

PERFORMANCE CRUISERS

24' SHOAL DRAFT CRUISER
BAHAMA SANDPIPER
CUTTER AND CAT-KETCH

DIMENSIONS

LOA:	24' 0"
LWL:	22' 6"
BEAM:	8' 0"
DRAFT:	4' 6" / 1' 6"
DISPLACEMENT, 1/2 load:	4,100 lbs
BALLAST (lead):	1,500 lbs
SAIL AREA (100% foretriangle):	278 sq ft
DISP/L RATIO:	161
SAIL AREA/DISP RATIO:	17.36



The cutter rig made the most sense, though the cat-ketch was the one that attracted attention.



She was cute and fun to sail. The rudder swung up as you see, giving a mere 18" draft. But the centroid of the blade was so far from the pivot axis in this configuration that it was a bear to steer.

I designed the *BAHAMA SANDPIPER* for Carol Prosser of Rockland, Maine, a Baptist preacher whose son worked at North End Marine in Rockland, Maine. Carol was a risk taker. He proposed a deal whereby he would finance the molds to build anything I might choose to design, as long as they cost under \$15,000. We would then sell kits and finished boats and we would both get rich. Clearly, this was a man who believed in a benevolent Deity.

I find that of all my designs I probably learned the most from this very early one, done just after I had built my second *FRANCES*. It was an intriguing boat, fun to look at, and we sold a few—way too few for all the work involved. But in attempting to design the best shoal water cruiser ever devised I was probably over-reaching. The error here was to assume that if you created a hybrid of two great boat types it had to be equally excellent.

Catboats sail amazingly well despite their unusual hull shape. They are extremely beamy and many of them have no ballast at all. They carry huge amounts of sail but I've never heard of one capsizing. And they can be sailed in a couple of feet of water downwind, maybe twice this to windward with the centerboard down.

Sharpies have the same shoal water capabilities. Some of them are very fast—much faster than a catboat. Again, the presence of little or no ballast makes them extremely light, which lowers resistance. But being both unballasted and narrow, capsize is a constantly upsetting possibility (pun intended).

What I tried to do was to sort of meld the two together. I had the advantage of fiberglass construction, which simplified some of the design problems. With no structural keel in the way I could place the centerboard trunk off-center, which helped the interior. There was plenty of space to easily lay inside lead ballast alongside it—more on one side than the other, of course. The trunk itself was of one-piece glass construction, glassed integral to the hull, and wide enough to get a paint roller into to apply antifouling. The rudder was an elaborate pivoting invention that worked well when it was fully down and never lost its grip on the water—unlike the catboat's "barn door" rudder that tended to be lifted out of the water when the boat heeled. The centerboard itself was of fiberglass and fat enough to present a true foil shape so it never stalled and didn't sideslip much at all.

But when you create a hybrid it is not only the favorable characteristics that get reproduced. The *BAHAMA SANDPIPER* took on some of the tenderness of the sharpie and all of the heavy helm of the catboat when the rudder was pivoted up as it had to be in shoal water. With a third of its weight in ballast it was a scary thing to pull on a trailer. In a way you might say it was a design before its time. Had carbon fiber masts been invented 30 years ago this design would have been more stable since its VCG would have been much lower. And it would have been possible to step the mast or masts without the assistance of a crane as was necessary with the heavy aluminum masts we had at the time. If it had been beamier it could have used less ballast and been a whole lot lighter.

In undertaking the *BAHAMA SANDPIPER* Carol and I made some classic mistakes:

1. We designed a product for a market that didn't exist. We thought that with gas cheap people would flock to own trailerable fiberglass sailboats, which would combine the advantages of a boat and a travel trailer. We lost sight of the fact that motels had full headroom and stand-up showers and if you stayed in one every weekend of your life you wouldn't expend as much money as for one *BAHAMA SANDPIPER*.
2. We built the boat too well. This was great for our egos, but who wanted to put the price of two new automobiles into something that got used perhaps three weekends a year?
3. The boat was exactly 8 feet wide so it could be legally trailered day and night. If you created a true catboat/sharpie hybrid it would have been wider and a lot lighter since it would have required less ballast.

We should have given up on night-time trailerability and made it 8 ½ feet wide and 1000 pounds lighter.

4. With all of the crap you throw into anything you drag around behind your car on a trailer she weighed maybe 4500 pounds. Add the weight of the trailer itself and you had a case of one helluva tail wagging whatever dog you pulled it with. Today you'd build it wider and lighter, with less ballast, and carbon fiber masts. It would sail a little better and trailer a whole lot easier. But there'd still be no market—people would stay in motels and charter REAL sailboats when they felt the urge to go sailing.

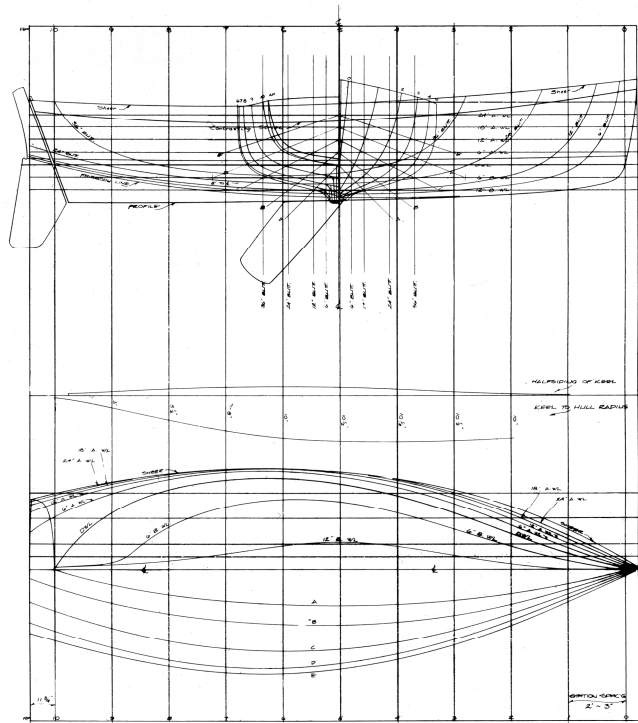
With all her compromises the *BAHAMA SANDPIPER* was still a fun little boat to sail once you got her off the trailer and into the water. If the day ever comes when we're growing our auto fuel in fields rather than mining it and not dumping wing-loads of carbon into the upper atmosphere flying to our next yacht charter, you'll see something very much like this in our campgrounds and shallow estuaries.



The centerboard trunk was off center a few inches to starboard, the companionway to port. It all worked out very nicely.



We finished them off to a very high standard. Too high.



A little bit wider and a lot lighter, these sweet lines would make a lot of sense.