



Charley Morgan's Lovely Legacy

Fifty-two years ago, a mon-fregel yawl named *Brisote* was launched on the waters of Tampa Bay, setting in motion a chain of events as improbable as they are inspiring.

The hard-chined hull form was the creation of local designer Charlie Hunt and a 28-year-old sailmaker named Charley Morgan. Evolving during midnight “tank tests” of small scale models on nearby Lake Wales, the hull cut through the water with little effort. But with its boxy cabin top and hard chine, the boat was hardly a work of art. In the rush to make the start of the 1957 St. Petersburg, Fla. to Havana Race, the masts, sails, and keel were scavenged from other boats.

The race committee initially snubbed *Brisote*, contending it wasn't fit for a sailing race to Havana because

Ray Mummery reaches toward Coconut Grove, Fla., aboard his Morgan 30, Wavedancer.

it lacked an engine. The absurdity of banning a sailboat for being a sailboat prompted a few choice words from Morgan and the committee promptly retreated. The boat, true to its name, breezed to first in its class.

Four years later, Morgan drew the lines for *Paper Tiger*, the famous 40-foot yawl that captured consecutive Southern Ocean Racing Conference championships in 1961 and 1962. The feat was never matched.

Just as his career as a designer and builder of custom boats was lifting off, Morgan was hospitalized with tuberculosis. Though a major setback, the illness also gave him time to contemplate future designs. Two years later, his health restored, he joined forces with his longtime friend and sailing companion Bruce Bidwell to restart the Morgan Yacht Corp. Their first true production boat, the Morgan 34, came off the line in September 1965. Three years and more than 1,000 hulls later, the company merged with Beatrice Food, and Morgan was a multi-millionaire.

To many, Morgan's legacy in the world of sailing rests in two projects that followed. The first was his bold attempt to upset the stuffy racing establishment in the 1970 America's Cup with his 12-Meter *Heritage*. The press hailed his underdog effort in the cup trials, but the star-struck *Heritage*

fell to rival and two-time Cup winner *Intrepid*. The two boats still duel on the waters off Newport, R.I., with the other 12 Meters each summer.

The second “legacy” boat stands in stark contrast. The Out Island 41, a pudgy full-keel boat whose windward ability relied largely on its rumbling Perkins 4108 diesel. Performance aside, the Out Island proved to be just what the booming Caribbean bareboat market needed. The charter trade and the public's growing fascination with liveaboard cruising made it the most popular 40-footer ever built.

For me, however—and I suspect I am not alone on this—Morgan's legacy is neither the woebegotten *Heritage* (it was dropped from its crane on launch day) or the ponderous Out Island 41. When I think of a Charley Morgan design, I think of boats like the Morgan 30 featured in this month's issue, the svelte offspring of *Paper Tiger*. Far from perfect, they are nevertheless a perfect expression of the moment, a serendipitous convergence of a time, a place (in this case the shoalwaters of Tampa Bay), and a dream. The result is nothing less than art.

Cover photo: Steve Cocklin's Morgan 30 dances across Chesapeake Bay. (Photo courtesy of Steve Cocklin.)

Practical Sailor

August 2009 • Vol 35 No 8

EDITOR

DARRELL NICHOLSON

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

JUDI CROUSE

MANAGING EDITOR

ANN KEY

TECHNICAL EDITOR

RALPH J. NARANJO

EDITORS AT LARGE

DAN DICKSON, NICK NICHOLSON,
DOUG LOGAN, DAN SPURR

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

SKIP ALLAN, KEN DELAVIGNE, DAVID GILL,
AL HERUM, ERIK KLOCKARS, FRANK LANIER,
JEREMY MCGEARY, JOE MINICK, MIKE SLINN

PUBLISHER

TIMOTHY H. COLE

EDITORIAL OFFICES

7820 Holiday Drive South, Suite 315

Sarasota, FL 34231

practicalsailor@belvoirpubs.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE, WEB, BACK ISSUES, OR FAX SERVICE

PO Box 5656

Norwalk, CT 06856-5656

800/424-7887

customer_service@belvoir.com

SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT:

800/829-9087

www.practical-sailor.com/cs

Box 420235

Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235

for Canada:

Box 7820 STN Main, London, Ontario
N5Y 5W1

B

Practical Sailor (ISSN #0161-8059) is published monthly by Belvoir Publications Inc., 800 Connecticut Ave, Norwalk, CT 06854-1631. Robert Englander, Chairman and CEO; Timothy H. Cole, Executive Vice President, Editorial Director; Philip L. Penny, Chief Operating Officer; Greg King, Executive Vice President, Marketing Director; Marvin Cweibel, Senior Vice President, Marketing Operations; Ron Goldberg, Chief Financial Officer; Tom Canfield, Vice President, Circulation. Periodicals Postage paid at Norwalk, CT, and at additional mailing offices.

Copyright © 2009, Belvoir Publications, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited. Printed in USA. Revenue Canada GST Account #128044658. Canada Publishing Agreement Number #40016479.

Subscriptions: \$84 annually. Single copies, \$7.50 (U.S.). Bulk rate subscriptions for organizations and educational institutions are available upon request.

Postmaster: send address corrections to *Practical Sailor*, PO Box 420235, Palm Coast FL 32142. *Practical Sailor*, P.O. Box 39, Norwich ON, N0J 1P0 Canada. WDS return address in Canada: Station A, P.O. Box 54, Windsor, Ontario N9A 6J5.

REPRINTS FOR PUBLICATION AND WEB POSTING AVAILABLE

Contact Jennifer Jimolka, Belvoir Media, 203/857-3144

PRACTICAL SAILOR ACCEPTS NO COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING