

MY
YACHT
DESIGNS
AND THE LESSONS
THEY TAUGHT ME

CHUCK PAINE



CHUCKPAINE.COM
PUBLICATIONS

My Yacht Designs and the lessons they taught me

Chuck Paine

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED FIRSTLY TO THE MANY CLIENTS WHO HAD sufficient faith in my abilities and those of my assistants to cause the construction of a yacht. Without you, these yachts and this book would not have been born.

I wish to thank my employees, skilled designers all, who did most of the actual work. If you like what you see in this book please realize that it was Mark Fitzgerald, Ed Joy, Lloyd Bracy, Art Paine, Chris Davis, Jim McQuaide, Doug Zurn, Maura Rogers, Jamie Hoffmann, Chris Van Heerden, Gram Schweikert, Larry Turner, Tom Lokocz, Will Ratcliff, Gayle Elfast, Bruce Alderson and Steve Davis, far more than myself, who have filled these pages with beautiful artwork.

Thanks also to my editors Art Paine and Dennis Caprio who suffered through the early iterations of my attempts to put these words together. Thanks to your critiques it is now, I believe, readable.

I would also like to thank the few photographers whom I have been unable to contact to ask permission to use your photos. Over the years many owners, passers-by and boatyard managers have given me snapshots or sales flyers depicting my designs, and I have taken the liberty of using some of them without knowing whom to thank. In a few instances I have used your photos because without them, the book would simply not have been complete. I have presumed your good will and hope you agree that it is a better book thanks to your efforts.

Most of all my thanks go out to my wife Debby, who suffered through those early years while I perfected my craft shut into an inaccessible Maine farmhouse on a snow-swept hill, who shared my old fashioned ethics keeping the company books straight for forty years, and who nursed me through many a bout of self doubt. I couldn't have done it without you.

—Chuck Paine

December, 2009

NOTES TO ACCOMPANY THE SECOND PRINTING

IT IS A TRUISM OF THE HUMAN CONDITION THAT IN ANY CREATIVE effort you can always do something better if you do it a second time. In undertaking this second printing I have made the following changes:

A/ Eight pages have been added to the book in the form of four more two-page bleed photographs and their captions. The original book was lavishly illustrated; this second version that much more so thanks to my locating four additional high-quality images of my creations.

B/ A few of the other illustrations have been replaced by higher quality ones that have come to light subsequent to the first printing.

C/ Many of the photographs are of significantly better color and sharpness, as a result of improving technology. When I was assembling the photos for the original press run, very high resolution digital scans from 35mm slides cost \$55 per scan, forcing me to use “moderately high res” scans to make the book economically feasible. Two years later, the same high res scans cost \$1.99 per slide! Combined with my improving Photoshop skills, the improved quality of the photos should be obvious.

D/ A few incorrect dates and memory muddles, three typographical errors, and one line of missing text have been corrected.

E/ The chapter on the PAINE 10 1/2 has been completely revised thanks to my receiving some wonderful sailing photographs from the owner of REDWING, the first boat built to the design.

F/ This book is about lessons for would-be yacht designers and owners. By expanding the content of most of the photo captions accompanying the two-page spreads, I was able to work in a few more kernels of naval architectural wisdom.

I hope you enjoy this “new and improved” version of *MY YACHT DESIGNS and the lessons they taught me*.

—Chuck Paine

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FOREWORD

BOOKS HAVE SOMETHING IN COMMON WITH yachts—they need to be designed. A book design, like a yacht design, is successful if it is pleasing to its owner. This means its designer has to have some idea who the owner is and why he or she might want to own one, yacht or book.

- *A book design, like a yacht design, is successful if it is pleasing to its owner.*

In crafting this book I have made six assumptions:

1. This is not primarily a technical treatise on yacht design. It is about hard won lessons. In a career as long and varied as mine you inevitably make mistakes and learn from them, you take risks and some come up winners. These lessons, be they revelations or missteps, are hard won gems, and I've highlighted them throughout the book

- *...in blue, italic type after a bullet, like this.*

2. Beyond the nautical ones, there are larger lessons to be learned herein than simply how to design boats. My story is one of a boy from modest circumstances who made a living working for the upper stratum of society, designing its toys. There were those during my youth who opined that a yacht designer was an aristocrat who hung out at the yacht club bar and lived off inherited wealth. I learned that they were wrong—if you were born with abilities and worked harder than everyone else, and were lucky, you could do anything. And in 35 years my studio launched over a thousand marvelous yachts.

3. This book is full of pictures and each one is worth a thousand words. For many years I wrote the design review pages for Yachting Magazine. As such I got to attend their annual editor's conferences. We writers would sit around and complain about the fact that nobody actually read our beautiful prose. "People don't READ anymore", we'd bitch, "they just look at the pictures." In case there is a particle of wisdom encompassed within these sentiments this volume is lavishly illustrated. But do try to read the gray stuff in the two vertical columns—some of it is really quite enlightening.

- *People don't read anymore, they just look at the pictures.*


4. Every reader has his own personal interests. Some prefer sailboats, others power, some traditional designs, some modern. For this reason I have divided the book into chapters by design type. One consequence is that the continuity of which design came before which other one is lost. But it also means that if you are reading to discover what you can about the proper amount of warping on the planing surface of a jetboat, you don't have to struggle through where the leading edge of a sailboat keel should be located.

5. This book does not contain all of the Paine designs by any means. Some excellent designs had to be truncated lest this tome become too heavy to carry! Please accept my apology if the boat of your dreams—or ownership—is missing.

- *No, you do not get your money back if your boat is missing!*

6. I've limited the stories in this book to yachts that were actually built—with but one exception. My office was fortunate enough for decades to never have to do any work "on spec", an extreme rarity in the field of yacht design. This book is about lessons learned, and you don't learn lessons from dreamboats that haven't survived the rough and tumble of the marketplace. It's the easiest thing in the world for architects to do renderings. But if nobody wanted to build it, it probably wasn't worth building.

- *Beware of spec designs—if nobody wanted to build it, it probably wasn't worth building.*

Yacht design is part art and part science. As is true of the other arts, there is no established career path—every designer's story is unique. The ratio of successful artists—rock star, diva, ballerina, painter, musician—to overqualified aspirants must be one in a thousand. The few who have succeeded at any of the arts have done so with a combination of talent, tenacity, and luck—the latter being by far the most important factor. The following chapter tells the story of the string of lucky breaks that enabled me to spend my life designing yachts. 



The east shore of Jamestown, RI, in 1948 when Chuck Paine was four years old. Both steam-powered ferries that connected the island with Newport can be seen in mid-photo. The War had ended, the warships were mothballed, and boat owners by the hundreds celebrated on sunny summer weekends.



CHAPTER ONE

How I Became a Yacht Designer

AS FAR BACK AS I CAN REMEMBER I LOVED boats. I was brought up in my earliest years on an island—Jamestown, Rhode Island—in the middle of Narragansett Bay. The beauty of sky and water was all around, and during long and sultry summers I was surrounded by whole fleets of elegant schooners, Navy ships and bumboats, rustic fishing craft and even a steam-powered ferry that connected our humble island with glitzy Newport.

WW2 had just ended and my grandfather offered his daughter and my recently demobilized father one of the ramshackle little cabins he'd been renting to summertime fishermen for years—just for the summer. That summer stretched into seven years. Gramp's shack was made of recycled cardboard called "Homasote" and comprised all of 515 square feet. My grandfather would take my identical twin Art and me flounder fishing in his flat-bottomed skiff. First he'd dip the transparent waters with a net to get shiners, or silversides as he called them. Then we'd go further out and anchor, dropping a sinker to the invisible depths where an occasional unlucky flatfish would be staring hungrily upwards with its two asymmetrical eyes. True, we lived in a shack, but we'd never known anything else—it was just home to us. I was surrounded by the riches of Nature. Wealth was to be found outside the cramped walls of our little home—down at the shores of our beautiful island.

I learned from my grandfather that there were people in the world who were content to work eight hours every day, but for him work began at five in the morning and ended at five in the evening when the fishing began—seven days a week.



"The Shack" on Jamestown, much improved after 60 years.

My first idea of what I would want to do when I grew up and had to make a living—a dream shared with most boys on the island—was to be the captain of the ferryboat. But at about the age of seven it became my mother's version of daycare to leave my brother and me off at Wharton's Shipyard where we'd sit dutifully on a bench and watch Portuguese men fit steaming planks to the heavy oak frames of wooden boats. As soon as she'd driven away we'd abandon the bench and scramble along the seaside rocks to Round House Shipyard which like all boatyards in those days was left unlocked and was full of white hulled sailboats and outside, the sleek, narrow, double ended motor launch *THANIA*. Every one of them was designed and built by a company called Herreshoff Manufacturing Company up the bay in Bristol. And every one was indescribably beautiful. I think it was then that I decided I was going to design yachts.

My brother and I would debate the fine points among them; whether yawls gained or lost grace by that afterthought mast, whether or not overhangs could be stretched too far, whether schooners with two gaffs were more or less beautiful than those with Marconi mainsails, whether those newfangled and unsightly Genoa jibs were acceptable if they made boats sail faster. My mother surely equivocated about her kids' nautical obsession. She herself feared the ocean—it had stolen away more than one fellow islander during her youth. On the other hand, her two boys fed off each other's happiness in drawing boats, boats, and nothing but boats on their father's discarded shirt-cardboards.

At the age of eight my parents moved off the island to Warwick, a suburb of Providence. That was a sad day in my life. No more ocean, no more boats, no more Gramps. Though the tract house they had bought in the suburbs was much larger, my father worked even farther away from home. Both my parents were very intelligent. My father was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Brown University. My mother was equally smart, but in those days men went to college and women didn't. She was a beautiful woman in her youth and escaped island life for the bright lights and marriage prospects of Providence, which is where she met my father.

I was what they now call a gifted child. School was a bore for me because it was too easy. I got straight "A"s without needing to try. So I filled my time and my school notebooks with sketches, mostly of boats, remaining sufficiently tuned into what the teacher was droning on about to always be able to stick my hand up if called upon and give the correct answer. I did

How I Became a Yacht Designer

