

Designer's Notes ISLANDER 36

By Joe Artese

Interior & exterior

The following describes only some of the features that I designed for the Islander 36. Those described were unique at the time, not at all seen in the production sailboat marketplace.

As an ocean racer, my first concern was to design the entire boat to be negotiated comfortably while in the heeled condition. It seemed inherently wrong to me that when working in a cockpit, heeled at 30 degrees, that we have to wedge our feet into the right angle corner between the cockpit sole and the vertical face of the cockpit seat. This was uncomfortable and dangerous. This desire for a horizontal working platform throughout the range of heel, resulted in the "Heelwalk" feature for which I applied for patent. The cockpit seats were ergonomically sculpted and a "foot flat" was designed into the leading edge of the seat to provide comfortable support for the feet of those braced up on the windward side.

To aid relaxing in the cockpit, the aft end of the trunk cabin was angled radically and curved as a lounge seat back. The winch island was sculpted to double as an outboard seat and then as an arm rest as it swept forward, around and up and over the cabin to the companionway hatch. Probably the most difficult part of this design was the integration of this complex transition in an aesthetically pleasing way. Clay modeling was employed at this point.

In order to reach the widest possible market, the house styling had to be a proper blend, crisp and elegant, in keeping with cockpit and with just the right balance of tradition to bring it all off. All of the lines were curved.

For boldness, I angled the cabin sides at a then rakish 20 degrees from vertical; (the convention was 10 degrees). This radical angle was tempered with a touch from the past, an elliptical cross-section for the coach roof instead of the standard arc of a given radius. Also, instead of the standard 6" radius at the corner of the cabin sides and coach roof, I carried the elliptical roof contour over as far as possible *beyond* the cabin sides, where it terminated in an overhanging teak eyebrow and returned to the cabin side. This visually widened and lowered the house.

As sculpture, the yacht is in constant motion with respect to the sun so surface reflections and shadows from the rigging play an all-important role in defining and emphasizing the character of the surface contours. For this reason, I am partial to elliptical shapes and sections, which are constantly changing, and hence, inherently more dynamic and interesting

than their more static cousins, the arc or segment of a circle. I also developed the cove stripe and its highly stylized arrowhead as an Islander trademark.

The transition to the interior involved a companionway ladder or more accurately, a staircase, that was kicked out to an unheard of angle of 45 degrees to allow the ladies a carefree decent below. In addition, the companionway was framed out in an unusually massive display of teak joinerwork, which doubled as a complex of handholds. The primary purpose, however, was aesthetic, for drama's sake a salty touch that was reminiscent of "shippy" knees. The expense was justified by the fact that this rich, sensuous display, drenched in sunlight, would be seen from almost every vantagepoint, inside and out.

The interior of the I-36 was as innovative as the exterior. My desire was to make the interior seem as inviting, interesting and as spacious as possible without sacrificing any of the carefully calculated stowage space, this meant that I had to employ some interesting new devices to achieve this effect. First, I discarded the standard, fixed, drop-leaf table and developed a concept that folded completely out of the way against the bulkhead. It could also fold out to half a table or all the way out for dining. The table was attached to a slider, which allowed it to be moved to port, or to starboard for ease of entry and egress. Generous shelves and end tables were added to take glasses, cups and general miscellany when the table was stowed out of the way.

To make the interior appear larger, the otherwise dominant vertical components such as mast and main bulkhead were reduced and a strong theme of horizontal stratification was established. For instance, the shelf surrounding the couch was carried across the salon bulkhead as a cabinet and on *around* to enclose the mast. The mast was actually stepped on the keel, but passed through this shelf and cabinetry, which reduced its "visual height" by 50 percent.

Additional interest was achieved by articulating or angling the main bulkhead above the shelf to form "cozy recesses" for book shelving and objets d' arts. These angles were reflected aft, diagonally opposite, in the angled galley sink face. Creating visual relationships between diagonal opposites induces the eye to subconsciously register the greater distance along the diagonal axis thus increasing the "apparent" spaces involved.

This angling or filling of corners breaks down the more static cube while creating a comfortable womb-like effect. The "sculpting" tends to vector the eye around the boat to the next point of interest that the designer has planned. In this case it was the chest which sat upon the ledge at the entry to the quarter berth across from the galley. This chest "transformed" into the chart table when needed. The adjacent berth area was framed by a heavy privacy curtain, which was tied back to dramatize the opening. The eye was drawn back to the remote recesses of this cavity by bringing light in through the deck.

As I write this 30 years later, it seems almost ludicrous to claim originality for things that now seem so commonplace, especially in light of Solomon's admonition that "There is nothing new under the sun". However, at the time, and in that context, the above ideas were new and refreshing and gave my client a profitable lift away from the rest of the fleet.

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