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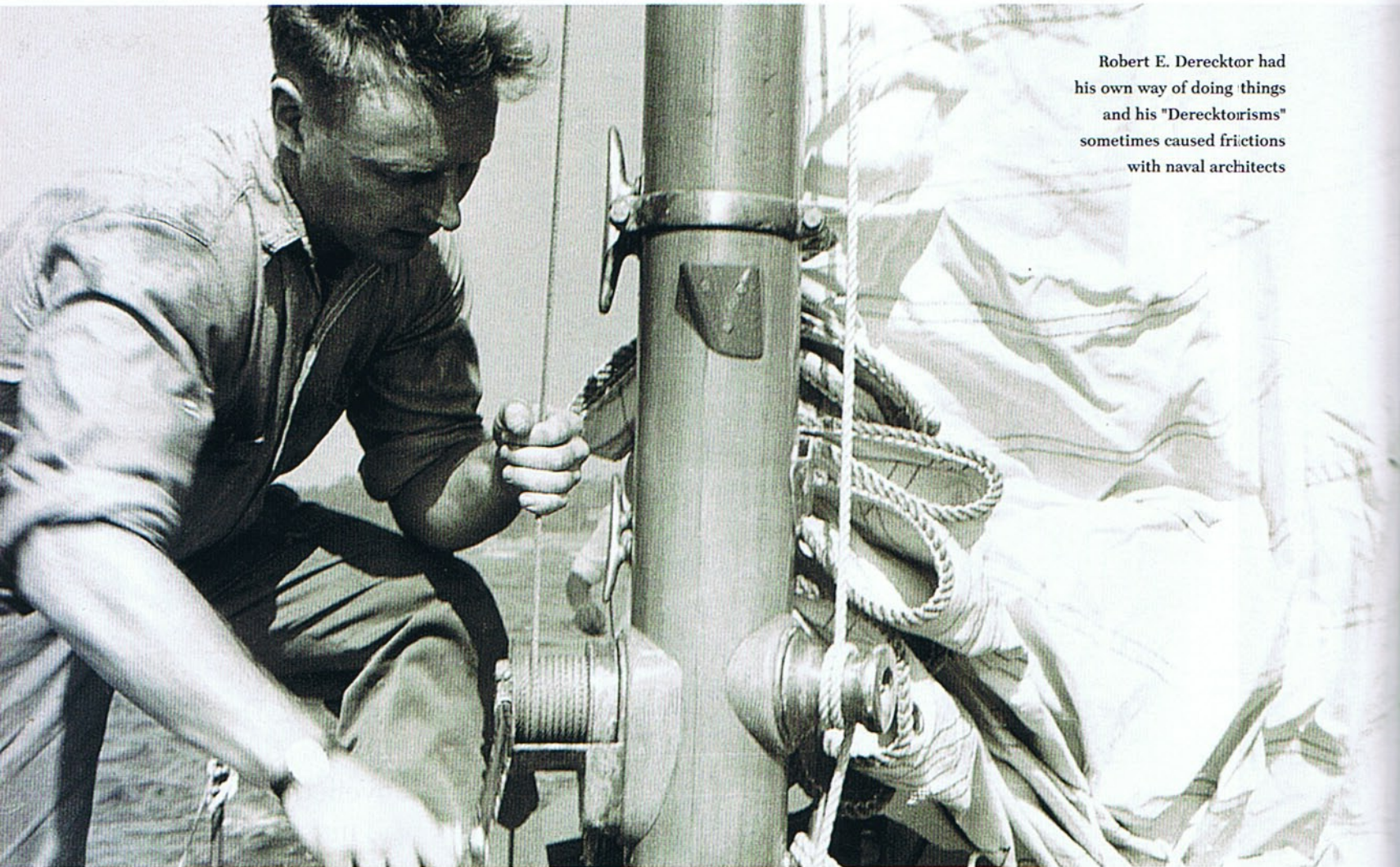


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Robert E. Derektor had his own way of doing things and his "Derektorisms" sometimes caused frictions with naval architects

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Derektor overlooks a naked waterfront near the Long Island Sound in Bridgeport, and when we visited in March a cool and wet wind blew across the shipyard. Silhouettes hurried through falling flurries, but the weather was not the only reason for their purposeful pace. The emerald green hull of a tugboat, its steel ribs still visible, occasionally glowed under the grey sky as welders moved around the sculptural structure. On the opposite end of the yard, two yachts quite literally filled a 300' bay and a tightly protected nearby assembly hall. One of the projects is the 281' *Cakewalk*, the latest and largest in a series of vessels owned by an American yachtsman who wanted to build his newest yacht in the U.S. to prove that American craftsmanship can compete with the rest of the world. His largest yacht before this was a 205' Dutch-built yacht. After reviewing several proposals from various shipyards, the yacht's owner and *Cakewalk* project manager Bill Zinser, his long-time captain, selected Derektor to build the largest yacht to launch in the United States in nearly 80 years. *Corsair IV*, built at Bath Iron Works in Maine in 1930, during the Great Depression, set the benchmark as the longest yacht ever built in the U.S. The launch drew trains-full of J.P. Morgan's family and friends to Bath



MAMARONECK HAD A LARGE COMMUNITY OF IMMIGRANTS WHO BROUGHT TO THE U.S. A TRADITION OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

to watch the elegant black-hulled yacht slide into the Kennebec River. There is an ongoing debate between yacht enthusiasts on what measurement really matters when it comes to ranking yachts: length overall (LOA) or gross tonnage. While many lists, including our own "Top 100" listing of the world's largest yachts (see *Yachts International* July edition), take into consideration only LOA, plenty argue that gross tonnage is a better measure. So in that respect *Cakewalk* (2,950 gross tons) actually will surpass J.P. Morgan's yacht, which had an estimated gross tonnage of 2,142, even if it had a longer LOA (343'). It could be the largest yacht ever built in the U.S.

Paul Derektor, partly in jest, points out that *Corsair IV* had a bowsprit, which accounts for some of its length. He is a quick-witted and intense man with ice-blue eyes. Sitting and answering questions is obviously not his favorite way to spend an hour, although he gracefully endures. He is a sailor like his father Robert "Bob" Derektor was, and one of his favorite books is the story of a solo journey from New Zealand to Chile by Miles Horden. While Paul went solo for years at the helm of his family business, his brother Tom has recently returned to Derektor Shipyards after creating a successful business



The S&S-designed Gulfstream 30 was a rare series as the Robert E. Derektor shipyard, above, focused on custom work



of his own. The two brothers are close. When they were kids, their father Bob brought them to the Mamaroneck, N.Y. shipyard he founded in 1947 and they learned early how to tinker with tools. Paul and Tom remember their father's enormous capacity for work, which seems to be an enduring family character trait. Bob's father (Paul and Tom's grandfather), Yale-educated lawyer and developer Nathan Derecktor, himself worked well into his 80s.

Law was not Bob's calling. Instead, he showed an early talent for boat design and built his first boat before he was out of high school. He befriended Olin Stephens (one of the founders of renowned design firm Sparkman and Stephens) who was impressed enough by the young man to recommend him for a job. Bob's goal, however, was to run his own boat repair and boat building facility, and at the age of 25 he acquired the company's original shipyard in Mamaroneck, near a natural small-boat harbor. There, he built many of his own designs, sometimes improvising from the plans. "He thought he had a better way of doing things; 99 percent of the time, things worked," Paul says. The Derecktor shipyard built many boats designed by others and, of course, Sparkman & Stephens' designs figure prominently among the more than 250 boats that Derecktor has built to date. Bob Derecktor, who also designed and created furniture, had a genuine appreciation

Derecktor has built 250 boats, including America's Cup winners; the 115' *Lady Frances* (top left), *Dillinger* and the Zurn-designed *Vendetta* (center) are a small sample

of woodwork. Mamaroneck had a large community of immigrants who brought to the U.S. a tradition of craftsmanship. He recruited many to work for his yard. Despite his love of wood, as early as the 1950s the innovative Bob Derecktor was intrigued by aluminum construction. Bob designed a machine to shape aluminum sheets that is still in use in Bridgeport today. By the early 1970s, the shipyard built almost exclusively in aluminum. Among the last wooden boats built at Derecktor were the 64' *Valiant*, built in double-planked mahogany on white oak frames in 1970, and Bob Derecktor's own *Mother Goose*, a 45' yawl built in 1971.

Sailboats, the family's passion, continued to play an important role well into the late 1980s. From 1974 to 1986, Derecktor built a number of America's Cup contenders and winners (including *Mariner*, skippered by CNN founder Ted Turner, built in 1974, and three *Stars & Stripes*, built in 1984, 1985 and 1986, for skipper Dennis Conner). It attracted a lot of attention and kept the shipyard busy. "We worked



A fast passenger ferry for Buquebus, patrol boats for New York City and the tugboat *Independence*, below, are just a few of many significant commercial projects

like crazy," says Paul Derecktor, recalling how the shipyard built four of these projects back to back. *Stars & Stripes '87* was a real rush, first because of the 24-hour-seven-day schedule workers had to keep for 86 days to get it ready, and then because it brought the America's Cup back to the U.S. The 1987 America's Cup winner earned headlines around the world. The projects grew in size. The 112' *Zingaro*, another S&S design, was built in 2000 as a world cruiser able to sail at a speed of 13 knots. The hometown newspaper, *The New York Times*, dubbed Derecktor "The Billionaire's Boat Maker". In 2001, construction began on a 150' sailboat designed by German Frers for Dennis Kozlowski. A year into the project, the former chairman of Tyco, embroiled in legal difficulties, became unable to finish the yacht. The graceful aluminum hull is now in dry dock at the Bridgeport facility awaiting a new owner. Still, sailboats never were the shipyard's sole focus. In 1969, the yard delivered a 61' light-displacement ocean cruiser called *Jim Hawkins*, designed by Avarad Fuller, which still inspires designers today. The 88' *Titania* (now known as *Minnow*) was built in 1979 to Lloyds 100A1+ Class specifications and had a range of about 3,100 nm at 10 knots. In 1989, the Derecktor shipyard delivered one of only three boats it built in composite. Speed specialist Frank Mulder designed the 74' *Dillinger* for John Staluppi, who went on to own a succession of the world's fastest yachts. Built

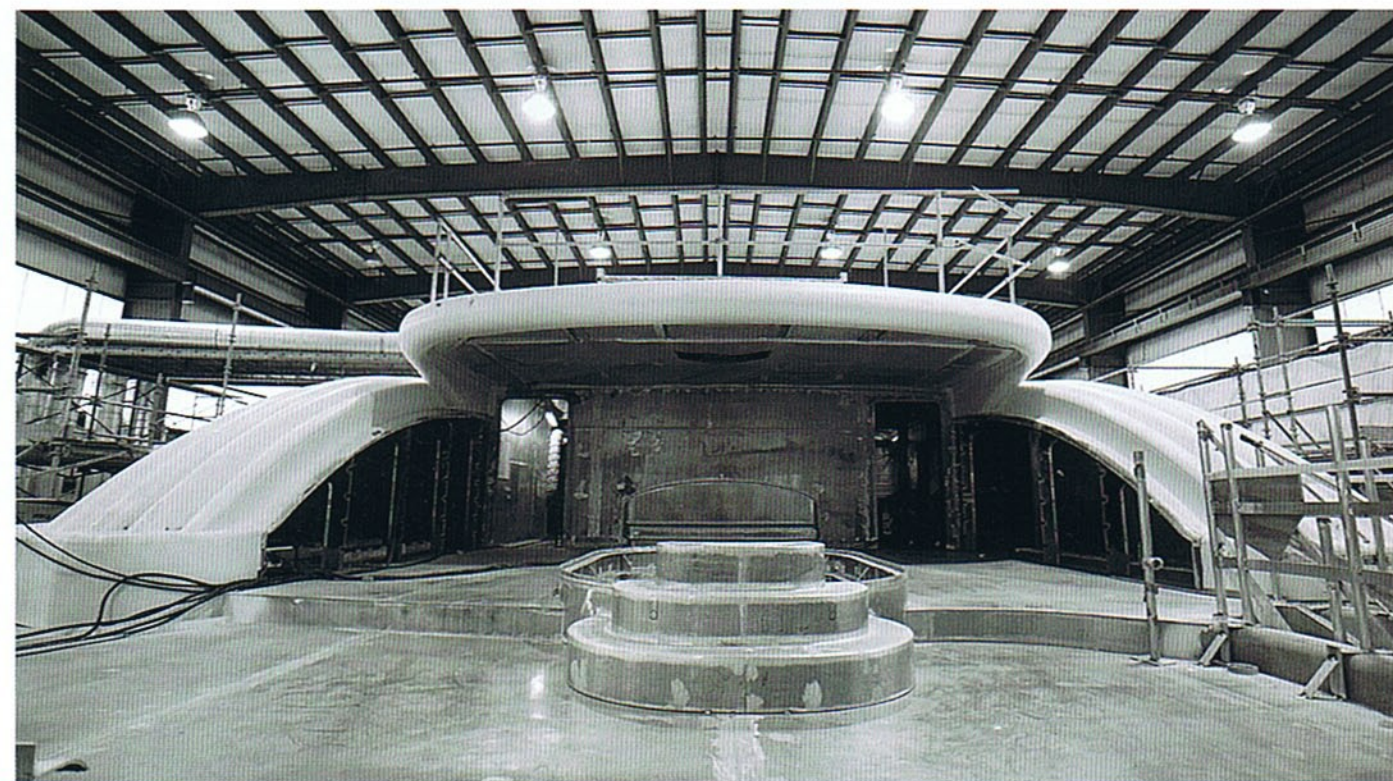
in carbon composite, the yacht was propelled by MTUs coupled with Kamewa waterjets and featured a space-age interior design by Art Line Studio. That is one of the projects that Tom Derecktor, who Paul says likes "the innovative stuff", remembers well from the pre-*Cakewalk* era. In 1989, Derecktor also delivered the speedy 115' motoryacht *Lady Frances*, now *El Jefe*. Sparkman & Stephens designed the deep-vee hull equipped with Kamewa jets. The 113' award-winning *MITseaAH*, another Sparkman & Stephens design, was built in 1993. Proving once more its ability to handle diverse projects, in 2005 Derecktor delivered a beautiful Zurn Yacht Design, a speedy 57' commuter called *Vendetta* to music legend, boat enthusiast and New Yorker Billy Joel. The hull, in composite, was built in Maine, but Derecktor completed everything else.

Refit and commercial work also have played a crucial role in the shipyard's history. In 1967, Bob Derecktor, who'd learned to repair PT Boats in the Navy, acquired a sizeable land near the Dania Cutoff Canal in Fort Lauderdale. At the time the yachting industry in South Florida was still in its infancy, and Bob had his eye on repair work from the cruising industry. It was at the Florida shipyard that the owner and captain of *Cakewalk* had their first experience with Derecktor Shipyards. Derecktor helped transform the 132' Van Lent yacht known as *Fiffanella* into the 142' *Cakewalk*. On the commercial side, the Robert E. Derecktor shipyard's first projects were police boats for the City of New York, and in the 1960s, the shipyard built a few aluminum Coast Guard Cutters. From 1985 to 1992, Derecktor operated a shipyard in Middletown, Rhode Island, which primarily built ferries and more Coast Guard Cutters. Mamaroneck, although located in the middle of a busy commercial district, also handled commercial work. In 1998, Derecktor started construction of the largest vessel it had yet built, a 148' ferry designed to carry 300 passengers and travel at a record 50 knots for Argentinian ferry operator Buquebus. In 2000, Derecktor outbid other shipyards and won a contract

Derecktor Florida, opposite page, did a major refit of one of the predecessors of the new *Cakewalk* (top right)



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IT WAS AT THE FLORIDA SHIPYARD THAT THE OWNER AND CAPTAIN OF CAKEWALK HAD THEIR FIRST EXPERIENCE WITH DERECKTOR SHIPYARDS



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PEOPLE AT DERECKTOR ARE OPEN TO SUGGESTIONS AND AND READY TO TRY NEW THINGS; IT CAN LEAD TO A BETTER YACHT.”

CAPTAIN BILL ZINSER

to build the largest waterjet-propelled fast ferries built in the United States to date—two 241' aluminum vessels carrying 250 passengers and 80 vehicles. With the scope and size of projects increasing time had come to look for another facility. Derecktor leased reclaimed industrial waterfront land in Bridgeport, in the neighboring state of Connecticut, and built assembly facilities, a production hall for pre-cutting and a machine shop and moved some of its workers there. One of them was 23-year employee Gilbert Mello, who came to the U.S. from the Azores and whom Bob Derecktor originally had hired for his skills as a cabinet maker. He now works on Derecktor's yacht projects. New hires included Peter Doeringer, now the shipyard's project manager for *Cakewalk*. The shipyard also later acquired a 600-ton travel lift. Large ferries ordered by the Alaska Marine Highway System were the first truly large projects built in Bridgeport: the *Fairweather* was delivered in 2003 and *Chenega* in 2005, bringing plenty of attention to Derecktor.

Although Derecktor Shipyards has a storied past, Paul Derecktor is not one to dwell on it; he prefers to look ahead. The new *Cakewalk* is foremost on his mind. "Projects like these are exciting. They keep the creative juices flowing," Paul says. "We don't want to build 10 to 20 boats at a time. A thing like *Cakewalk* is great. The process itself is what makes it so interesting." Still, the shipyard's diverse experience and ability to tackle complicated projects helped Derecktor land the contracts. "One of the reasons we came there is that there are few yards that have the mentality of building commercial boats and have the understanding of the yacht world," says *Cakewalk* project manager Bill Zinser. "People (at Derecktor) are open to suggestions and ready to try new things; it can lead to a better yacht...The quality so far is really very good," he adds.

Building in the U.S. did not mean foregoing European design or components. The owner and project manager, who both liked *Carinthia*, approached Tim Heywood who, as Zinser puts it, luckily was available. Azure Naval Architects, who already had a relationship with

Derecktor, was selected to design the hull. The owners, who are very involved in the project, the designers and the shipyard created a six-decker with incredible volume and ample decks. A walk through the yacht, still a few months away from completion at the time of our visit, is a surprising experience. First, there is the sheer scale. It takes three flights of stairs to reach the access ramp into *Cakewalk* from the assembly hall floor, enough to get the heart racing a bit. Once at the top, a look down the open elevator shaft still under construction can induce vertigo. It takes a little imagination to picture the yacht as it will be, but it's very easy to get a sense of the space. The owner's deck, equipped with a gym, features a forward stateroom with eight wrap-around windows. The main deck has a library (only visible on plans tacked to the walls at this stage) and six main-deck staterooms occupy what Bill Zinser calls "prime real estate". The lower deck accommodates crew cabins and an AC room. There is a dedicated cold room for flowers, a freezer room, a laundry and a cellar. The yacht has a split-level engine room with MTU 4000 series engines, four generators, two huge watermakers, a state-of-the-art sewage treatment and a muffler system. The lower deck also has a huge tender bay for the toy. The yacht, which will be in charter, will carry a 37' Vikal limousine tender, a 35' and a 33' Riva Cento. A dive station will also be available. The other surprise is how pristine the whole work area is, in spite of the multiple crews working onboard at one time. Miles of cables, in bundles as big around as a fist, are tidily secured behind bulkheads and into the ceiling. The veneer that is already in place is invisible be-

At the Derecktor Shipyards Connecticut: from left, Paul Derecktor, Stephen Champtaloup, Jef d'Etiveaud, Kathy Kennedy, Gavin Higgins and Tom Derecktor



In Bridgeport, Bill Zinser works with Tim Heywood who designed *Cakewalk* as an elegant and voluminous yacht with ample decks

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hind layers of protection that tightly embrace the planes and curves of the interior bulkheads. There is hardly any dust, nor debris or pungent smells. Not one corner of the multiple blue-line plans tacked on the walls is out of place. No tools are in the way. Evidently, others have noticed. Jef d'Etiveaud, who works in business development, came onboard a few months ago. A competitive sailor, he has worked as project manager for a variety of shipyards. "I have never seen anything quite like this: the quality of employees and the level of efficiency are unparalleled. The shipyard is on a par with many of the top names. It's a culture that comes from the top," he says.

Attention to detail is important to Paul Derecktor. "To be uncompromising is what makes a good yard," he says. Still, even with modern tooling, an experienced and diverse work force and a good corporate culture, handling complicated projects such as these can be a bit of a juggling act. A set of plans on a conference table near Paul Derecktor's all-business-like office shows how he would like to expand the facility in Bridgeport with a larger outfitting berth, a new large assembly hall and increased lifting capacity. A federal grant will help with additional investments in tooling.

The shipyard has worked with Azure Naval Architects, and more recently Rainsford Saunders Design, to develop design concepts ranging from 197' to 282'. RSD displayed a model of the 282' yacht at the Abu Dhabi Yacht Show in March. Of couses times are hard for the yachting business at the moment, and shipyards around the world are forced to tighten their belts and diversify to coast through the difficult months ahead.

Now that he is back at the shipyard, Tom Derecktor has embraced the goal of tightening procedures for even more efficiency. His experience outside of yacht and ship building exposed him to procedures that can be applied to project management. Derecktor has an engineering team of 25 to 30 who rely on a number of programs such as Autocad, ShipConstructor, NavisWorks and SolidWorks. It has recently introduced a computer-controlled milling machine, and Tom is interested in bringing more. "Engineering and planning are the most critical elements of the job," Tom says.

President Paul Derecktor freely admits he is happy his brother is back at his side. He has plans for the future and a teenage son who is showing interest in the family business. Within a year, Derecktor will complete two milestone projects: Paul's focus in on the now and a bright future.