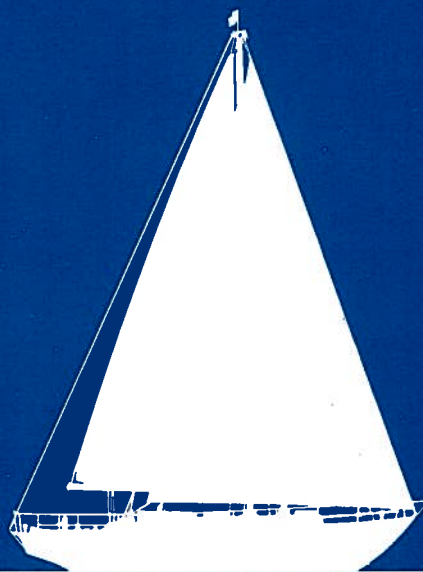


NAUTICAL QUARTERLY



MASON 43

MASON 43

— A SURVEY BY FRASER AND JEAN FRASER-HARRIS



Early on in our association with this handsome Eurasian we had to acknowledge that we were on the brink of a love affair. Recognizing the handicap such emotion would place upon our good judgment, we have taken pains to remain impartial.

Al Mason, the designer, is a man of the "old school" whose name is particularly associated with some fine auxiliary sailing yachts built in Europe after World War II. After graduating from the Webb Institute of Naval Architecture during the early 1930s, his first job was in the design office of Alden's where he worked for the princely

sum of 50¢ per hour. In later years he headed up the drawing office of Sparkman & Stephens where he had more than one stint. During his S&S days, he worked on many well-known yachts, among them *Finisterre*.

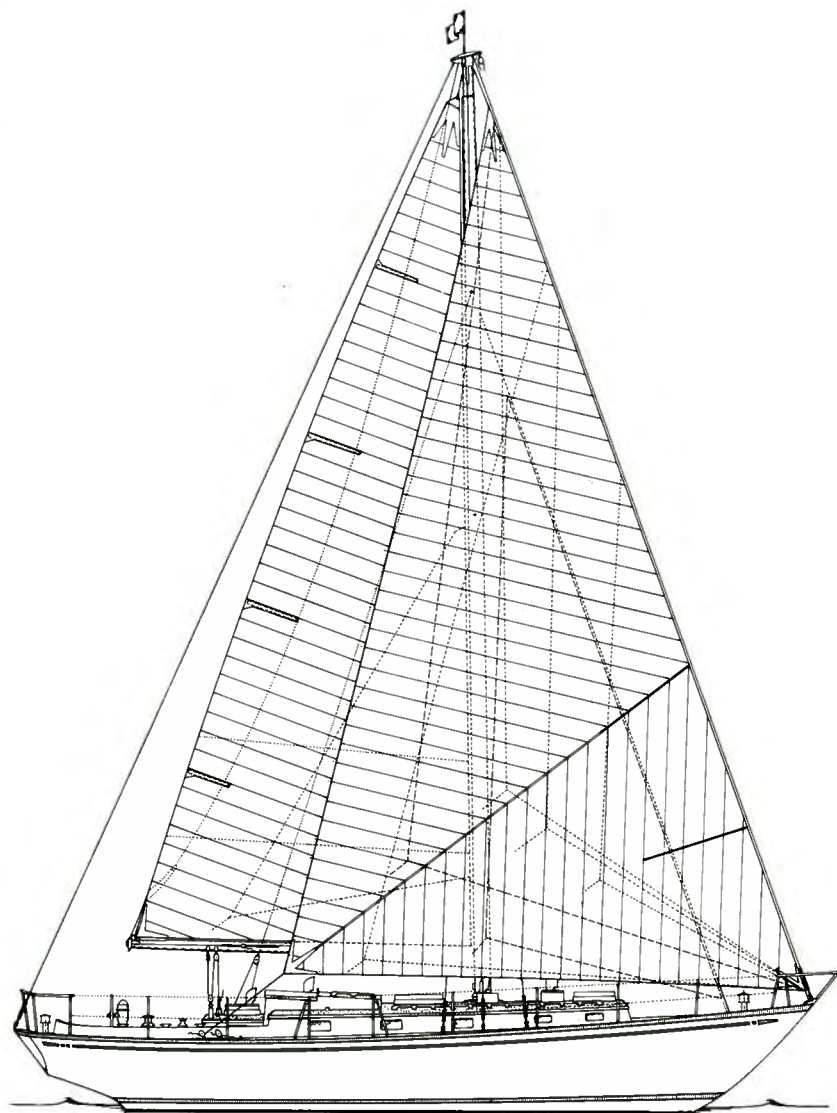
For a time he taught naval architecture at the Naval Academy in Annapolis and also worked in the Navy Small Craft design office in Norfolk before returning to private practice. The set of plans for the 43, which we were given, display the combination of great attention to detail and superb draftsmanship for which this designer is renowned.

Pacific Asian Enterprises, Inc., the builder/importer of the Mason 43, comprises three men—Jim Leishman, Joe Meglen and Dan Streech. You will note that they are listed in alphabetical order, for they insist upon being regarded as equal partners working together as one entity. Having spent time with them, we agree; it was a pleasure to meet three young people with the same ambitions and ideals.

Their association began about 1974 after two of them were involved in the sale of an older, wooden Mason 38' and fell in love with both its cruising performance and classical beauty. The three subsequently

teamed up, researched Far Eastern shipyards and developed their plan to produce a quality cruising yacht of classical design and built to the highest standards of construction using modern methods and materials. Their relationship with Al Mason is that of acolyte and high priest. They are still very close, and he remains responsible for all modifications.

The Ta Shing shipyard in Taiwan was chosen as builder, we were told, because of its long commercial history, large pool of highly skilled labor, and effective management in the person of C. M. Roan, chairman of the company.



The intrusion of half a world between ourselves and the yard has obliged us to be content with photographs of various stages of production, coupled with inspection of two vessels. It was not difficult, though, for us to be convinced that the standards set by Mason's drawings are being scrupulously upheld in production. With three equally talented partners, it is possible for one of them to visit the factory at frequent intervals. Every yacht is inspected at least once during its production in the new shops built to accommodate the Mason line, which covers 43', 53' and 63' yachts which now account for a large percentage of the yard's output.

An interesting aspect of the Ta Shing yard is its practice of profit sharing among certain skilled supervisory personnel in each trade, a scheme that increases incentive and further insures the success of the project.

Coupled to a wage-rate differential when compared with Western yards (which cannot last forever), such practices permit building to higher standards than are currently realistic elsewhere at comparable cost. Thus a combination of continuous liaison between sponsors, designer and builders, up-to-date factory facilities, and modern production methods produce a yacht that competes at an attractive price with the most luxurious European and American yachts of the same type.

Obviously only time and the satisfaction experienced by owners will determine the ultimate success of this joint venture, but we believe the factors noted above, and a long-term attitude, largely explain the enthusiasm generated during our introduction to the Mason 43.

A first impression, on studying the plans and specifications, is that the 43 is indeed a scientific advancement in well-proven ocean cruising designs, with performance maximized only up to the point of excluding any sacrifice of comfortable cruising ability. She has ample freeboard, a low-profile coachroof, and balanced overhangs with graceful stem, sheerline and counter. Underwater her full keel, moderate forefoot and keel-mounted rudder well aft contribute to lively maneuverability and steady downwind tracking.

An advertising copywriter might describe her as an ideal yacht for the discerning family who like to cruise—and for a change he would be telling the truth!

Careful spot checks and examination of core samples from the vessels inspected confirm the accuracy of designed specifications in production models. Hull layups are mat and woven roving, hand-laid, with an overall thickness of 1.12" in way of the keel, .61" to .5" at the turns of the bilge, and .375" at the topsides with additional thick-

ness in chainplate areas. Five full-length stringers lie on either side of the hull. These are 4" x 7/8" planks of high-density foam bonded over with two layers of woven roving and one layer of mat.

Bulkheads of mahogany marine ply have doublers on the main bulkhead to which the upper chainplates attach. These bulkheads boast a total thickness of 2 1/4" at the attachments. Foam filler is inserted between bulkheads and hull to insure strength without hard spots; they are bonded to the hull with two layers of woven roving and one of mat with an additional layer of cloth for smooth appearance when visible.

"Mares tails" (about 1' lengths of glass-fiber rope) are passed through the bulkheads some two inches inboard of the edges and spread either side along the hull and glassed in under the bonding layers to anchor the bulkheads even more securely. The chainplate knees are similarly attached, but here the bonding passes completely over the knee. These chocks go down over the first two stringers, and the steel straps carry eight 7/16" bolts on the uppers and four on the lowers.

The deck is a balsa-core sandwich encased in fiberglass. After the approximately 6" x 3" balsa bricks have been laid, the whole molding is vacuumed and resin-soaked before the covering fiberglass layers are laminated. Danger of subsequent core saturation by water is thus minimized.

Finally, the hull-to-deck join is indicative of the standard of construction we are discussing. First a polysulfide bedding compound is spread over the inboard lip of the hull molding to which the deck is secured, then flat stainless-steel bars run the entire circumference of the join, both above and below the lip, and finally the whole is through-bolted with 3/8" stainless-steel bolts at 4" centers. Another indication of the excellence of this boat's engineering and construction is the installation of tanks. As the hull's construction nears completion, five stainless-steel water tanks of 200-gallon total capacity, and two 50-gallon black iron fuel tanks engineered to fit the hull, are bonded and blocked in place.

Of particular interest is the internal design of the rudder. The stock is in two parts, the lower half bent back and running out to the end of a stainless-steel blade encased in the fiberglass molding. The top portion of the stock comes down and welds to the bottom on the angle. The important effect of this is that the turning forces on the blade are transmitted by the bar stock as well as through the normal blade/stock weld.

Another special mention goes to the seagoing quality of the cockpit. The well is kept small, but seats are wide, and by carrying the half deck forward to the



Al Mason's classic lines have been transformed by the Pacific Asian partners, and by the Ta Shing Shipyard of Taiwan, into an ocean-voyaging vessel that the Fraser-Harrises found to be well-constructed, easily handled, and finished with meticulous joinerwork and attention to detail in machinery and systems.

companionway entry starboard, there is additional space within the coamings but danger from "pooping" is minimized. While the vertical opening of the companionway is kept narrow and has both louvered opening door and drop boards, the ample top opening has a heavy and well-anchored teak sliding hatch. The cockpit seats and half deck are at deck level and the coamings are a bit low for seating comfort, but the problem is overcome by an ingenious modification of three detachable backrests, one for the helmsman and one either side. These cleverly drop into coaming slots.

The foredeck layout is practical. A 45-pound CQR with all-chain rode is handled by a Nilsson electric windlass, a product of New Zealand and a most efficient piece of equipment. This yacht windlass includes all the features of a capstan found on the deck of a modern destroyer, not omitting a really practical manual handle for use in the event of electrical failure. The gear for a second anchor is standard. The chain locker, situated well back from the stem, has built-in isolated drainage to the main bilge sump.

The attention to detail aboard the Mason 43 left us with the feeling of a concept that has been realized intelligently and completely.

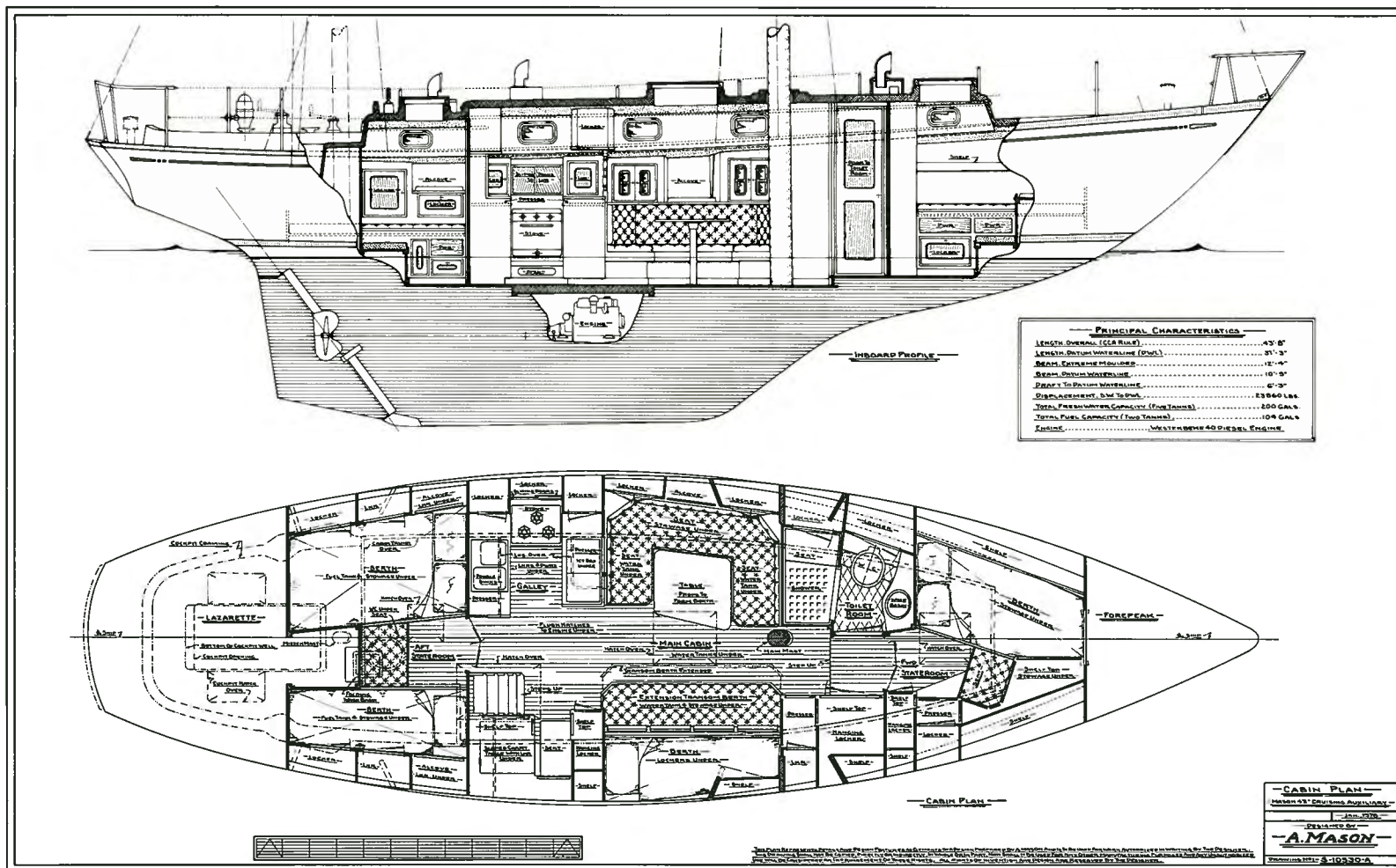
Decks are clear and uncluttered. The low cockpit coamings make movement fore and aft easy. The robust and powerful rig is available in cutter or ketch version. Rigging is $\frac{5}{16}$ " 1 x 19 stainless with swages to open stainless-steel turnbuckles. (We have seen only the cutter which, in any case, would be our choice.) The balance was very satisfactory, sail handling easy and the problem of coping with a larger mainsail has been simplified by the introduction of jiffy reefing. Spars are painted aluminum and the mast, with double spreaders, is keel-stepped. The loose-footed staysail stay has a Highfield quick-release lever. Halyards are all pre-stretched Dacron. After hull No. 45 the winches specified are Lewmar: primaries are #44 self-tailing;

secondaries and mainsheet are #24, main and jib halyards are #30, and staysail halyard is #10. An additional storm trysail track is standard. A set of working sails is standard. An optional detail on deck is the sailing dinghy, designed by Al Mason, which fits abaft the mast in space, and on chocks, designed especially for it.

This laundry list is getting tedious. To digress for a moment, when we were in Dana Point for the sea trial, we were invited aboard for a second run, this time as lead boat in the Christmas parade of illuminated yachts. This was California at its most Californian, exciting, with about sixty yachts ablaze with lights and animated by toys and some very jolly company. We had Santa Claus aboard HoHoHo-ing through a

loud hailer over seasonal music. Acknowledging a pretty girl waving a champagne bottle from an anchored boat, he asked her what she'd like for Christmas. "A mink coat!" she cried. "Have you been a good girl?" asked Santa in his best bass voice "Oh yes!" she shrieked. "HoHoHo," said our Santa, whose beard was by this time slightly stained by good hot Gluwein, "You'll never get a mink coat *that* way!"

After which good cheer, we shall get on with our duty and usher you down below. The Perkins 4-108 diesel with Warner 2:1 reduction gear has a 1/4" stainless-steel shaft. Engine, batteries and pumps are all located under the sole, with bilge, shower sump and water pressure pumps all available through one inspection hatch. All through-hull fittings can be monitored without difficulty. This configuration, sound from the standpoint of weight distribution and additional accommodation space, does have the drawback of vulnerability in the event of flooding; however, a deep sump and the seamanlike arrangement of the companionway minimize this risk. In a yacht primarily designed for





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elow-decks details, shown here in photos and in the designer's perfect drawings, include the businesslike navigation station above, berths on the starboard side of the main cabin at left, and the galley/dining area below. The standard arrangement provides overnight cabins fore and aft, a nicely arranged U-shaped galley, head

compartment with separate shower, and generous stowage space throughout.

LOA: 43'10 1/2"
LWL: 31'3"
Beam: 12'3 1/2"
Draft: 6'3"
Sail Area: 899 sq. ft. (cutter) 916 sq. ft. (ketch)
Ballast: 8400 pounds
Displacement: 25,000 pounds
Fuel: 104 gallons
Water: 206 gallons
Power: Perkins 50-hp 4-108 diesel
Spars: aluminum finished in linear polyurethane
Designer: Al Mason
Builder: Ta Shing (Taiwan)
Importer: Pacific Asian Enterprises, Box F-A, Dana Point, CA 92629



cruising under sail, the advantages of excellent access to machinery with consequent ease of maintenance and uninterrupted living quarters fully justify the arrangement.

The quality of building and attention to detail are maintained in the Mason 43's mechanical and electrical installations, which conform to ABYC standards. Thought has also been given to the problem of running maintenance; the steering gear, for example, is easily reached through a panel in the after stateroom hanging locker.

A complete 110- and 12-volt distribution panel with circuit breakers and telltale lights is located at the chart table with the main 4-way switch under the navigator's seat. Wiring is coded and well run; all liner panels are detachable for easy access, and fittings are attractive and of good quality.

This yacht is designed to meet the demands of discerning cruising sailors. The accommodation plan is matched to this requirement with one notable exception: the saloon has a dinette to port with fixed table which drops to form a double berth, as opposed to the gimballed table which seems to have gone out of fashion. The agents tell me that the everlasting question—"How many will she sleep?"—is responsible for this concession: Jean and I still prefer the formula for the Ideal Yacht—one that "drinks six, eats four and sleeps two." For the same reason we question the necessity for a second bunk in the master stateroom and feel the space could be more imaginatively put to work.

Another minor criticism of the accommodation is the use of extensive joinery as well as a lowered locker in the shower stall. A good deal of post-shower mop-up will be inevitable if this woodwork is to be kept healthy. And we discovered a small but slightly fatal error in the shower stall construction: the "grab/drain rail" which runs the length of the accommodation on both sides to catch any drips from the opening ports passes through the shower and ends up over the stateroom bunk aft. An enthusiastic hairwasher using the telephone shower will be putting in a call to its bedmate! Indeed, when I discovered this, Joe Meglen, who had taken a 43 across the Pacific, exclaimed, "So *that's* where it came from!"

Our magnet discovered two poor cupboard door latches, one on a galley cupboard over the sink, and one in the after stateroom hanging locker. Apparently Oriental factory purchasing agents are no better equipped with magnets than their Occidental counterparts! The small opening basin in the master cabin, a good idea in the absence of a second head, needs a retaining lock when in the open position.

Is it desirable to have two complete head

spaces on a cruising vessel of this size? Again this is a matter of the yacht's role. For large weekend parties with six or more sleeping aboard, maybe yes; for a single live-aboard couple or a serious cruisingman and his temporary guests we agree with the philosophy expressed in this vessel that the space is better filled with good navigation and galley facilities. The 2 1/2" insulation around the refrigeration is marginal; we prefer 3" or 4". It makes a great difference in power consumed or compressor running time, particularly in the tropics.

Having expressed these views, let us complete our report by stating categorically that we both found this yacht to represent a thoroughly thought-out approach to efficient and comfortable ocean cruising. The standard of construction, in particular the joinery, is well above average. The attention to detail—drained portlight bezels—small window on the inboard bulkhead of the navigation space to provide light from the companionway but prevent splashing on the charts—a deck prism over the chart table—four dorade ventilators, one with a double box—three well-designed opening hatches—fourteen opening ports and two additional deck plates for cowl vents fore and aft—galley furnished with standard freezer and refrigeration space—all left us with the feeling of a concept realized intelligently and completely.

The sailing trial provided sufficient proof that the quality of construction is matched by that of performance. This yacht is initially slightly tender, but this is an intentional feature of the design, for only at about 12° of heel does she maximize her waterline length, and light-air performance is assisted by slight heel to fill the sails.

We had about 15-18-knot winds, under full main and genoa, by the end of the afternoon. We got the rail down by hardening up, at which point she stiffened nicely and went well. As we were not instrumented, there was no way we could record actual speeds through the water, but both on and off the wind the 43's performance was most satisfactory. She is a pleasure to handle under power or sail, and creates a very positive feeling of confidence that she would carry one safely through adverse conditions.

The Mason 43's agents are selected carefully, spare parts are maintained on hand, and emphasis is placed upon the followup of direct communication with and necessary support for all Mason owners. Production of all models is likely to remain somewhat limited in the face of a policy which will, we were assured, continue to place quality ahead of quantity. In our opinion, this company is off to a good start. Which, as Churchill might have said, is a good word "with which to end."

STANDARD SPECIFICATIONS

CONSTRUCTION

- Hull—hand laid to Lloyds + 100 A1 specifications with 10 full length longitudinal stringers
- Deck—molded FRP sandwich with teak overlay
- Cabin—molded FRP sandwich
- Exterior trim—teak
- Cockpit sole—teak grate
- FRP weather hood for sliding companionway hatch

DECK EQUIPMENT

- 6 s/s insert bow, stern and midships chocks
- Four 10½" bow and stern cleats
- Two 6½" midships cleats
- Full length teak handrails on cabin top
- S/S bow and stern pulpits, stern pulpit with opening gate
- Double life lines
- Deck plate for emergency tiller
- Additional deck plates forward and after for use with cowl vents to provide additional ventilation
- Winches:
 - Primary winches: Lewmar #44 STC
 - Secondary winches: Lewmar #24 C
 - Main sheet: Lewmar #24 C
 - Staysail halyard: Lewmar #10 C
 - Jib halyard: Lewmar #30 C
 - Main halyard: Lewmar #30 C
- Double bow roller to accommodate 45 lb. CQR anchor; s/s and bronze
- Stainless steel mast pulpits
- Stainless steel cowl vent protector
- Stainless steel pedestal pulpits

SPARS & RIGGING

- Forespar aluminum mast and boom assembly with polyurethane paint
- Spreader lights, foredeck lights
- Nav-Tec stainless steel turnbuckles
- Complete running rigging
- Standing rigging stainless steel
- Block—Schaefer 08 series
- Main sheet traveler—2'10" stops and double roller bearing car
- Genoa track—14' stops and lead blocks
- Adjustable mast step
- Storm trysail track

SAILS

- Odyssey—main 9 oz., with 2 sets reef points
- Staysail—8 oz.
- Jib—8 oz.

STEERING

- Pedestal with 28" Yacht Specialties wheel
- Emergency tiller

VENTILATION

- Five teak water trap vent boxes, s/s cowls
- Three teak opening hatches with smoked acrylic tops
- 1 teak opening companionway hatch
- Opening ports—6 bronze 7" x 14"
- Opening ports—6 bronze 6" x 12"
- Opening ports—2 bronze 4" x 12"
- Stainless steel port bezels

ACCOMMODATIONS

- Sleeping accommodations 6-9
- One double berth in forward cabin
- One double berth in aft cabin with a single berth starboard
- Convertible dinette to double in main salon with extension transom berth and pilot berth to starboard
- Cushions—4" vinyl covered
- Teak hull ceiling on exposed areas
- Hanging lockers—3 large
- Foul weather gear locker
- Additional drawers and lockers
- Full size chart table
- Cabin sole—teak and spruce with sound insulation over engine area
- Interior joiner work; hand rubbed teak-satin varnish finish
- Teak deck and cabin beams
- Stainless steel companionway banister

GALLEY AND HEAD

- U shaped galley
- Large double s/s sinks with pressure hot and cold
- Pumps: fresh water, elect. and manual
- Hot and cold pressure water system
- Ice box (set up for conversion) FRP lined double top opening and side opening for dock side
- Shower—separate stall with pressure hot and cold. Shower has its own holding tank.
- Stainless steel bar across front of stove alcove
- Heads—one forward with holding tank. Head can be pumped overboard or into tank; tank can be emptied at dockside with vacuum, deckfitting, or offshore with large diaphragm pump.
- Small sink with hot and cold water provided in aft cabin. When not in use folds neatly into bulkhead

MACHINERY

- Perkins 4-108 marine diesel with Warner Hydraulic 2:1 reduction
- Oil drip pan
- Prop shaft 1¼" stainless steel
- S/S water lift exhaust system
- Deluxe instrument panel
- Manual bilge pump
- Double lever engine controls
- Electric bilge pump

ELECTRICAL

- Primary 12 volt DC system
- Batteries—two-105 amp hours
- 4-way Guest vapor-proof selector switch
- Secondary 110 volt AC system
- Weatherproof ship to shore receptacle
- U.S. electrical distribution panel
- All appropriate interior, navigation, spreader lights
- Hot water heater

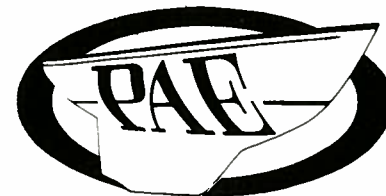
TANKAGE

- 105 gallons fuel in black iron
- 205 gallons water in 5 s/s tanks with centrally located selection manifold

MISCELLANEOUS SPECIAL FEATURES

- Hull colors: white, colors optional
- Cabin sides: gel coat, white
- Cabin top—molded, non-skid
- Main salon cabin hatch: size and placement is to facilitate engine removal
- Weather companionway hatch hood
- Easy access deck plate for emergency tiller use
- Teak sailing instrument access cabin in aft cabin
- Coast Guard approved propane tank locker in lazarette
- Refrigeration plumbing
- Stove plumbing
- Chain locker is sealed from bilge and drains to keel sump in order to keep bilge clean

Manufacturer reserves the right to change specifications based on parts availability and to facilitate product/production refinements.



PACIFIC ASIAN ENTERPRISES, INC.

Box F-A

Dana Point, California 92629 U.S.A
(714) 496-4848 Cable "PAECORP"