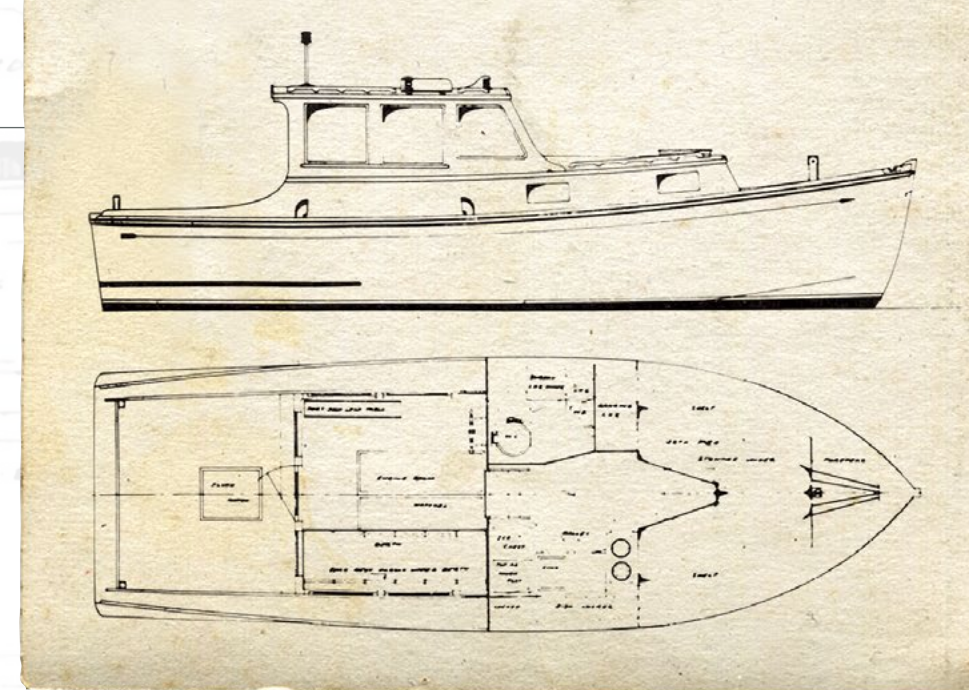


ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

The Evolution of the "Trawler"

Words: Wendy Hinman



If you see a large, vaguely rugged-looking motoryacht on Pacific Northwest waters, the guy next to you will probably call it a trawler. But is it? Trawlers are either all around us or endangered, depending upon who you ask.



When people refer to a trawler, what comes to my mind are the lumbering steel fishing behemoths designed by once local MARCO shipyards, where my husband, Garth Wilcox, worked throughout the 1990s. Today, however, the term trawler is used to describe pleasure yachts that bear little resemblance to working steeds. I was curious to discover how this nomenclature came to be applied to such different vessels. Being married to a naval architect, I started asking questions. What I found was a hornet's nest of subtleties and differing opinions.

THE WORKBOATS

Trawlers are a type of fishing boat that drags nets, usually over the sea floor, but sometimes through the mid-water column. Trawling, or dragging as it was also called, started with sail and evolved to steam-powered vessels in the UK and Scandinavia. Working trawlers found their ways across the Atlantic, where the large continental shelf provided ideal habitat for bottom fish. They reached the Pacific Northwest and Alaska in the 1920s. Initially, the trawlers were crafted of wood, then later of steel. More recently smaller vessels are made of fiberglass.

Regardless of the construction method, these workhorses needed to be strong and seaworthy to withstand the extreme forces of the ocean, with powerful engines capable of dragging nets through the water faster than fish can swim. This was a tall

order, especially in the severe fogs and storms of the north Atlantic or the frozen wilds of Alaska's Bering Sea. They were full displacement vessels that could move at moderate speeds with a low center of gravity that granted them good seakeeping characteristics in a broad range of conditions. Their deep, wide hull shape allowed for large fuel and water tankage, and a sizeable hold capacity for extended periods away from port. They tended to be single-screw hulls, with keel drag and a skeg that aided tracking in waves. A plumb bow maximized the load it could carry and a vessel's useable waterline. High bulwarks kept them drier in stormy conditions. These vessels were known for being capable and dependable.

In the same way that modern kitchens have embraced industrial-style and brushed-stainless appliances, modern motor yacht design capitalizes on commercial vessels' solid reputation for ruggedness, seaworthiness, and reliability. When looking for a solid boat design, it is natural to begin with ones that are proven.

TRAWLER EVOLUTION

Early versions of pleasure motor yachts were often converted fishing boats or vessels that were designed and custom built expressly for recreational use during slack periods by companies who typically served the fishing industry. Traditionally, trawling was done over the side of the vessel on the main deck, forward

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What we know as a trawler has come a long way from its working roots. This modern, ocean-voyage capable machine, the North Sea 62, designed in British Columbia by Gregory C. Marshall Naval Architects, has the rugged looks, but hasn't "worked" a day in her life.

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of the pilothouse. Romsdal North Sea trawlers were a design closely related to the Scottish trawlers of the 1870s. Much later, stern trawlers were developed that placed the pilothouse forward. Pacific Northwest trawlers are universally stern trawlers with the pilothouse forward, which allows for various possible uses, including trolling, and many trawler yachts follow this styling.

MARCO's Seattle Shipyard, known for building quality fishing vessels, built private yachts in the '50s and '60s. They were variously called yachts, diesel cruisers, or Alaska cruisers, but never trawlers. Still, they looked much like other Northwest yachts of the day, some of which came to be called trawlers. The difference was likely due to a more precise nomenclature on the part of a company invested in building real trawlers, trollers, seiners, tugs, and other workboats tasked with demanding duties. Naval architects who've designed fishing trawlers bristle at a comparison between the original trawlers and the trawler-yachts that have co-opted the name.

"A trawler is a fishing vessel [that] tows a net behind it. How can you call something like a Grand Banks a trawler when it has no rigging, winches, or deck space to trawl?" says an exasperated Chuck Cannon, who designed the real workhorses for many years at MARCO Shipyard.

Who actually deserves the credit or blame for creating the concept of recreational trawler is subject to debate.



Ed Monk, hard at work designing boats in his Seattle office in 1967. Monk (1894 - 1973) was a shipwright and naval architect who designed both commercial and pleasure boats, power and sail. He even lived aboard his 50-foot bridge deck cruiser Nan, that he designed and built himself, for seven years. Initially referred to as, "Plan No. 1", Nan was moored in the Seattle Yacht Club and briefly served as his office. Monk's designs are still common sights of Puget Sound and are ubiquitous throughout the region.

Many naval architects adapted commercial-fishing boat designs for pleasure use. Among the most recognized for this were Art DeFever, Bill Garden, Ed Monk Sr., Hugh Angelman, and Kenneth Smith. In my research, these names kept popping up over and over, though in no way can I say it's a comprehensive list.

ARTHUR DEFEVER

According to Trawler Forum, "The late Art DeFever, Naval Architect, is the man who rightfully earned credit for creating the cruising yacht designs we commonly call trawlers today. Since 1939, Mr. DeFever has drawn boats that are sea kindly, comfortable, and pleasing to the eye."

Arthur DeFever spent his early years designing commercial tuna clippers that traveled long distances to Central and South America and were typically away

from port for weeks at a time before returning with their holds full of catch. DeFever's ideas evolved from there. According to Arthur DeFever's website: "In the early 1960s, Arthur joined the Offshore Cruising Society. At the time, long-range cruising in private yachts was virtually always done in sailboats. His friends suggested that he design a seaworthy cruising powerboat that would have sufficient range to make the long runs up and down the Pacific coast into Mexico or Alaska. So Arthur designed several pleasure craft for that organization in the 38 to 54-foot range. These were deep draft, full-displacement, diesel-powered vessels that were capable of prolonged Pacific passages in comfort and safety."

BILL GARDEN

Bill Garden was also working as a naval architect by the late 1930s. He designed all manner of boats, from sail to power yachts, workboats, and fishing boats until his death in 2011. He, too, designed a number of power yachts that resembled Northwest fishing boats.

In the 1950s, Garden perfected the Wanderer class, which was dubbed a trawler design. Yet Bill Garden took issue with the term. In his book *Yacht Designs* (revised and expanded by Tiller Publishing in 1998) he states, "The term 'trawler yacht' has been gradually watered down by the advertising people to mean just about any boat with square corners, without regard to the boat's basic ability to do a day's work, be weather-tight and seaworthy, or be a direct descendant of a workboat."

As for its origins, he says, "On the West Coast, the trawler yacht was originally called a troller cruiser and then a troller yacht. The West Coast troller is a commercial fishing boat of a size and type that had great appeal to the cruising yachtsman. During the 1930s Ed Monk [Sr.] was instrumental in popularizing the original troller cruisers of the Northwest."

ED MONK, SR.

Ed Monk, Sr. was one of the premier naval architects of the Pacific Northwest



A Grand Banks such as this one - A Grand Banks Europa 46 - on Lake Washington is a descendant of Hugh Angelman's and Charles Davies' Chantyman design.

from the late 1920s through the 1960s. He began working with Ted Geary in 1926 drawing yachts and commercial vessels, including fishing trollers, seiners, and trawlers. One of his designs, built by Grandy in 1941, was the 40-foot *Springbock II*, considered to be the forerunner of the troller-type cruiser he became known for after World War II.

So what is the difference between a troller and a trawler? Whereas commercial fishing trollers typically drag individual fishing lines, commercial fishing trawlers drag a trawl, which is a big net held open with doors that spread-out the net. The doors and net create significant drag, which requires more power. Perhaps the added might and muscle of the trawler lent it an advantage when it came to naming rights. After all, if you want to invoke the image of a sturdy vessel, why

not choose the granddaddy of them all? No matter what it was called, there was a niche for a production boat of this type. Monk predicted that when war hostilities ended, recreation yachts would become a growing market. His assessment was indeed correct. After Pacific Motor Boat published his plans for *Springbock II*, interest in this style of boat exploded.

Traditional construction of cedar planking on white oak frames was the order of the day and suddenly custom builders were bending cedar into this shape all over the U.S. and the world.

BEYOND CUSTOM CRUISING YACHTS

In Hong Kong, Robert J. Newton and sons, John and Whit, ran a boatyard called American Marine, Ltd. where they



were building custom vessels designed by leading marine architects of the era, including Bill Garden, Sparkman and Stephens, and others. In the early '60s, they wanted to capitalize on the potential for recreational yachts by building production boats. In 1961, they built a limited number of a 34'6" wooden trawler yachts designed by well-known naval architects Hugh Angelman and Charles Davies. Called the *Chantyman*, the trawler yacht featured a raised pilothouse and high bulwarks. The retail price for this 34'6" diesel yacht was \$25,500. While not wildly successful, it introduced the concept of this type of yacht to the boating world.

Among the custom builders of the day was Penobscot Boat Works, a mid-coast Maine builder run by brothers Bob and Carl Lane. They were crafting a line of

Continued on Page 64

The Chantyman, designed by Hugh Angelman and Charles Davies, was the first production series "Troller" and arguably the ancestor of modern "Trawler" pleasure boats. The success of the Chantyman, though modest, led directly to the creation of Grand Banks line of fine yachts.

Chantyman

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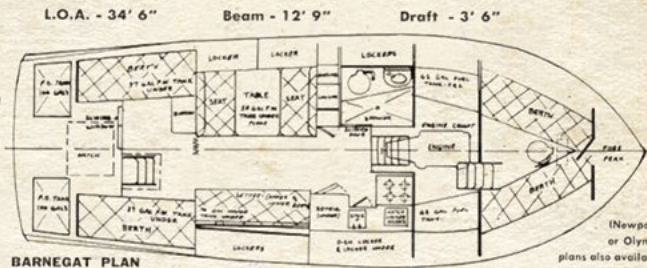
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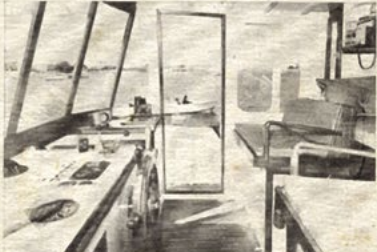
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small runabouts under the Penbo name but wanted to expand into larger yachts that drew heavily from the local workboat vernacular. They produced three distinct lines they called the "Cruising Houseboat," the "Trawler Yacht," and the "50 Fathom." The salty look of these boats had broad appeal.

KENNETH SMITH AND THE GRAND BANKS

Following on the modest success of the *Chantyman*, the Newtons of American Marine, Ltd. commissioned well-known marine architect Kenneth Smith to design Spray, a 36' diesel powered cruising boat similar to a workboat. Spray was the prototype of the line that would succeed in the way that the *Chantyman* hadn't. With some changes, like enlarging the saloon and adding a flying bridge, its successor became the craft that sold the world's boaters on the modestly powered motor yacht that came to be known as a "trawler." Yet, in truth, the hull had already evolved into a semi-displacement hull. It had a fine bow entry, with rounded bilges, and some flatness aft to create lift. In 1963 American Marine, Ltd. focused on producing this line of boats, which



Evolution in action via Bill Gardner. Both of these boats were designed within 24 months of one another - the top boat is a 1966 fishing vessel that was later converted into a Troller cruiser. The bottom boat is a 54' trawler yacht built in 1968 for a private owner, it is currently for sale from the Pacific Marine Foundation.

"Trawlers are pure displacement hulls built to heavy scantlings and designed for modest power and speed, economy of operation, and seakindliness. Once you deviate from this, it's just styling."

they called Grand Banks. Named for the highly productive fishing ground off southeast Newfoundland, Canada where the mingling of the cold Labrador Current and the warmer Gulf Stream and the shallowness of the water produces heavy fogs and severe storms, Grand Banks invoked the sturdiness of vessels that plied these waters.

THE EVOLUTION CONTINUES

In 1974 Grand Banks quietly switched their production to fiberglass to meet demand. Fiberglass construction offered economies of scale. When a dubious public came to finally accept fiberglass as a trusted building material, the shapes started to change even more as it became easier to build curves.

Many recreational boaters with very different needs from those of the commercial-fishing industry grew tired of moving through the water slowly. They wanted to reach their destination in speed and comfort. American Tug salesman Steve Scruggs explains the popularity of semi-displacement motor vessels in the Pacific Northwest. "In the Pacific Northwest, we cruise in a fjord with notable tide change where water is often flowing through narrow cuts. No matter how well you plan, at some point the current may be against you. With a semi-displacement hull, you have the option to increase your speed to get through a pass rather than being forced to stop and wait for slack water. This is particularly appealing when facing increasingly large currents as you move northwards towards Alaska."

Yet in an attempt to increase the speed even more, some designers made adjustments to hull and cabin shapes, prompting a loss of the fuel economy and sea kindliness that used to define the category. The result is often something that bears little resemblance to the slow, full displacement fishing vessels that inspired the name. Countless articles and an active *WoodenBoat* magazine forum reveal how many others seem confused or mystified by the casual use of the name "trawler" to describe all manner of vessels. In my research, I found reams of detail about displacement, semi-displacement, and planing model "trawlers." I sifted through debates about single- versus twin-screw.

On Trawler Forum, I counted no less than 18 discussion threads covering classic wooden power yachts, custom yachts, tugs, and even trailer and pocket trawlers.

So where does the definition begin and end?

A DIFFERENCE OF OPINION

Voyaging Under Power (4th edition, McGraw Hill, 2013), deemed to be the authority on motor yachting, notes, "The majority of today's 'trawler yachts' have not even a nodding acquaintance with a real seagoing fishing trawler. A trawler is and always has been a fishing vessel designed to tow a trawl (or net) that is pulled along the bottom to trap fish. To do this, she needs a husky hull with a good grip on the water and aperture space for a large, slow-turning propeller."

Garth Wilcox, a naval architect who has designed a wide-variety of workboats states that, "Trawlers are pure displacement hulls built to heavy scantlings and designed for modest power and speed, economy of operation, and seakindliness. Once you deviate from this, it's just styling."

"For example, the new tug yacht is simply a trawler yacht with a different style deckhouse," Wilcox adds. "A tug traditionally has less bow sheer and lower bulwarks forward so you could work off of the bow, whereas on a trawler, the forward bulwarks are designed for forward protection. So if you look at the styling, Nordic Tugs are more tug-like in appearance than American Tug, but otherwise the hulls are quite similar."

In an interview in 2010, Jim Leishman, vice president of Pacific Asian Enterprises (builder of Nordhavn yachts), defined a trawler to be a powerboat with a full-displacement, ballasted hull that is economical enough and with enough range to make long ocean passages.

Voyaging Under Power authors Robert Beebe and Denis Umstot acknowledge how far the name trawler has evolved from its origins and attempt to clarify by making a distinction between "true trawler" and "light trawler" yachts. They boil it down to a combination of displacement/length ratio, Speed/length ratio, above water/below water ratio, and a prismatic coefficient among the many that naval architects use.

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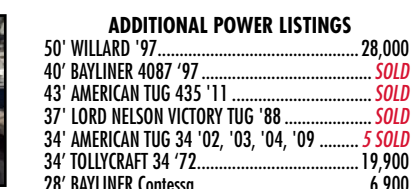
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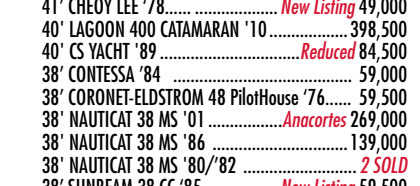
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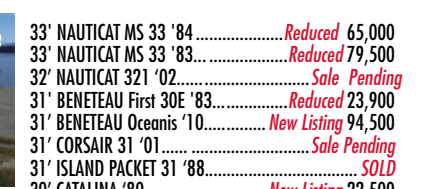
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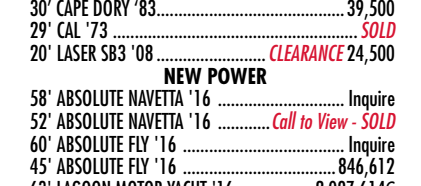
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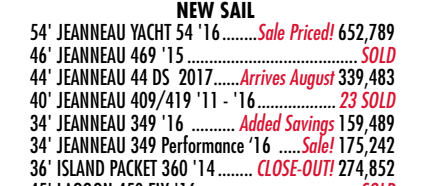
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On Watch

Continued from Page 56

than ever our group must tell our boating story. Never did that mean more to me than those past two days. I'll never forget sitting in Representative DelBene's waiting room and watching her staff usher in the Washington tribal delegation. As much as I wanted to put a glass to the wall and listen, I refrained, counting on the knowledge that our story is compelling, urgent, and in need

of leadership. Jumping ahead in the narrative, a fishing season will occur. Without making the time to advocate for our ecosystem of issues during the ABC, we would easily be swapped out for the other multitude of interests clamoring for time.

Now, if only the ABC occurred four times a year!

ORIGIN OF THE SPECIES

Continued from Page 64

Yet Grand Banks, a name that has been synonymous with the concept of "trawler" for more than forty years, refers to its newer 20-knot-plus Heritage series as "trawlers." So does the name trawler mean anything anymore?

"Like all themes, a great percentage of the trawler yachts built eventually are bastardized versions of the original types," states Bill Garden. Garth Wilcox offers his opinion.

"I think the word trawler in recent years has come to de-

scribe a look: a clipper or plumb/vertical bow with high forward bulwarks with a traditional sheer line tapering to a lower stern, and a vertical, somewhat blocky style forward house. Prospective buyers and owners can't assume anything. They need to make sure that whatever vessel they choose is the right one for their intended application. A planing hull might be appropriate for protected waters, but I'd never take one offshore," Wilcox says.

When my husband and I voyaged in the islands of the South Pacific and Asia, I was surprised to encounter motor vessels that had crossed the Pacific just as we had in a sailboat, albeit at far greater expense. Yet many motor vessels are capable of ocean voyaging. A 53-foot Lapworth design built by Cheoy Lee named Champion was the first known small trawler-type yacht to complete a global circumnavigation in 1980. Many more have done it since then.

According to *Voyaging Under Power*, authors Robert Beebe and Denis Umstot say that a vessel, regardless of what it is called, needs to be ocean-capable and have sufficient range for offshore voyaging. A full-displacement vessel is known for being fuel efficient and being able to carry significant loads, something that might be necessary for offshore adventures in any case. On this, even purists and non-purists might agree. **NWY**



Department of Corrections

We have a couple corrections to our *R2AK Race or Revolution?* feature from our June issue. Jake Beattie was misquoted as saying, "...it must've been the largest non-beer related traffic jam in Port Townsend I've ever seen." He in fact said, "...deer-related traffic jam..."

Our apologies to the fine residents of Port Townsend.

Additionally, the start date for Leg 2 of the race was June 26, 2016 not June 24, 2016.



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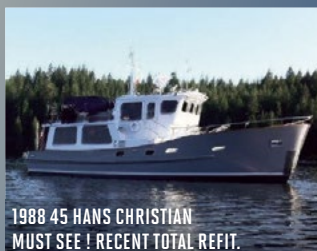
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