

The editor's former boat, a Thistle design by William Atkin, has been cited as a model for William Crealock's Kendall, which soon evolved into the Westsail 32.



Legacy of Colin Archer is Still Alive and Kicking

If you think your boat is a bear to maintain, you might take some consolation in this month's used-boat review of the Union 36. It is a fiberglass boat, but considering the amount of teak on deck and belowdecks, it might as well be made of wood. Not that there is anything very wrong with that.

The 32-footer my wife Theresa and I cruised on for 11 years was very similar—a big, heavy double-ender—and ours was made of wood. While

our 1937 William Atkin *Thistle* design differed significantly from the Union 36 and the modern double-enders that Bob Perry would later unveil (the Tayana 37 and Valiant 40, among the better known), these boats can be broadly traced to a common ancestor: the North Sea rescue boats designed by the renowned Norwegian naval architect Colin Archer.

While Atkin's *Thistle* is clearly a derivative of Archer's work, Perry's boats diverge so sharply from this archetype that they deserve a different branch on the family tree. The longer waterlines, flatter hull sections, and increased volume in the canoe-shaped stern of Perry's boats reduced some of the more annoying characteristics we noticed in our boat, *Tosca*—among them a tendency to hobby horse and roll at anchor. Perry's changes also made the boat faster and more weatherly.

Few cruising designs are so rich in maritime lore as the double-ender. Archer's famous first rescue boat *RSI* is a museum piece, as are the boats of famous solo circumnavigators Argentinian Vito Dumas (*Lehg II*) and Sir Robin Knox-Johnston (*Suhaili*). The wave of home-built post WW-II cruisers inspired by John G. Hanna's *Tahiti* and *Carol* ketches, Atkin's *Ingrid*, and L. Francis Herreshoff's *Marco Polo*, further raised the double-ender's legendary status.

When the age of fiberglass finally took hold in the 1970s, William Crealock's Westsail 32, a thinly veiled copy of Atkin's designs, rightly earned its place as the boat that launched 1,000 dreams.

While the double-ended concept holds many advantages, there are significant tradeoffs, and it is wrong to assume that just because a boat has a pointy stern, it is inherently a safer cruising boat. When it comes to seaworthiness, quality of construction and maintenance record can be just as important as design lineage.

Among the greatest disadvantages of many of these boats is light-air performance and weatherliness. During *Tosca's* short hops in the Caribbean, these handicaps were striking, but once we set out west across the Pacific, we had no real complaints about the broader tacking angles and relatively sedate passages (average 112 miles per day). True, today we would opt for some more efficient and weatherly hull, but we still hold to the philosophy behind Colin Archer's early designs: "Safety comes first."

Cover photo: *The Union 36 Melelu rests at anchor in the Chesapeake.* (Photo by Frank Lanier.)

Photo by Jimmy Hall

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EDITOR

DARRELL NICHOLSON

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

JUDI CROUSE

MANAGING EDITOR

ANN KEY

TECHNICAL EDITOR

RALPH J. NARANJO

EDITORS AT LARGE

DAN DICKSON, NICK NICHOLSON,
DOUG LOGAN, DAN SPURR

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

SKIP ALLAN, KEN DELAVIGNE, DAVID GILL,
ERIK KLOCKARS, FRANK LANIER,
JEREMY MCGEARY, JOE MINICK, MIKE SLINN

PUBLISHER

TIMOTHY H. COLE

EDITORIAL OFFICES

7820 Holiday Drive South, Suite 315

Sarasota, FL 34231

practicalsailor@belvoirpubs.com

CUSTOMER SERVICE, WEB, BACK ISSUES, OR FAX SERVICE

PO Box 5656
Norwalk, CT 06856-5656
800/424-7887

customer_service@belvoir.com

SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT:

800/829-9087
www.practical-sailor.com/cs
Box 420235
Palm Coast, FL 32142-0235
for Canada:
Box 7820 STN Main, London, Ontario
N5Y 5W1

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Contact Jennifer Jimolka, Belvoir Media, 203/857-3144

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