

Shannon Coaster 58' Design Comment

by Walt Schulz

A Tale of Three Women

For those interested in a quick description let me start out by stating that the primary goal of my Shannon Coaster 58' is to create a manageable sized motor yacht with maximum luxury, extended live aboard accommodations. My objective was to design a yacht where you can "take your waterfront view and lifestyle with you no matter where the vessel travels". The 58' Coaster can be easily handled by an average couple without any crew or help. The twin engine Coaster will cruise at 12 to 15 knots using my patented, fuel efficient SRD Tec hull platform, and the twin engines coupled with bow and stern thrusters will allow the most difficult docking maneuvers to be painless. If you're still interested, read the following somewhat long, but hopefully informative, story about how this design really developed.

The inspiration for the Coaster 58' came after spending a several days sitting on a mooring at Edgartown on Martha's Vineyard. I was aboard a Shannon 38 foot powerboat with my wife Janet and adult daughter Erin. If you have never been there before, Edgartown is considered one of the busiest and most beautiful harbors in New England. It was quite entertaining to sit in the cockpit and watch sail and power boats of every imaginable size and shape parade past us trying to get a slip or pick up one of the moorings in the harbor. By the second day we got into one of those "wave-themagic-wand-money-is-no-object" conversations about which boat or waterfront mansion either Janet or Erin would prefer. Frankly I was very surprised by their response. I really expected Janet to pick one of the big mansions and Erin to pick one of the large, ostentatious mega yachts that dotted the waterfront. When I questioned them Janet's reply was, "why would I want huge house? The one we have now is already too big for us". Erin's rejoinder was, "I don't want a big yacht that requires crew. I want a boat that I can operate with just my husband so I can cruise the east coast in privacy without crew underfoot."

Thus started a lengthy debate between two experienced boating women as they went from boat to boat telling me what was wrong with each one. It occurred to me that this was a very unique opportunity and quickly I got a pad and pencil and began to take notes. The first big criticism that they both agreed upon was the location of the owner's cabin on boats under 80 feet. They couldn't understand why designers always stick the owner's cabin way up in the bow, below the decks or jammed under the wheelhouse in an airless, claustrophobic place with no real windows or view. I tried in vain to explain the imposed limitations created by engine, machinery location and other design issues.

"Maybe designers should consider putting outboard motors on the transom if that's the big problem" Erin said sarcastically.

Janet jumped in with, "if I'm going to spend months or longer on a boat I want a bedroom with a view not a cabin in a cave."

I pointed out that they could always just purchase a waterfront condominium in the harbor as a possible solution but instantly they mentioned all of the exclusive (read expensive) waterfront condos we had rented in Key West over the years that were plagued with loud neighbors, barking dogs and noisy grandchildren. They reminded me of how many times I said I would never buy a condo because it always

reminded me of my youth living in tenements in the city.

One of the things they liked on some of the trawlers was the location of the galley next to the covered aft cockpit. Janet commented, "that's the place where people congregate when entertaining guests and the galley eating area makes sense right next to the outside lounge cockpit." But Erin, who constantly researches the boat industry, added a good point. On a typical 50 foot trawler, the galley might be aft but the head is often nowhere nearby and in many cases is way up forward. This forces guests to walk through the galley, up steps, and then down another staircase to reach the head.

Janet was looking at the high decked trawler that was swinging on a nearby mooring. "Isn't that the trawler we passed in Buzzards Bay that came in hours after us and had all that trouble picking up a mooring line?" she asked.

"Yup- that's the one." I replied.

"Well, why do they make the bows so high? That woman was killing herself try to grab the mooring line with a boathook."

"They have to make the decks high off the water in order to get standing headroom in the engine room". We had watched the trawler come into the tight mooring field with about 20 knots of wind. There was only a husband and wife who looked to be in their fifties or sixties aboard and the woman was wearing a radio headset in order to her husband. The husband was struggling to maneuver between the boats with a 50 foot single engine boat that was so high it had the windage of an aircraft carrier. He was blasting the bow thrusters trying to line the boat up with the mooring ball. She was flaying a 15 foot boathook around trying to grab the line in the dark while hanging precariously over the bow. It was obvious that he couldn't see the mooring ball under the high bow and the wind was pushing the boat all over the place. After three failed attempts and a close call hitting another boat one of the launch boats came to their rescue and handed the mooring line up to the woman. Janet was still staring at the trawler and said, "Standing headroom in the engine room... I don't understand? I've been watching you work on engines for years and you're either kneeling down or laying down to fix things on motors. What can you do standing up in the engine room? I groaned at her female commonsense, "It's just one of those testosterone filled marketing gimmicks". "It figures", was her dry reply. So, a reasonably low bow, twin engines along with bow and stern thrusters were now added to the list of the "perfect wish yacht".

The following day we were having lunch at a waterfront restaurant at an outside table. While we were sitting there a big (70-80 foot) yacht pulled in right in front of us. The yacht had the typical "jogging shoe" appearance with large football shaped black windows and swept back fiberglass wings. There was some obvious screw up because they had the big fenders and dock lines set up on the wrong side of the vessel. They were in an incredibly tight spot, but the helmsperson chose to do a 360 degree turn in place with only inches to spare. There were only three people aboard, two men and one woman. Based on their ages it appeared that it was a young paid captain at the helm which meant that the middle-aged, over weight owner and his wife were doing the dock line and fender work. In any event, the captain did a masterful job turning the yacht using twin engines and bow and stern thrusters. The real problem was that the salon area was pushed right out to the sides of the hull precluding

an outside side deck passage from the bow to the stern. We watched these two nonathletic people racing like mad going through doors and up stairs to the upper level to get to the fenders which were hanging down about 12 feet to move them to the other side of the vessel and then racing down stairs to move the dock lines. It actually appeared that we were watching some kind of weird Olympic event or one of those TV game shows where people have to race across an obstacle course over water with spinning objects knocking them all over the place. I felt that we should have used our paper restaurant placemats to hold scores up for their heroic efforts. When the yacht was finally tied up Janet said, "Why in the world on a boat that big wouldn't they have side decks so people didn't have to run through the cabin and up and down steps to get from the bow to the stern?" Since Janet has been doing all my fender and dock line work for many decades while I have the strenuous job of just pushing the throttle and shift levers back and forth I was careful about my response. "They must have wanted to make the salon area very wide", was my feeble reply. "Are you kidding?" she huffed. "That thing must be over 20 feet wide. What difference would a couple of feet on each side for safe side decks make?" I had no good answer, so I made a mental note to make sure the "perfect yacht" had unencumbered bow to stern side decks.

Later that afternoon we walked up to the north end of the harbor. We reached the marina and fuel dock area just in time to watch a 40 foot trawler styled like a tug boat trying to back into a slip in a crosswind. There were two couples aboard so there were two women and one man in the aft sections yelling and scrambling around trying to fend the trawler off the pilings. It was quickly obvious to me that the man in the wheelhouse couldn't see aft because the inflatable dingy on the roof behind the wheelhouse totally blocked his visibility to the stern. We witnessed three aborted efforts to back the trawler between the pilings before they finally crashed their way into the slip. I broke the silence by saying, "He needs TV cameras in the cockpit and monitors at the helm because he can't see past that damn inflatable." Erin started laughing and said, "I think he should have invested in the cameras instead of those worthless headsets they are wearing." Thus, complete 360 degree visibility at all times from the helm station was added to our "bucket list" wish boat.

The following weekend we were over in the quiet and scenic Red Brook harbor on Cape Cod to pick up my youngest adult daughter Bree. Bree had to work at the University so she missed much of our annual summer boat trip. Naturally, the conversation quickly turned toward the "magic wand wish boat". I had pages of handwritten notes and I filled Bree in on what seemed to be an impossible to design dreamboat. My biggest concern was fitting everything in without make the boat too big or too high. Bree came back with, "what about a smaller version of the big Benford Florida Bay Coaster that we used to see at Newport when we had a mooring there?" Jay Benford is probably one of the most talented and prolific yacht designers in the industry and he designed a model line of clever, steel hulled trawlers that had multiple decks stacked similar to a Mississippi River Boat. "No good", I replied. "He used a trawler hull with big chines and ballast to get stability from all the deckhouse height. Plus, a 7 or 8 knot powerboat is painfully slow and somewhat dangerous if you're trying to beat the dark or weather moving around the coast or Inland Waterway. I guess that speed is OK for someone foolish enough to want to take a motorboat across the Atlantic Ocean, but I would want to travel at 12 to 15 knots if I owned a powerboat. Plus, you have to stay well under 20 feet of air draft for all the bridges and no more than 3 feet of hull draft because the ICW is shoaling in every year". While Janet and Erin are more interested in yacht interior design, Bree is intrigued by mechanics so we began a

heated discourse on vertical center of gravity, stability and draft issues. Janet quickly excused herself to go below to "read" having witnessed Erin, Bree and I getting into technical and design issues before. We ended up talking in the cockpit until 2 am.

Well, that week of taking notes and listening to three women turned into seven weeks of furious design work. Janet, Erin and Bree were consulted at each phase of the design work for comment and input. While I pushed the cursor around on the computer, the Coaster 58' design is really the product of three experienced boating women waving their own personal magic wand to create the ultimate luxury yacht. At every design point, they stopped me from slipping into the dreaded and very common "Stupid Man Syndrome".

I named the design the "Coaster" as a salute to my friend Jay Benford and the late Murray Peterson for his beautiful wood, Coaster schooner designs.

W. S.

SHANNON COASTER 58

Design Specifications

LOA 58'7"

Beam 18'

Draft 3'6"

Displacement 60,000 lbs

Fuel 700 gallons

Water 200 gallons

Air draft 18'9"

Specifications subject to change without notice 9/2012

SHANNON BOAT COMPANY, INC., 19 BROAD COMMON RD, BRISTOL, RI 02809
401.253.2441 EMAIL sales@shannonyachts.com www.shannonyachts.com