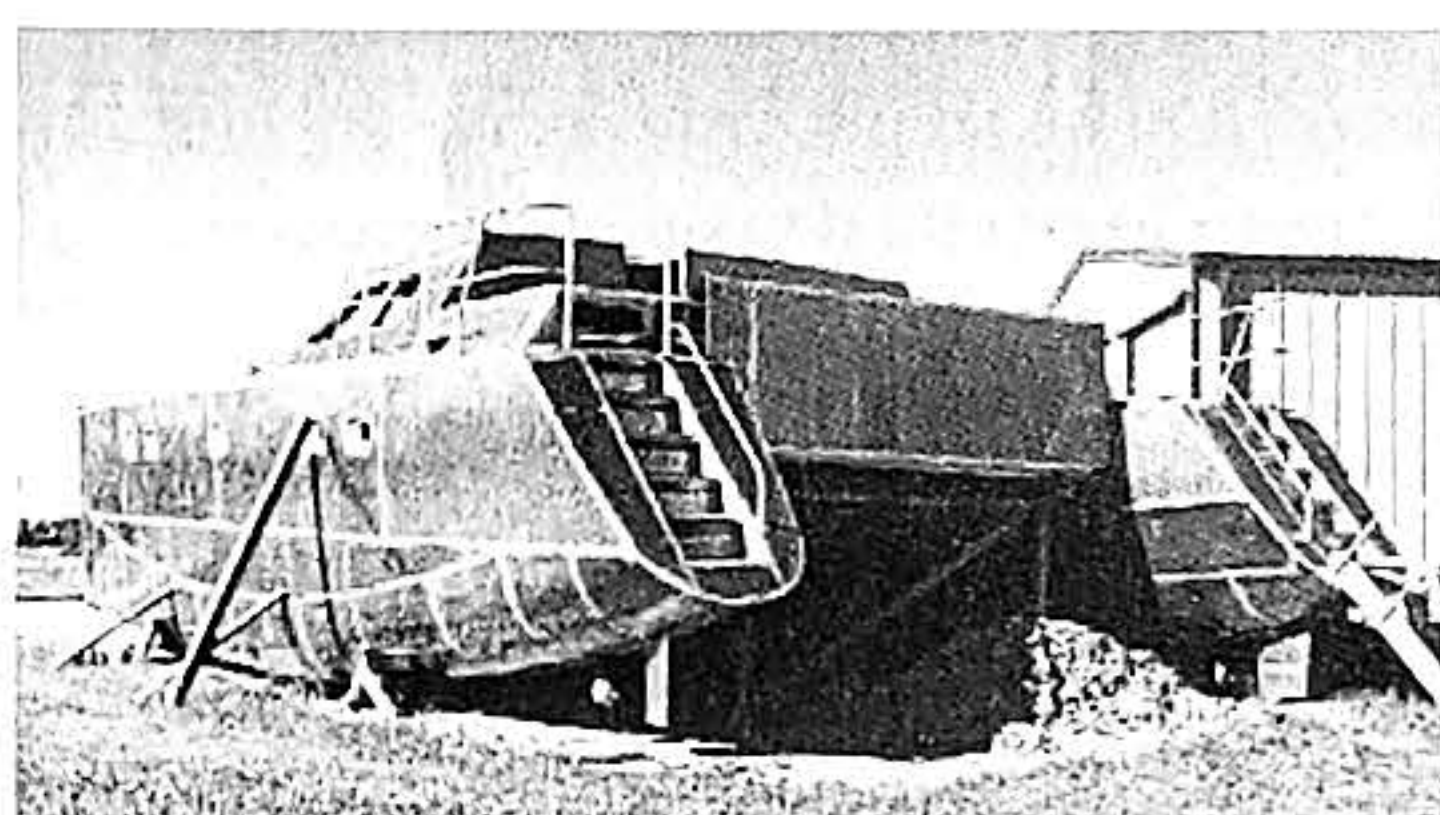
Just the facts:

Russ said he would have to recycle 426,000 aluminum cans to replace the metal used on Rhumblin.

Mississippi. Subsequently, he will make his way up the Ohio River in Illinois, then head up the Tennessee River in Kentucky, where he will cross south through Tennessee and Alabama in a canal, eventually reaching the Gulf of Mexico. Whew!

In Florida, Russ will pick up his mast, which will climb 65 feet from water line. Sails will complete the boat. "My master plan is to spend one to two years in the Caribbean and then head up the East Coast and across to the UK, making it back to the Caribbean in the fall. Then, maybe go through at Panama and try to see the West Coast and Alaska," Russ said.

What about the trip around the world that so many boat builders talk about?



Rhumblin sits, pieced together, in front of Russ's garage.

Russ is not sure he will sail around the world. He is not sure where the boat will take him after he completes the first trip.

The story behind the name:

Rhumblin, as Russ explains to land lovers, is a navigational term referring to the most direct course between two points. Russ first considered the name when playing off the word Rum. Many other names have been considered and a few are still in the running, according to Russ. "Rhumblin is the name I am really leaning toward right now." Another name Russ is considering is Alumination.

Sailing around the world is a possibility and an opportunity for more lessons than Russ could ever imagine.